



Groundwork NE & Cumbria

IMPACT REPORT 2023/2024



FOREWORD

Welcome to Groundwork North East & Cumbria's Impact Report for 2023/24. We hope you find this report useful and that it demonstrates to you the impact and progress we have made over the last 12 months.

Our mission to improve people's prospects, create better places and promote greener choices across the region continues to be as relevant as ever, and this report reflects on Groundwork's impact where we have supported practical action to create a fair and green future in which people, places and nature can flourish.

Our activities and impact would not have been possible without the support from a wide range of organisations and businesses, providing much appreciated financial support and in some cases their knowledge and expertise. Organisations such as the National Lottery, Natural England and Local Authorities have allowed us to deliver our services to communities most in need and tackle some of the social, environmental and economic challenges which we face as a society.

Behind the scenes of all this activity is our staff, who really are at the heart of what we do. We pride ourselves on having a place based approach and without you, having the local knowledge and the pride to improve your communities we could not be able to create the impact we do. I hope that you enjoy looking back on this report and feel inspired by the milestones we have achieved and the lives we have changed.



Thank you for your continued support and commitment to Groundwork North East & Cumbria. Together, we are making a difference, creating a better environment and communities for everyone.

Steven Roberts
Chief Executive

S Roberts

ABOUT US

Groundwork North East & Cumbria (GNEC) is part of a federation of charities, supporting practical action to create a fair and green future in which people, places and nature thrive.

We deliver this impact through a range of diverse local and regional programmes and services across the Northeast and Cumbria. We work with individuals, communities and businesses to create a society of vibrant, healthy, green communities with resources and resilience to shape their futures.



We work with people who are facing multiple challenges, in places that are lacking social infrastructure and economic opportunities. Many of these places across the region are increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather events.

Supporting a place-based approach we address these challenges by:

- ✓ Connecting people with one another, with opportunities and with nature
- ✓ Building knowledge and confidence so that people feel more in control of their future
- ✓ Delivering social, economic and environmental outcomes in an integrated way

APPROACH

We prioritise our operational work under six key thematic areas and measure our achievements based on the difference we make to the lives of people, our impact on the environment and our contribution to UN Sustainable Development Goals.



YOUTH



EMPLOYMENT



NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS



ENERGY EFFICIENCY



HEALTH & WELLBEING



GREEN TEAMS & LAND MANAGEMENT

2023-2024 SNAPSHOT

Environmental Impact



- Supported **12,000** individuals in adopting greener choices.
- Implemented **85** biodiversity improvement actions, including: addressing habitat & biodiversity loss
- Identification of **16,263 kg CO2e** in potential domestic carbon savings.

Fuel Poverty Advice



Through our Green Doctor programme, we have supported over **4,600** households in Tyne and Wear and Cumbria by offering:

- free, impartial advice
- support to save energy, reduce your bills, and live in a warmer

Land Improvement



We have made substantial improvements to the local landscapes:

- **61,000** square meters of land were improved.
- **85,174** square meters of land was made accessible to the public. Projects spanned across **106** sites, including public parks, community areas, schools.

Organisations Supported



- **282** organisations were supported through grants
- Total of **£72,626** distributed to boost community-driven initiatives.

Education, Training & Employment



Our programmes have facilitated significant educational and employment outcomes:

- **984** individuals supported in transitioning into education, training, or employment.
- **143** formal qualifications attained.
- **2,520** individuals received personalised coaching or mentoring.

Volunteer Engagement



- Our activities were supported by **537** active volunteers.
- Collectively contributed over **14,500** hours: This includes **239** corporate volunteers and **162** professionals, bringing a wealth of expertise to our initiatives.



YOUTH

Despite the challenges and the adjustments to delivery from different sources of funding, staff have maintained excellent support services to our young people.

Youth delivery staff are passionate about what they do earning the respect of the young people they work with on the start of their journey and this is constantly reflected in the feedback and praise the team get from the young people and the funders.

*Jacqui Hodgson
Youth Programmes Manager*

DurhamWorks Programme for Schools

The DurhamWorks Programme for Schools offered specialised support to 15-16-year-olds navigating decisions about education, training, and employment after Year 11. It included one-on-one guidance, group activities, and school events with local business representatives. The programme aimed to help individuals identify their goals, explore necessary skills and qualifications, and find suitable pathways toward their aspirations, providing assistance along the way.



Case Study

I found Kaitlin to be a lovely girl who has a positive outlook to everything. She is always smiling no matter what difficulties she has.



Kaitlin Snowdon, a Year 11 student at The Oaks School with learning difficulties, received our support transitioning to Bishop Auckland College's Aspire Programme. After overcoming transport challenges, staff arranged a successful visit, making Kaitlin feel welcome for her start in September.



365 young people supported



347 supported into education training or employment



305 reported improved mental health and wellbeing

DurhamWorks
To improve your future



Northern Directions

Northern Directions provides opportunities for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) aged 16-24 to progress towards or into the labour market, further education, or training. Free, tailored employability and personal development packages are available for a diverse range of participants, to support them in overcoming barriers. The comprehensive employability and personal development programme is tailored to individual needs and includes coaching, mentoring, job matching, application support, interview preparation, and training in basic skills and health & safety.



It has been amazing to see how this project has developed and supported young people in the region. The team worked hard to reach young people in need of this support and due to the success of this delivery we were able to get further funding to continue this work.

Mary Blackwell - Project Manager



Overall supported 562 young people



217 young people supported into employment, further education/ training

Green Influencers

Green Influencers works with young people aged 11 - 18 carrying out a mix of traditional youth work sessions and environmental social action. Working with and for disadvantaged communities across the north to create better, greener places to work and live and improve the quality of life for people. These areas are high in anti-social behaviour, have a lack of provision for young people and people are often disengaged from nature.



The project engaged with 163 young people



Case Study

This was our first time we have done anything with a pond and we have learned how a pond can take care of itself by letting wildlife take over. We have learned a lot about our environment and how we can make change by making small changes to the way we live.



A group of 10 young people who attend West Cornforth Primary School decided to create a wildlife pond and learn all about the importance of ponds. This is a main habitat for some native plants, frogs, newts, bugs, creepy crawlies foxes, hedgehogs and our flying friends like bats and birds. The young people learned the steps they need to take to create such a place and what equipment and materials they would need to complete this. The group came up with a time line for delivery and were involved with engagement activities to introduce nature into people's lives.



EMPLOYMENT

Despite a challenging year marked by increased demand and reduced funding, our Employment Teams have consistently risen to the occasion. We have tailored our support to address the growing needs of our community, leveraging all available services to achieve optimal outcomes for both funders and participants.

Our commitment to integrating our Employment services with a diverse range of projects and programmes remains steadfast.


We extend our gratitude to our dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment and hard work

Craig Drummond
Employment Programmes Manager

Reaching Out Across Durham

The most recent phase of the ROAD project, which started in April 2023, continued the efforts of the 2016-23 initiative funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and ESF through the Building Better Opportunities Fund. ROAD supported County Durham residents aged 25+ who were out of work, helping them overcome employment barriers. Assisted individuals in finding their potential and moving into education, training, or work by boosting their confidence, skills, and promoting health and wellbeing. The ROAD Partnership was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

 **Supported 110 economically inactive people**

 **86 people experienced reduced structural barriers into employment and skills provision**

 **305 reported improved mental health and wellbeing**

Case Study

She looks so much better and happier, her overall health and confidence has increased and her financial situation has been transformed.



Claudette moved to West Cornforth from London four years ago after losing her job and facing personal difficulties. She volunteered at but seldom left her house, with physical and mental health issues, financial and debt problems, lack of IT skills and jaw problems requiring a brace after major surgery.

ROAD supported her by improving her health & wellbeing through diet advice, exercise and relaxation techniques. With ROAD, she completed a food hygiene course, received IT training and secured a dentist to fit her jaw brace, covering taxis for appointments and ensuring treatment remained free.

Claudette's financial situation has improved, reducing debt and claiming her state pension. Now, Claudette continues volunteering, plans to engage more socially, and has started a prayer group at home.



Choices

Choices, Cumbria, was a programme that aimed to help individuals across Cumbria overcome barriers to employment. It provided tailored support, addressing challenges such as a lack of confidence, social isolation, health issues, and lack of experience or qualifications.

The programme also assisted diverse groups including offenders, young care leavers, lone parents, refugees, individuals over 50, and those recovering from substance abuse.

”
I never thought I would feel as I do today after the help from Choices



This programme helped me get out of the house and I am more comfortable with new people ”



866 people Supported with complex barriers to achieve their goals



209 Economically Inactive supported into employment



573 West Cumbrian disabled residents supported





HEALTH & WELLBEING

We are proud to have delivered a wide variety of projects that have supported people of all ages to improve their health, wellbeing and social networks by connecting them to their community and local green spaces. Through the delivery of a diverse programme including; Mens Sheds, allotments and community gardens, walking programmes, community learning, children's holiday activities and specific activities for people with dementia and more recently Parkinsons, our programme has provided vital opportunities for local people and families to be healthier, more active and improve their wellbeing. By engaging in worthwhile activities participants have been able to share experiences, develop their knowledge and skills whilst also increasing social interaction and reducing isolation.

Lisa Taylor
Communities Programme Manager

Norton Grange Community Hub

Norton Grange Community Centre is a vital community hub offering essential services and support. It has accessible spaces for activities, operates as a warm space five days a week, and provides free internet and refreshments without referral. The hub offers confidential support for issues like domestic abuse, mental health, and finances, collaborating with Thrive Teesside and Citizens Advice Bureau. Activities include a community pantry, lunch club, educational programmes, and free children's activities.



Over the year 800+ people have attended the Lunch Club



Case Study

Everyone is lovely and friendly here and honestly, I get lonely, and I'm glad this is here. I struggle with my mental health and the food is lovely, I've made new friends and thoroughly enjoyed the cooking session, I am so glad I came to the cooking class to find out about all of this.



JD is over 60, lives alone and is benefit dependant. She heard from a friend about the casserole club cooking sessions and contacted us for a place. She attended alone. She was partnered with another lady in her 30's and they chatted and laughed throughout the session. They were invited to the community pantry and lunch club the next day and both agreed to attend.

They met up the next day and each week after to access low cost and free food and enjoy a hot meal and chat. Since getting to know Jeanette, JD has disclosed that she looks forward to Wednesdays each week and that it is the only time of the week she comes out and socialises.

Green Social Prescribing Network

A pilot led by Groundwork to understand and promote the benefits of green social prescribing.

The aim was to promote the benefits of nature for health & wellbeing; ensure those with health inequalities have equal access to opportunities; link existing social prescribers and activity providers. We mapped services and supported activity providers to access funding to deliver activities; organised networking events to promote green social prescribing and link providers of activities/healthcare; carried out extensive surveys to understand barriers to using green social prescribing.

A highlight was developing the networking events - at which activity providers would host activities with social prescribers and healthcare professionals taking part - showcasing the real life benefits of engaging with nature. Healthcare professionals carried this into their own work, advocating for the benefits of engaging with nature and being better equipped to offer green/blue social prescribing to their patients.



Thank you for hosting an excellent event it was a great networking opportunity. Following on from the session I had some great conversations about the possibility of collaborating and hosting some nature-based wellbeing sessions for children and young people over the Summer Holidays”



Hosted 7 networking events, with 6 host organisations and 25 activity providers. In total, 140 social prescribers and activity providers attended/participated.



Supported 13 projects to gain funding through the NHS Green Social Prescribing Development Fund.

Eden Hill People's Centre

Since 2017, Groundwork has partnered with Eden Hill People's Centre, a thriving community hub, on a three-year programme aimed at enhancing the centres' resilience and sustainability for the future. Through collaboration with local partners, we provide a safe space for the community to access various support services, including money management, youth provision, minibus service, volunteer training, and energy-saving advice. This initiative, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, is delivered in partnership with Horden & Peterlee Rugby Football Club and Eden Hill People's Centre.



Eden Hill has knocked it out the park again with their half-term programmes. We come every year without fail and we will definitely be back.



Over 52 weeks the hub have served 4680 community members with low-cost food through the Bread and Butter Thing project



Supported low-income families by providing school uniforms for 267 children




Weekly health and wellbeing walks host 11-12 participants.





ENERGY EFFICIENCY

2023-24 was an exciting year  for our energy efficiency programme, through diverse activities from recycling educational activities to retrofit advice sessions.

As an expanding programme, Green doctors and our Retrofit Energy Advisors have been visiting homes across the region to make them more energy-efficient and sustainable. By providing expert advice and practical solutions, they have not only collectively reduced carbon footprints but also enhanced well-being. We have achieved lower energy bills and healthier homes at a time when people need it most.

Stephen Armstrong
Communities Programme
Manager

Waste Awareness & Recycling Education Programme

In partnership with the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership and SUEZ, we run a successful waste awareness and recycling education program. The Visitor and Education Centre hosts activities, workshops, and presentations for residents in Gateshead, South Tyneside, and Sunderland. Over five years, it has engaged 25,000+ residents, educating them on waste management through centre sessions, outreach, and plant tours.



Fantastic interactive sessions, students got to see first-hand the importance of recycling and reducing amount of waste. Brilliant classroom base and session.

- ✓ 9,786 residents engaged through the centre between March 2023- April 2024
- ✓ The programme has hosted 109 school sessions March 2023 - April 2024
- ✓ Hosted 41 community sessions, 12 public events and 44 site tours March 2023 - April 2024



Green Doctor

Groundwork's Green Doctors help residents across the region stay warm, healthy, and save on bills. They offer free, impartial advice on energy savings, reducing heat loss, improving water efficiency, and cutting costs. They also connect individuals with specialist services for mental health and work with energy companies on hardship support. This service has continued to grow across the region as more people struggle with their energy bills.



Supported over 4,600 households, across Tyne, Wear and across Cumbria



Retrofit Development

To enhance the advice and guidance we provide households, we have taken steps to upskill staff and have **two Retrofit Assessors** in post with more training scheduled. This will increase our resource around Retrofit and expand this area of work.

Case Study

I found dealing with the energy company really stressful. I really appreciated Andy's help



Michael, mid 70s has serious health problems and needs to keep warm and avoid stress. After moving into a new property, he was struggling to set up an energy account in his name and receiving notice of arrears letters relating to the previous occupant. This was causing him undue stress.

He contacted the Green Doctor service and through contacting the energy supplier on his behalf - an account was set up and Michael told he could ignore the letters. We also showed Michael more boiler settings to maximise the efficiency of his boiler and how to set up the central heating programmer. We read the meter and calculated an accurate estimate of his next bill. As the bill was going to be due in full and be relatively high, we arranged a support payment into his energy account to help cover it.





LAND MANAGEMENT

We've been empowering green teams to maintain and manage land across the region and in return created a brighter future for our communities.

Through this sustainable land management we've worked with local authorities and housing associations to restore habitats and create safer community spaces for people and nature. With this we have created green jobs and stimulated local economies, offering educational opportunities which teach sustainable practises. With this work we have contributed to wards created a healthier environment for everyone

*Chris Watson
Director of Land & Communities*

Pegswood Community Park

Groundwork North East & Cumbria manage Pegswood Community Park on behalf of the Banks Group who own the site. The Park is made up of three closely connected sites – the Meadows, the Lake and Howburn Wood – totalling 41.4 hectares and comprising a range of habitats with an abundance of flora & fauna: there are areas of immature woodland, ancient woodland, meadow areas, a lake, nutrient poor wildflower areas, wild scrub areas, pond/scrape areas and hedgerows. Spread across the three sites is a network of paths for the enjoyment of site users. Most of these paths are established, lined paths, but some are also informal.



It has been great to be busy out on the Park with the ” extra input from the faithful volunteers who come every week, rain or shine. And we have had a lot of rain (!) which has created some issues, but we are very aware of how our work has been helping the Park and its users, both human and animal. We always receive favourable comments from people when we are out and about, which encourages us in what we are doing, and it is lovely to see the Park developing and changing through the seasons and through the years.

- ✓ Added 2,300 woodland and wood-edge plants into the meadows
- ✓ Planted a further 1,000 saplings around the lake



BANKSGroup
development with care

Beyond Housing

Groundwork is pleased to continue managing various sites for Beyond Housing throughout Redcar & Cleveland. Our locally-based team is familiar with these sites and understands the community's desire for safe, well-maintained open spaces.

We employ a Supervisor and six Operatives, all fully trained in horticulture, mowing, spraying, and health and safety. Our responsibilities include:

- ✓ **Maintenance of 16 sites**
- ✓ **Covering 89,000 square meters of grass, 2,100 square meters of shrubs, 600 square meters of hedges.**

Additionally, we address specific issues raised by local residents and ward councillors through reactive work on particular sites.



Customer Feedback



They have been fantastic and have come every week to do it. They're a LOVELY bunch of people, they all pile into the garden together, one mows while one strims the edges and others rake up and bag what cuttings there are and another blows the debris off the path. Literally 5 mins and it's all done! There are SO NICE!





NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS

Our work with Nature-based Solutions has delivered some wonderful outcomes with our brushwood fascines working really well and creating lots more mudflat and saltmarsh. By restoring this precious habitat we are putting back small pockets of what has been lost through developments on our riverbanks and creating space for wildlife such as common goby, sand hoppers, little egrets and shore crabs. Across our range of NbS projects we've rewetted peatland, created wetlands for water storage, installed fish refugia and vertipools to name but a few all with their own unique way of providing an ecosystem service for people and wildlife.

Hellen Hornby
Programme Development
Manager

Revitalising our Estuaries Wansbeck Sand Dunes

Revitalising our Estuaries has delivered additional improvements to the Wansbeck estuary and the riverside greenspaces. EcoNorth identified issues such as sand dune degradation including loss of native species to invasive sea buckthorn, Japanese rose and Japanese knotweed. Algae mats and a nearby barrage also impacted the area. The Estuary Ranger team took cost-effective measures like installing barriers to protect vegetation and reduce litter.

They managed sea buckthorn and other invasive species without herbicides. Saltmarsh protection included limiting trampling and removing litter. Lizard habitats were created using natural stone. Community engagement involved educational initiatives and updating environmental records. Supported by Coca-Cola, volunteers, and local groups, the project effectively addressed disturbances, erosion, and invasive species, enhancing habitats and fostering community involvement.



**Grateful to see people cleaning up such a beautiful ”
place, making it more enjoyable for everyone.**

- ✓ **30 hectares of woodland improved, featuring 5 sections of boardwalk for better access**
- ✓ **25 trees planted**
- ✓ **Removal of Japanese rose and reduction of spread of sea buckthorn**
- ✓ **Litter picking and debris removal from riparian corridor of the Wansbeck estuary**

The Wild Oysters Project

We have been successfully delivering the Wild Oysters Project since 2023. This past year has been particularly exciting, with our hosting of educational visits and plans to establish a new reef in the North Sea. The Wild Oysters Project aims to improve the health of Britain's coastal waters by restoring native wild oysters. Oyster reefs clean our coastal waters and provide an important habitat for other marine animals.



Newly created reef, the size of a football pitch, home to 10,000 European native oysters



I first volunteered with The Wild Oysters Project as I wanted to make a difference to my local environment and when I learned what has happened to Oyster populations I knew it was something I wanted to get involved in. The work that this project does is so important and the people who do it are amazing. I'm honoured to have been able to help even a small amount.



860 school students engaged on site visits, workshops and school sessions



200 volunteers engaged on oyster monitoring and reef deployment



Wansbeck Restoration for Climate Change 'Wilds of Wanney'

The "Wilds of Wanney" photographic exhibition was developed from images captured by amateur photographers on guided photo walks led by Chris Woodcock, as part of the Wansbeck Restoration for Climate Change initiative.

The positive reaction to the walks and the submitted photographs led to the development of an outdoor exhibition. This exhibition utilised robust panels that not only showcased the latest photography but also intertwined the narrative of Wansbeck. Both the indoor and outdoor exhibitions were successfully displayed at Wallington and later moved to Kirkharle Courtyard and workshops.

With the support of shears foundations also engaged in school visits these visits included an overnight stay, activities like lambing, soil sampling, bat detection, and learning local history.



The panels look great, I love the mix of information on there.



1,600+ visits to the indoor and outdoor exhibition displays



Hosted 2 educational school visits



12 people participated in the workshop

Looking to the Future

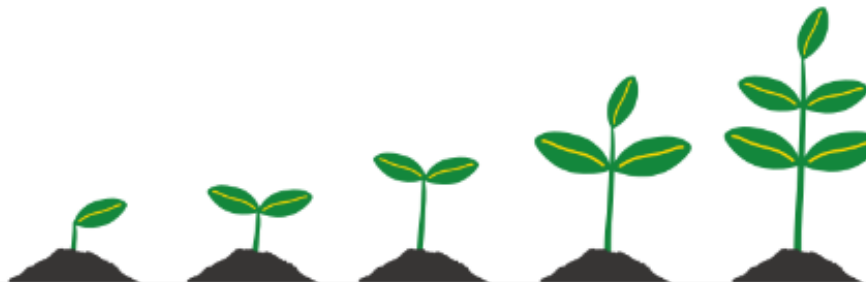
Next year, 2024/25, we will continue to focus our work in areas of greatest need across the Northeast and Cumbria, helping people in hardship and isolation, building the green economy, connecting those who need it most with nature and helping people and places respond and adapt to climate change.

We will deliver a range programmes and activities across our six thematic areas in order to achieve our charitable goals. To do this, we will maintain our partnerships with variety of partners and look to build new ones, allowing us to try new innovative approaches to support a continued demand on our services.

If you are a business or organisation and would like to hear more about the work we do and would like to make a different please contact us to discuss the opportunities further.

Email: North.east@groundwork.org.uk

Tel: 01388 662666



Together, we have the ability to amplify our impact and drive meaningful change. Strong Partnerships are important to us, as they bring diverse strengths and resources to the table, allowing us to be innovative and adaptable in our delivery.

By securing essential funding and collaborating strategically, we can enhance our communities and nature, turning a shared vision for a greener and more resilient future into reality.

I hope that this impact report has enthused you to reach out and to work with us, to create lasting transformations and make a significant difference to our communities across the North East and Cumbria.

*Lisa Locke,
Head of Business Development*

To view our direction for the year ahead please view our Business Plan 2024-25



Business Plan 2024-25






THANK YOU

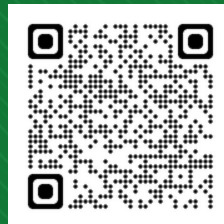
Working in partnership with public, private and community stakeholders, we improve, protect and enhance our local communities and environment.

If you're interested in supporting our work, or would like to know more about our organisation please email: north.east@groundwork.org.uk

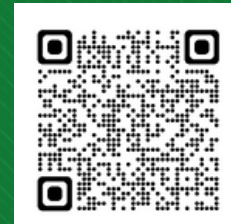
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SCAN TO VIEW
GNEC WEBSITE



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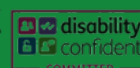
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Landscape
Institute
Registered practice



GOOD WORK
PLEDGE
COMMITTED



North East
Better Health
at Work Award
Ambassador Status

