

IMPACT REPORT

2024/25

GROUNDWORK FIVE COUNTIES



Foreword

Groundwork is all about people and this past year has shown just how much can be achieved when people come together with purpose.

Whether it's a family struggling with energy bills, a volunteer finding confidence outdoors, or a young person building their future, we've seen time and again how small changes can lead to big impact.

That's the story of this year - one of resilience, renewal, and real lives changed. We're proud to support an organisation that listens deeply, acts locally, and works hand-in-hand with communities to make things better for people and for the planet.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been part of that journey.

Sarah Clarke & Darren Ibell, Co-chairs of the Board



This year we have built on the previous hard work from our dedicated staff and volunteers to further establish trust, hope, and momentum.

Our focus is on what matters most: helping people feel warmer, greener, more connected, and more confident about their future.

From reimagined green spaces to expanded support for households in crisis, this report is full of stories that reflect the strength of our communities, and the power of practical help at the right time.

I'm so proud of what we've achieved together, and excited for what comes next!

Penny Halewood, Executive Director





About us

Groundwork Five Counties is a local community-based charity with a green heart.

We respond to the wants and needs of the local area in partnership with likeminded organisations, charities, groups and individuals.

For years we have been delivering our projects across Nottinghamshire and areas of Derbyshire under the name Groundwork Greater Nottingham. Since our rebrand in 2023 to Groundwork Five Counties, we deliver in much of the East Midlands.

Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland are the five counties where we have the pleasure and privilege of providing outstanding community support.

We are part of the Federation of Groundwork Trusts, which comprises of Groundwork UK and fourteen independent Groundwork Trusts across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We work closely together to support our communities and involve local decision-makers and national government.

> PEOPLE | PLACE | PLANET



Our team

Every team member makes a real difference every day!

This year we have welcomed many new faces, especially in our Green Doctor team – growing from 15 to 20 team members, including three Trainees. By offering these work placements we help people to upskill and kickstart a career in the green sector.

- > 86% of our team members say they are proud to work for us
- > 84% feel our culture is supportive, inclusive and enjoyable
- > 84% love the perks, including flexible remote working

- > "I have learned so much since I joined. I wish I had found **Groundwork** earlier in my career."
- > "Beneficiaries have told me how much our support has **changed their lives.**"
- > "I loved hearing how after attending an event and **feeling inspired**, a family installed a pond to **support their local wildlife.**"
- > "I feel so proud seeing **participants become more confident, find a job, or become a volunteer** with our support."

What we do

Our Mission is to empower local communities to live their lives more sustainably. Our Objectives are:



1 We enable people to improve their lives and communities by providing resources and building resilience, empowering them to create their own solutions.

Reducing poverty, boosting confidence, and improving skills, health, wellbeing, and employability for those most in need.



2 We support people to protect, replenish, and enjoy their local green spaces, helping wildlife and biodiversity to thrive and to enable nature's recovery.

We engage communities in nature renewal through habitat restoration, climate resilience projects, and practical skills to protect local biodiversity.



3 We create opportunities for people to develop green skills, supporting their journey towards employment, volunteering, and becoming better guardians of the planet.

We deliver training, volunteering, and practical support to help people develop green skills and move towards employment or volunteering in the green economy.



2024/25: Our Year in Numbers



4,428

beneficiaries supported across all our projects



249 people

supported into work, education or training



139 volunteers

gave us 212 days of their time, valued at £73,649



3,362

people supported by our Green Doctor energy efficiency experts



£722,167

total domestic utility bill savings



1,406,415 kg

of CO2e saved = driving 4,165,100 miles



29 organisations

supported and made more resilient



363,364 m²

of landscape restored = 51 football fields

Partnerships

A key element to our success is our partnership working with local organisations who refer beneficiaries into our services and provide the tools we need to support their communities.

> St Barnabas Hospice

In September 2024 we introduced our Green Doctor energy advice service in Lincolnshire, with a total of **416 households** supported in 2024/25.

To reach the right beneficiaries we team up with local organisations. One highly successful local partnership is with St Barnabas Hospice, a Lincolnshire-wide charity that cares for people with terminal illnesses.

Many of their patients live at home, with a heightened need for warmth to curb the symptoms of their health conditions. We support them to be more energy-efficient and cut down on bills, easing the financial burden that often comes with terminal illness.

This helps people with serious health problems to be more comfortable at home in their final weeks, months, or years.

We have supported **98 St Barnabas patients** this year, making a positive impact at a difficult time.

St Barnabas Hospice Welfare Benefits Advisor Diane
and Green Doctor Ben





> Bassetlaw District Council

This year, we partnered with Bassetlaw District Council on a range of community projects with great social value.

Our Green Doctors helped **429 council tenants** save money, energy, and care for their homes.

We opened a new outdoor community hub in Worksop's deprived Cheapside area, hosting **18 events** and welcoming **159 attendees** of a wide variety of ages and backgrounds.

Snipe Park in Harworth & Bircotes received a **vital drainage upgrade** to put a stop to flooding and muddy shoes. We also **improved accessibility and biodiversity** in the park by removing fallen trees and clearing pathways.

In these tasks our team were joined by **2 T-level students** who gained valuable work experience and support on their employability journey.

We launched children's play sessions to mark a fresh start for the park, with **24 pre-schoolers** having fun and engaging with nature.

All these projects are explained in detail on the upcoming pages.

And we're not done in Bassetlaw yet!

Our collaboration with the Council continues into 2025/26 with even more exciting projects. Watch this space...

OUR WORK



1

We enable people to improve their lives and communities

Green Doctor

With the ongoing cost of living crisis, our Green Doctors have been **more in demand than ever**.

During our home visits we give **bespoke advice** to help people save energy and money; from explaining boiler settings to installing small measures like LED bulbs and radiator foil.

We encourage **easy behavioural changes**, such as showering for a maximum of 5 minutes and switching off appliances when not in use. All these small wins really add up over the year!

Together, we **review utility bills** and check the household's eligibility for **benefits and grant funding**.

Where needed we will support people to tackle **energy debt** and access **further support**, like emergency heating, fuel vouchers, mental health, and more.

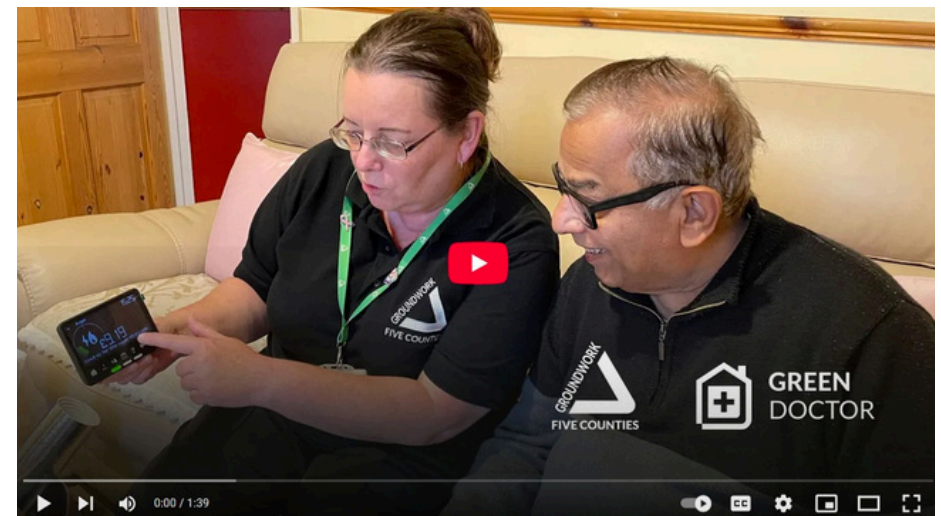
All our advice aims to **empower households to make informed decisions** about their energy use, resulting in more money in their pockets and a more comfortable home.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-green-doctor



Video case study, click to watch



Damp & Disrepair

We work closely with social housing associations to identify damp, mould, disrepair and needs in tenants' homes, and to get these **issues resolved quickly and amicably**.

This service combines the Green Doctor energy and money-saving advice with the chance for **tenants to speak honestly** about any issues they are experiencing in their homes.

Tenants often **lack the confidence** to raise issues with their landlord, fearing repercussions. As an impartial third party, we will liaise with the landlord on their behalf.

We give tenants a voice and provide landlords with the chance to **right any wrongs**. We follow up two months later to ensure our advice has been put into practice, and check if reported repair requests have taken place.

For the tenant this means **improved mental and physical wellbeing**, and a **safer, healthier home**. This in turn improves the landlord's **housing stock**, their **tenants' satisfaction, reputation**, and **compliance** with the Regulator of Social Housing.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/damp-disrepair





“We were dreading the cold and the cost of heating”

Chris and Jim are a couple with multiple health issues, struggling to pay their bills and stay warm at home. Green Doctor Ben helped them save hundreds of pounds.

Chris says: “We were dreading the cold and the cost of heating, especially with **losing our Winter Fuel Payments** which had a big knock-on effect.

“Ben advised that we were eligible for a **50% water bill discount** because of our health conditions. This has saved us hundreds which we use to **put the heating on more**. We can even afford a **weekly cleaner** to help us, which has been a **fantastic, unexpected bonus**.”

Jim says: “Ben also **gave me a heated blanket** which keeps me extra warm to support my health. He has been incredibly helpful, and we are so grateful. We **highly recommend** the Green Doctor!”

“The Green Doctor is an actual lifesaver”

In 2022 Nolan lost his wife after years of caring for her through a terminal illness. Left with no income, mounting paperwork, and overwhelming grief, he fell into a financial and mental crisis.

By May 2024, his landlord Bassetlaw District Council referred him to Green Doctor Marie to get energy advice. Recognising Nolan’s urgent mental health needs, Marie prioritised emergency help over energy advice.

She arranged **food parcels**, helped him to access **benefits** and negotiated his **debt repayments** to ease his financial burdens. She connected him to **mental health services** and a **social prescriber** to get back into the community. With her ongoing guidance, Nolan began to rebuild his **confidence and stability**.

“Having someone by my side who **genuinely cares** has changed everything, I have started to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Marie is an actual lifesaver.”





Retrofit

In autumn 2024, we partnered with Bassetlaw District Council to review EPC ratings and discuss retrofit options with tenants.

We outlined measures like external and internal insulation, solar panels, heat pumps, and smart heating controls. We explained their benefits, expected cost savings, and installation process.

Many showed interest in the Smart Export Guarantee, which allows households to sell excess solar energy back to the grid.

Some of the households we visited were classed as “hard to reach”; tenants that the Council struggles to connect with or were steadfast in their refusal to accept new technologies.

After our visit, most tenants were more willing to consider retrofit installation and felt more confident in their knowledge of suggested upgrades.

- > **60 EPC reviews**
- > **9 new EPCs** for properties without certificate or upgraded since last survey
- > engaged **11 “hard to reach” households**

Electrical Safety

This year we expanded our Green Doctor service to include electrical safety advice. With half of UK house fires caused by electricity, this is a vital addition.

During visits we highlight risks like overloaded sockets, unsafe appliance use, and electrical hazards in kitchens and bathrooms.

We educate people on the importance of checking for safety marks and advise to only buy electrical items in physical stores or from reputable UK-based websites.

As our Green Doctors say: better to be safe than sorry!

Find out more:

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

- > Over **500 Green Doctor home visits** included electrical safety advice
- > Raised awareness at **9 community events**
- > **1,538 people** engaged and educated
- > Appearances on **Notts TV and Bolsover TV** to advise about electrical safety at home

Watch Green Doctor Mike on Notts TV



Allocations

Building on our existing services, we now offer early support to social housing tenants.

Along with their keys, new tenants receive a brochure with practical tips on home maintenance, including damp prevention, heating efficiency, saving money, security, and more.

Once settled we arrange a Green Doctor home visit to give bespoke advice, and flag any issues for the landlord to resolve. This is particularly helpful to people who have not overseen a household before or who have made mistakes in the past.

Since launching in November, we have **supported 96 households**.



Across all projects, 20 Green Doctors:

- > supported **3,339** households
- > saved a total of **£722,167** on energy bills
- > saved **1,406,415kg CO2** = the equivalent of **driving 4,165,100 miles**
- > saved **43 Megalitres of water** = the equivalent of **filling a swimming pool 44 times**

Beyond Barriers

We support economically inactive adults in South Derbyshire, providing one-to-one coaching to address their challenges to bring them closer and into work.

Barriers can include disabilities, mental ill health, low confidence, or other challenges. We support people to set realistic goals and break these down into steps, providing motivation and encouragement.

Together we celebrate each milestone, boosting the participants' confidence in their own abilities and taking pride in their achievements.

We explore available employment options suitable to their experience, skills, and interests. We give support every step of the way, from writing a CV to preparing for job interviews.

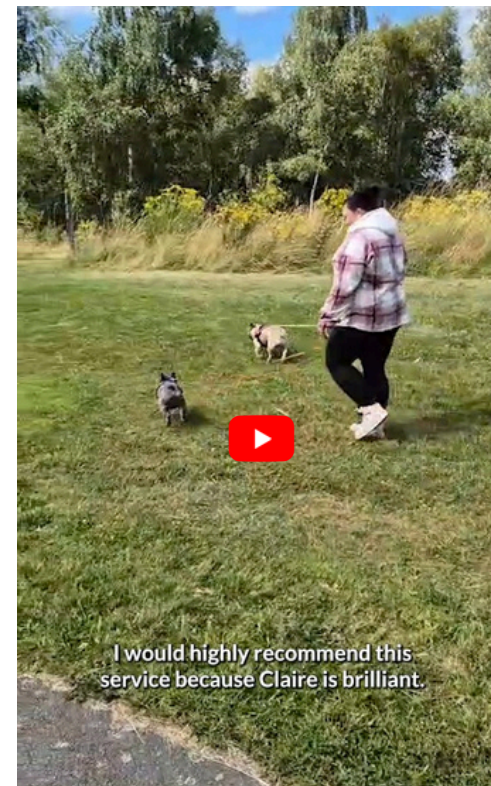
Our discretionary grant funding is used to improve the chance of success by paying for training courses and vital items such as interview clothes and laptops to empower digitally excluded participants.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/beyond-barriers

We supported:

- > **115 people** through personal development plans
- > **19 into paid work** and **3 into self-employment**
- > **30 people** to overcome digital exclusion
- > **500 hours** of volunteering



Watch our video case study: Zoe's dog walking business





Jobs for Hongkongers

Continuing our prior work within the Hong Kong community, we again provided employability support to newly settled Hongkongers.

We offer support to people of working age through one-to-one support and group sessions to settle into UK life, find work, and make meaningful connections.

Our practical exercises included CV writing, finding and applying for paid or voluntary work, building on existing English skills, community integration, and more.

This project came to an end in March 2025, but we continue to work with individuals and organisations within the community through our Green Doctor service and volunteering opportunities.

We supported:

- > **44 people to integrate** into their local community, develop English language skills, and gain employment skills
- > **12 people to access education**
- > **6 people into employment**
- > **2,000 attendees** at the Lunar New Year community event to raise awareness, educate, and celebrate culture



Tesco Stronger Starts grants

Groundwork works with Tesco to provide community projects with a funding boost of up to £6,500. From applying to deciding who receives the funding, this grant is fully community-led.

Each quarter we open our Tesco Stronger Start grant applications to schools, community groups and other good causes. Three local projects are voted on instore by customers.

There are no losers, only winners: Third prize is £500, second is £1,000, and the winner with the most tokens receives £1,500.

Twice a year, selected Tesco stores host the £5,000 Golden Token draw, where customers take a lucky dip in a pouch containing 99 blue and 1 gold token. Whoever draws gold can vote for the project they feel is most deserving of an extra £5,000 on top of their blue token winnings!

Find out more:

www.tescostrongerstarts.org.uk

- > **420 applications** in 2024/25
- > **34 Tesco stores** participating in our area
- > **£408,000 distributed** to local winners



Comic Relief Community Fund

Groundwork works with Comic Relief as an intermediary funder to support grassroots community organisations.

This year we enabled the distribution of grants to small organisations who deliver services based around tackling the impacts of poverty, building resilience, working to support equity and inclusion, and support climate justice.

In the role of Enablers, we ran the grant panel with local community representatives to identify the most deserving projects and allocate funding around the East Midlands.

We also ran two grant recipient networking events, helping organisations to connect and find opportunities to collaborate. We have been asked to enable this grant again in 2025/26.

- > **16 local applications** with **11 successful** projects
- > **£52,728.50** distributed locally

Grassroots Grants

Another fantastic funding opportunity for small organisations that make a big difference in their local community.

Grassroots Grants was funded by the People's Postcode Lottery and offered unrestricted funding up to £2,000.

We again played the role of Enabler, running a local panel to allocate the funding in the East Midlands and ensure applicants were given the opportunity to make their case and given fair deliberation. We are continuing our involvement for 2025/26.

- > **24 applications** shortlisted
- > **20 successful projects**
- > **£36,250** distributed





2

We support people to protect, replenish, and enjoy their local green spaces

Wellies in the Woods

It's a sad fact that many children have underdeveloped social skills and don't play outside. Parents often lack confidence in playing in nature, and many experience social isolation.

Wellies in the Woods tackles these issues through play groups set in nature. Each session we read a popular book and provide accessible activities around the story – from crafts with natural materials to scavenger hunts.

Children learn about nature through play while boosting their literacy, social, and communication skills. Parents gain low-cost outdoor activity ideas and build lasting friendships.

We welcome children with SEND and adapt to each family's needs. Weekly sessions run for two months, helping attendees to grow in confidence, connection, and wellbeing.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/wellies



- > **354 children and adults** took part in our dozens of play groups across the region
- > “Thomas has made a **great impact** on my daughter and she has learnt to be **braver around bugs.**”
- > “We are **more mindful of our surroundings and** enjoy **exploring nature** on our walks. We loved doing **creative activities** with things found in nature.”
- > “We **loved learning** about different plants, flowers and creatures.”

Habitat Management

In 2024/25 we continued to look after green spaces around the region, ranging in size from small local parks to large areas within the National Forest.

We work with landowners to establish their needs and propose meaningful change, from regular maintenance tasks to installing benches, pathways, and way markers.

We create accessible spaces that offer increased biodiversity for people to enjoy, and for wildlife to thrive in. Our team's specialised knowledge of local flora and fauna helps to achieve the best possible outcomes for each space, supported by enthusiastic volunteers.

This year **we managed 57 sites** around the region and our team **improved 363,364 m² of land** - that's over 51 football fields!



Case study: Snipe Park

Residents near Snipe Park in Harworth and Bircotes have long felt frustrated by the neglected park and woodlands which they feel were unsafe, and the frequently flooded pathways.

After discussions with Bassetlaw District Council and a community consultation to gain insights into what improvements local people wanted, our team got to work.

We cleared the overgrown vegetation in the drainage system, allowing water to once again flow where it should. To improve accessibility and safety, we removed dense trees and shrubs and used the cuttings to create new wildlife habitats.

We hosted four Wellies in the Woods sessions to kickstart this new era for Snipe Park, encouraging families to experience their improved local green space.





Little Walled Garden

When we first got the keys to our community hub, it was an overgrown and neglected allotment. But we saw its potential and turned it into a thriving space where people of all ages come to learn and socialise.

Since April 2024 we've delivered dozens of courses in gardening, bricklaying, carpentry, and other green skills. Each learner helped to transform the space, bit by bit, into the hub it is today.

The produce we grow is given to local people in need, and we regularly deliver flowers to the care home next door.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/little-walled-garden

- > **Over 200 people** signed up to take part in our courses
- > **21%** learners with a **disability or learning difficulty**
- > **51% BAME** learners
- > **40%** report **increased confidence**
- > "It was **absolutely amazing**. I learned a lot and really enjoyed it."
- > "I **learned so much** and **met some wonderful people**. I have already implemented some of the skills I picked up on my own allotment."



Cheapside Community Hub

In October 2024, our outdoor community hub in Worksop officially opened with a series of events. Located within Cheapside, a disadvantaged area of the town, it's a welcoming space for people of all ages.

Events included cooking and social eating, pumpkin carving, bird box making, and Wellies in the Woods play sessions. The feedback was so positive that we hosted ten more Wellies sessions over the next months, which again were a roaring success.

We are working hard to transform the space into a thriving community hub. Local volunteers have been recruited to make our big plans reality, and we can't wait to see how the space develops.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/cheapside

- > **159 sign-ups** for all Hub events
- > **99 children and adults** signed up for our Wellies in the Woods sessions
- > The location for **2 Team Days** for our staff to improve and enjoy the site



Case study: Edward and Grace

Local resident Deborah attended three of our Cheapside launch events with her two adult children, Edward and Grace, who have learning difficulties.

During the first cooking and social eating session, Edward and Grace were very shy; Deborah did much of the talking.

After a short while, they both came out of their shell and started chatting with others, preparing their own food, and trying new things – something that their mother said can be hard for them.

As Environment Coach Thomas talked about volunteering opportunities, Edward said he wanted to find a job but wasn't sure how. This sparked a conversation on how we could help, and we followed up with personalised signposting to wider local support, which helped Edward in his search for paid work.

The three came back for our pumpkin carving event on 31st October. They met yet more new people and had a wonderful time making their own Halloween decorations to take home.

Staff noticed a marked difference in their confidence. The two were happy to interact with strangers without needing to be by each other's side constantly, as they had been in the first session.

The family said that the events were welcoming, accessible, and enjoyable. We hope to see them again at future events!





Outdoor events

Every year we host dozens of outdoor events, including workshops and guided walks.

From making bird boxes and festive wreaths to learning how to coppice, during workshops our team share their skills and knowledge with eager participants of all ages.

During our guided walks, our staff are often supported by local experts. We educate visitors on points of interest within their local green spaces, which are often overlooked.

This year's themes have included mammals, butterflies, amphibians, fungi, wildflowers, and other topics.

Our events attract a variety of attendees, from families with young children to seasoned nature-lovers and 'twitchers' who are keen to find rare species!

See our upcoming events:

www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-events

- > **369 participants** across our outdoor events
- > **246 participants** for Autumn Footprints, an annual walking festival in Amber Valley that we organise



3

We create opportunities for people to develop green skills and become better guardians of the planet

Green Pathway to Skills & Employment in Bolsover

This project aimed to improve the employability of economically inactive people in Bolsover, by learning green skills, getting work experience, and gaining valuable qualifications.

Each quarter during 2024/25 we provided a different programme of activities, where participants learned a range of skills:

- Laying and repairing pathways
- Building and maintaining fences
- Conservation and land management
- Tree felling, coppicing, hedge laying
- Safely operating hand tools and power machinery

Two different Brushcutting & Strimming qualifications were available to gain, as well as the CSCS card (Construction Skills Certification Scheme). All are sought-after qualifications that greatly improve the chances of employment.

This project's funding has come to an end but some learners continue to volunteer with us in Bolsover, using the green skills they learned during the course.

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-bolsover

- > **79 learners** signed up
- > **4 people found work** after participating
- > **5 individuals are still volunteering with us** every other Wednesday along the Archaeological Way in Bolsover
- > **“Loved learning** hedge laying and coppicing. It was **hands-on, fun, and great for wildlife.**”



Volunteering

We could not effectively look after dozens of green spaces without the help of our fantastic volunteers!

From passionate individuals to “Friends of” groups, by collaborating we get local support and a better understanding of current activity and needs.

This helps our environmental experts to make informed decisions on what improvements will most benefit the local community, biodiversity, and wildlife.

Volunteers receive training from our staff and share their knowledge with each other, creating a supportive atmosphere where all are welcome and valued.

The result is the gaining of green skills for life, new social connections, and improved mental/physical health for our volunteers, as well as a prosperous green space for all to enjoy.

This year **139 volunteers** generously gave us **212 days of their time**, valued at **£73,649**

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-volunteer





Corporate Volunteering

We facilitate corporate volunteering days around the East Midlands, welcoming businesses great and small to make a difference in their local community.

This is a chance for employees to be away from their daily routine and give back. We are flexible to accommodate different interests, needs, budgets, and location.

By working together we can help your business make a major impact that your colleagues and customers will be proud of. Ready to change places and lives?

Find out more:

www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-corporate

Case study: Jones Lang LaSalle

In September 2024, we welcomed staff members of the Nottingham branch of Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) to one of our green spaces - Denefields Meadows in Matlock, Derbyshire.

Here the team removed meadow clippings, which is vital for soil fertility and to ensure good future growth. Other tasks included filling out stone steps which had started to disintegrate and were becoming a hazard.

The team weren't put off by the drizzle and got stuck in, resulting in a job well done and smiles all around!

Watch JLL's volunteering day out





We are so grateful to everyone who has supported us this year - volunteers, partners, and Trustees.

Every minute of time volunteered, every pound of funding, and every effort goes towards fulfilling our Mission. Special thanks to our funders:

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- Ashfield District Council
- Austin & Hope Pilkington Trust
- Bassetlaw CVS
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Belper Town Council
- Bolsover CVS
- British Gas Warmer Homes
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Cadent Foundation
- Cemex
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities via The Growth Company
- Derbyshire County Council
- Duffield Parish Council
- Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Community and Family Learning - Nottingham City Council
- Electrical Safety Fund
- Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme
- Gedling Borough Council
- Groundwork CLM
- Groundwork East
- Groundwork Greater Manchester
- Groundwork West Midlands
- Heanor & Loscoe Town Council
- Intelligent Health
- Jones 1986 Charitable Trust
- Lady Hind Trust
- Leicester Community Links CIC
- Matlock Town Council
- National Energy Action Centre for Sustainable Energy - Energy Affordability Fund
- Nottingham City Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council
- Shakespeare Martineau
- Tesco Stronger Starts
- The Energy Saving Trust
- The National Forest Company
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Groundwork Five Counties
Executive Director: Penny Halewood
07850 503125
penny.halewood@groundwork.org.uk

www.groundwork.org.uk/fivecounties

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