IMPACT REPORT

2025/26



GROUNDWORK FIVE COUNTIES

GROUNDWORK
FIVE COUNTIES

Foreword - Board of Trustees

Real impact for local communities and the environment, that's what Groundwork Five Counties is all about.

We are proud to be part of such a significant organisation, which celebrated its 35th anniversary this year.

We have gone from humble beginnings as a Nottingham-based grassroots charity standing up for the environment, to an East Midlands-wide charity with an extensive range of programmes and services.

We always look towards the future, and we are eager to see what comes next. In the meantime, please enjoy this Impact Report for 2025/26, which has been a year that we are very proud of.

Jonathan Mace and Sarah Clarke, Co-chairs of the Board







Foreword - Executive Director

Looking back on the past year, I feel enormously grateful for everything our staff, volunteers and partners have made possible.

Building on the commitment and hard work that came before, we have continued to strengthen relationships, grow confidence, and create positive change across our communities.

At the heart of our work is a simple aim: to help people feel more secure, more connected to one another and to local green spaces, and better equipped for a fairer, more sustainable future.

Inside this report, you will find examples of what that looks like in practice, from greener, better used spaces to practical support for households navigating difficult times. Together, these stories speak to the resilience of local people and the difference timely, compassionate support can make.

I am deeply proud of what we have achieved together this year, and I look ahead with real encouragement as we continue this work.

Penny Halewood, Executive Director



About Us

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

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

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

We are part of the Federation of Groundwork Trusts, and we work closely together to support our communities and involve local decision-makers and national government.

Our projects are wide-ranging and include financial and community resilience programmes, green skills and pathways into work, outdoor events for the whole family to enjoy, and many more community-first services.

Everything we do aims to inspire people to become better guardians of the planet and look after our environment - together.

PEOPLE | PLACE | PLANET

Our Mission and Objectives

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

1. People

Enable people and communities to thrive, live comfortably and build resilience

By empowering individuals to reduce poverty and inequality, improve health, wellbeing and confidence, support warm, safe and affordable homes, and strengthen individual and community resilience, so people are better prepared for risk, crisis and emergency situations.



2. Place

Support community led nature recovery in local places

By empowering communities to take stewardship of local green spaces, protect and restore habitats, support wildlife and biodiversity, and build the skills, partnerships and confidence needed for long-term custodianship and climate resilience.



3. Planet

Cultivate green skills for a fair and sustainable future

By creating accessible routes into green skills, training, volunteering and employment, supporting a just transition to a low-carbon economy, and enabling people to play an active role in protecting the planet.



2025/26: Our Year in Numbers



5,102 people

supported across
all our projects



231 people

supported into work,
education or training



367 volunteers

helped us to look after green spaces, giving us **1,651 hours**, valued at **£20,990**



4,125 people

supported by our Green Doctor
energy efficiency experts



£729,612

total domestic
utility bill savings



1,492,099 kg

of CO2 equivalent saved
= driving 4,418,853 miles



36 organisations

supported and made
more resilient



415,964 m²

of landscape restored
= 58 football fields



Photo credit: Broxtowe Borough Council

1 Enable people and communities to thrive, live comfortably and build resilience

Green Doctor

With the ongoing cost of living crisis and no sign of energy costs going down, our Green Doctor energy experts have been more in demand than ever.

During our fully funded 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







Derby City Council Partnership

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

This year our Green Doctors have been working with Derby City Council as part of their **Home Energy Advice Service**, alongside other great charities and organisations.

Councillor Sarah Chambers, Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Public Safety, said: “Rising energy costs continue to put pressure on households across Derby, and we know that many residents are worried about keeping their homes warm.

“This service is making a real difference by providing practical, personalised advice that helps people reduce their bills, improve comfort at home, and lower their carbon emissions. It’s about giving residents the knowledge and support they need to take control of their energy use.”

Damp & Disrepair

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

Awaab's Law took effect in October 2025 and requires social housing landlords to action reported health hazards in 24 hours.

During our visits we take damp meter readings and conduct thorough inspections of the whole home to ensure there are no immediate dangers.

We give tenants a voice and provide landlords with the chance to fix problems. We follow up two months later to ensure our advice has been put into practice and requested repairs have taken place.

The result is improved mental and physical wellbeing, and healthier, more comfortable homes.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/damp-disrepair

- **427 properties** inspected in 2025/26
- **2,001 rooms** found with damp, mould, or disrepair

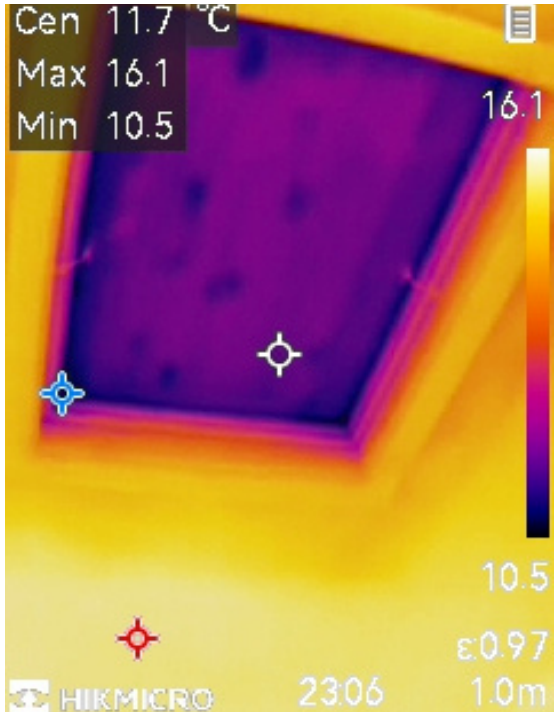












Healthy Homes Analysis

Expanding on our Damp & Disrepair service, we provided in-depth analysis to selected households with persistent damp or mould.

We placed small sensors in affected rooms for two weeks, tracking humidity, ventilation, and temperatures hour-to-hour. We could identify exactly what was happening, pinpoint the when and where, and provide bespoke advice evidenced by data.

We used a thermal camera to visually explain identified issues to the household, so they could easily see cold spots and how quickly they can be resolved by adequate heating.

We could also demonstrate why a particular area was getting mouldy, such as an uninsulated loft hatch which was always considerably colder than surrounding areas.

These findings were included in the Damp & Disrepair reports for each property, allowing the landlord to take action on repairs.

- **111 households** supported
- **93%** had some disrepair issues
- **69%** had visible mould, **25%** had damp but no visible mould,
- **74%** of households have either had their issues resolved or are awaiting repairs

“Without the Green Doctor, I would be another veteran on the streets.”

Disabled veteran David was incorrectly billed £4,500 by his energy supplier, which had him on the brink of homelessness.

When Green Doctor Kirsty reviewed his paperwork, she realised that he had been receiving the gas bill for the whole caravan site - not just his own home. Together they rang the supplier, and within 15 minutes David’s undue debt was wiped, credit was put onto his account, and his bill was set to be just £20 a month.

David says: “Without the Green Doctor I would have been another veteran on the streets. The relief is unbelievable, I can finally see a future again. I am also hundreds of pounds better off every month as Kirsty told me to apply for benefits I wasn't aware of. I can’t thank her enough."





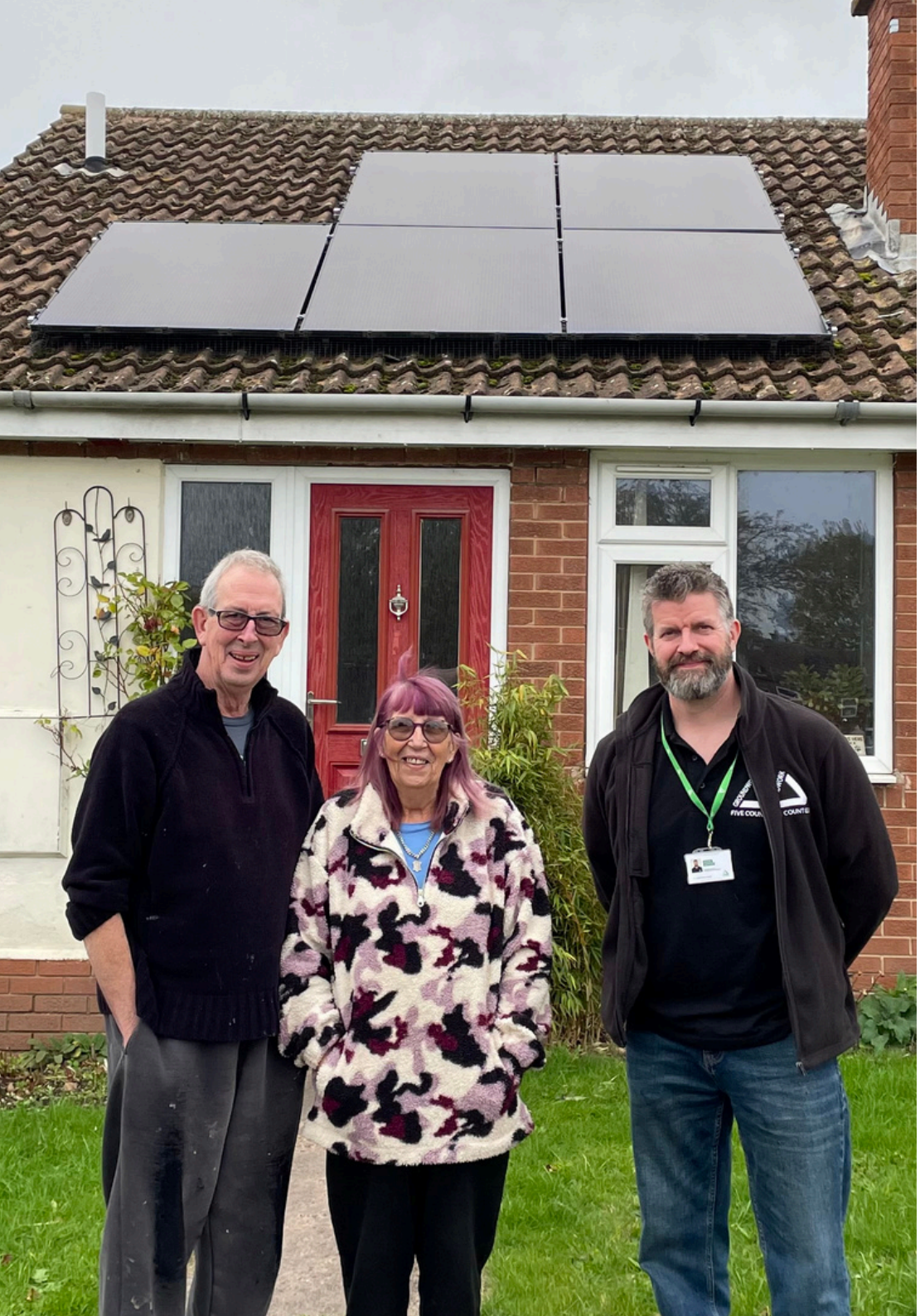
“I’m no longer ashamed of my home.”

Michelle reported a strong smell of mould in her kitchen to her landlord, Bassetlaw District Council, who we work with through our Damp & Disrepair service.

Green Doctor Debbie visited Michelle and found mould had built up behind her kitchen cupboards. Debbie gave mould prevention advice and provided the council with a full report of her findings.

The council’s repair team discovered the mould was caused by leaking bathroom tiles on the other side of the wall, which was resolved with a three stage anti-fungal wash and a replacement of the bathroom wall.

Michelle says: “I’m so relieved and no longer ashamed of my home. Hidden mould is awful, you can smell it, but you can’t get rid of it yourself. I’m pleased this service exists so tenants can get help from the landlord when problems come up that are not our fault.”



Retrofit Support

More households are having new technologies fitted, but many are struggling to use them in a way that's most beneficial to them and the environment.

To empower these households, we provided post-retrofit installation advice, with particular focus on people over 65 and those with health conditions.

Many reported limited or no instruction during installation, resulting in inefficient use which can be detrimental to them financially, create damp and mould, or negatively affect their health and wellbeing.

We advised on how to efficiently use retrofit installations including solar PV, heat pumps, and external/internal insulation. We filled in knowledge gaps and advised on behaviours and income maximisation through energy payback schemes.

- **102 households** supported through post retrofit installation advice
- **£18,052 saved** if our advice is followed
- **100%** recommend a visit and **92%** feel a visit prior to installation would have been beneficial

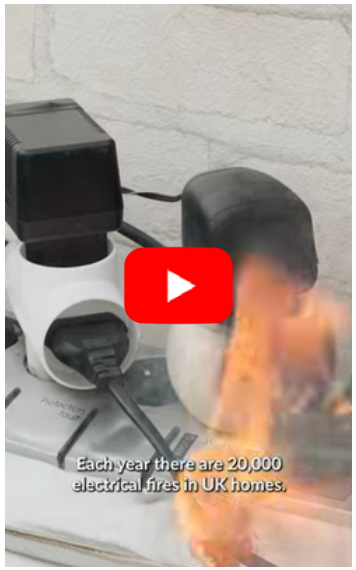
Electrical Safety

Our electrical safety advice service was expanded this year, as fires in the home are on the rise.

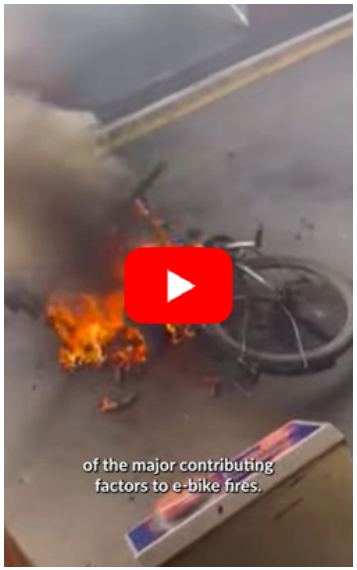
We created an in-depth advice brochure and a series of videos to raise awareness of this growing problem. Topics included electric bikes/scooters, portable heaters, shopping safely for electrical products, and general safety advice for the home.

During Green Doctor visits we highlighted risks like overloaded sockets, unsafe appliance use, and hazards in kitchens and bathrooms. We also appeared on multiple radio stations to talk about how to stay safe and avoid common mistakes.

Watch the videos below or download our electrical safety brochure:
www.groundwork.org.uk/electrical-safety-leaflet



Electrical safety at home



E-bikes, e-scooters and portable heaters



Shopping safely online for electronics



Community Resilience

This year we introduced Risk Ready Communities, a community resilience programme to help people identify risks, be better prepared, and recover faster from emergencies.

It prepares and empowers communities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for risks like flooding, extreme weather, loss of utilities, and other issues on the Community Risk Register.

We provide people with knowledge and practical actions through free resources, online and in-person workshops, and local events. We provide support with Community Response Plans, which can make a huge difference to emergency response and recovery.

This programme is in partnership with the Local Resilience Forum and Communities Prepared (a Groundwork South programme).

Find out more:
www.llrresilienceforum.org.uk/risk-ready-communities





Water Literacy

Water is often undervalued because of its apparent abundance, but in reality water is scarce, with serious environmental impacts.

We delivered accredited Water Literacy courses, aimed at businesses, organisations and community groups to gain a better understanding of how we use, waste, and should protect water.

We provided attendees with vital knowledge to inspire them to lead peers, support their communities, and influence their industry to consciously adopt a sustainable water-use approach.

This programme was in collaboration with Waterwise, Ofwat, and Northumbrian Water.

- **211 people** signed up with **110 accreditation** certificates awarded



How we helped man with a brain injury set up his own business

Matt from Swadlincote wanted to set up a gardening business but was facing major challenges with an inability to read or write due to a brain injury, as well as low confidence.

Employment Coach Claire helped Matt every step of the way, from filling in legal paperwork and finding ways to work efficiently around his disabilities, to setting up his business social media and finding customers.

We also provided funding to purchase vital equipment for his business such as a towbar and a mobile phone so Matt can take work calls.

Matt says: "Claire helped me from beginning to end. Without her, I could not have done this and I am so grateful."

Beyond Barriers

After 2.5 years, our successful Beyond Barriers employability programme in South Derbyshire has come to an end.

We supported economically inactive adults up to 66 years of age, providing one-to-one coaching to address their challenges to bring them closer and into work.

We helped them to set achievable goals and overcome a range of barriers such as poor physical or mental health, digital exclusion, and low confidence.

Many participants had poor social skills that held them back. To encourage social interaction and build confidence, we facilitated group workshops around topics like CV writing and interview preparation.

Our discretionary grant funding was used to improve the chance of success by paying for training courses and vital items.

- **201 people** supported through personal development plans
- Over **50 people** found paid work

Grant Funding

For decades we have facilitated the distribution of grant funding to deserving local causes in the East Midlands.

Tesco Stronger Starts
One of our biggest success stories is the Tesco Stronger Starts grant, for which we have been managing applications since 2015.

From applying to deciding who receives the funding by voting with blue tokens in-store, this grant is fully community-led.

Since 2015, we helped Tesco to distribute **£6,619,418 to local causes.**

This grant scheme has recently been relaunched as the Tesco Fruit & Veg grant, supporting schools, charities and organisations to improve access to healthy food for children and young people.

Find out more:
www.tescoplc.com/fruit-and-veg-grants





Comic Relief Community Fund
We worked with Comic Relief as an intermediary funder to grassroots community organisations that support people living in, or at risk of, poverty or hardship.

Grants of up to £5,000 for grassroots, community-led organisations annual income less than £250,000.

Whether help is needed with staff wages, materials, equipment, rent or training – this fund is flexible to meet individual organisation needs.

We ran the grant panel with local community representatives to identify the most deserving projects and allocate funding.

> **22 local applications** with **10 successful projects**

> **£59,998** distributed locally



2 Support community led nature recovery in local places

Habitat Management

Looking after green spaces is the 'groundwork' of what we do and this year we have continued to manage nature reserves, parks, woods, and other sites around the East Midlands.

We create open, easily accessible areas that offer increased biodiversity for everyone to enjoy and the wildlife to thrive in.

Our team's specialised knowledge of local flora and fauna helps to achieve the best possible outcomes for each space, and we are supported by enthusiastic volunteers.

From busy community spaces such as as Snipe Park Wood in Harworth & Bircotes to remote locations in the High Peak, our team are busy every working day!

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-habitat

- **415,964 m² of land improved** - over 58 football fields
- **107 new wildlife habitats** created
- **169 biodiversity improvements** made
- Supported by **367 local volunteers**













Hedgerow Heroes

The UK is reported to have lost up to 50% of hedgerows since WW2, more than the length of our country's entire road system.

Hedgerows are vital assets to our landscape, providing food and shelter for wildlife, increasing biodiversity, preventing soil erosion, and they are crucial in our battle against climate change.

In collaboration with countryside charity CPRE, we delivered dozens of volunteering days to plant new hedge whips in Derbyshire. We also hosted four hedgelaying training days, ensuring this centuries-old countryside craft is not lost.

We were joined by enthusiastic locals, from school children to professionals on a team outing and retired nature-lovers.

- **155 volunteers** took part
- **11,393 native hedges** planted
- **13 green spaces** improved
- **2,400 meters** of new hedgerow planted
- **200 meters** of hedgerow restored through hedgelaying

Outdoor events

Every year we host dozens of outdoor events for people of all ages, such as guided walks in green spaces.

During these walks, we educate visitors on points of interest which are often overlooked. Themes include birds, butterflies, amphibians, damselflies, fungi, wildflowers, and other topics.

Since 2002 we have hosted Autumn Footprints, a walking festival in the Amber Valley region of Derbyshire. This year we organised 24 walks to showcase local heritage, natural history and wildlife, led by local volunteers.

Our events always 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

> **495 participants** across our outdoor events

> **123 attendees** to our Autumn Footprints walking festival





Children Outdoors

According to research, only 27% of children regularly play outside near their homes and some areas have 900 children per playground.

We deliver children's outdoor activities such as Get Into Nature and Wellies in the Woods, encouraging families to enjoy nature and find out how fun playing outside can be.

From scavenger hunts and crafts with natural materials, these small group activities help to boost children's development in areas such as communication skills, sharing, resilience, and emotional, social wellbeing - the foundations of future success and happiness.

This is a safe and inclusive environment that welcomes everyone and embraces families with mild to moderate additional needs including learning needs, autism, ADHD, processing, communication needs, and more.

Weekly sessions run for multiple months in safe local green spaces, which helps attendees to grow in confidence, connection, and wellbeing.

Find out more:
twww.groundwork.org.uk/wellies-national

- **105 children and adults** took part in 2025/26
- **8-week sessions** in **3 outdoor spaces**
- "My little girl is now **more confident** around other children, and has **more patience and focus** at story time and **waiting** her turn."
- "Tom has got a new **interest in nature** and wants to know what everything is called so we've been doing **bird research** and putting different foods out to get variety in the garden."





Cheapside Community Hub

Our flagship community hub in Worksop opened in 2024, and is going from strength to strength.

This year we have welcomed local people through a range of events including Wellies in the Woods, a bird box building workshop, two family bushcraft sessions, and seasonal events to carve spooky pumpkins and create festive wreaths.

We have built a shed which provides storage and shelter so we can host events during adverse weather, and we are working hard to implement other infrastructure.

We have a lot of ambitious plans to turn the Hub into a thriving community space, with constant activity and exciting opportunities for the local residents.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/cheapside

- **156 bookings** for all Cheapside Hub events
- Including **89 children**
- The location for **2 Team Days** for our staff to improve and enjoy the site



3 Cultivate green skills for a fair and sustainable future

Student Employability

We are supporting North Notts College students with on-the-job work experience in a deprived neighbourhood in Worksop.

Students from bricklaying and joinery courses are working on a wide range of tasks including repairing brickwork, building new fencing, garden gates and replacing pergolas, alongside other improvements that benefit the community.

Their work experience gives them an advantage when they graduate, and their skills improve throughout their 45-day placement. They also learn vital soft skills that employers value, such as timekeeping and following instructions.

This project started in summer 2025 and is ongoing. It is part of Bassetlaw District Council's 'Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy'. This is a fantastic example of how collaborative working can lift up a whole community.







"I'm very proud of what I've achieved so far."

When we meet Ellie, a first-year T Level student, she is hard at work mixing mortar and repairing damaged brick walls.

She says: "Many of the walls here have exploded bricks or were smashed by vandals. We remove the damaged bricks, replace them, and patch everything back up. All these small changes make a big difference.

"The people living here have been really nice, we've had lots of compliments on our work and said it's looking much better, which is great to hear.

"I'm the only girl on site, but that doesn't bother me. I love getting my hands dirty! I grew up with the trade and I always felt it's something I could do as well. I work hard, put the effort in, and I'm proud of what I've achieved so far."

Little Walled Garden Hub

Our second community hub is located in Nottingham, which has been the location of green skills courses for local people who are unemployed, working part-time, or are on a low income.

These two-day courses focused on DIY and gardening and were delivered in small groups to help people build up confidence and get personalised support.

The DIY section included building garden beds, fencing, sheds and other small structures, along with minor repairs around the Hub. Gardening tasks and knowledge included soil preparation, composting, seed planting, organic pest control, crop rotation, and much more.

These courses were part of a two-year project, which came to an end in July 2025.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/little-walled-garden

- **107 learners** supported in 2025/26
- **229 learners** supported throughout project



Green Skill Workshops

We host a range of workshops around the region to help people gain new skills and explore whether the green sector is right for them... or to simply have fun and learn something new!

From teaching participants how to make bird boxes to learning how to coppice, during these workshops our team share their skills and knowledge with eager learners.

Some events are aimed at adults and are more employability-focused, with our new 10-week Green Ranger courses opening doors into the industry. Other events are for the whole family, so that even very young children can participate in and bring a creation home. One thing they have in common is lots of smiles and a sense of achievement at the end.

> **428 bookings** across **22 events**

> Including **175 bookings** for just **3 festive wreath** making events







Volunteering

Our fantastic volunteers make what we do possible. We are lucky to have regular volunteers that are happy to help us all year round, no matter the weather.

We work with local residents and existing organisations such as “Friends of” groups. This way we get a good understanding of the site’s activity, needs, and future plans.

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

The result is 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.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-volunteer

- **376 volunteers** supported us in 2025/26
- **1,651 hours** of volunteer time
- Valued at **£20,990**







A Visit from Natalie Fleet MP

Last summer we welcomed Natalie Fleet, Member of Parliament for Bolsover, to one of our regular volunteering morning at the Archaeological Way in Shirebrook, Bolsover.

Natalie started her lustrous career as a volunteer and is keen for people to understand the role that volunteering has in the trajectory of people's working lives, as well as the positive impact it has on the community.

She got a tour of the site and an overview of the work that our Environment Trainer Charles and his group of regular volunteers do. Every other week they come together to maintain and improve the area for the benefit of visitors, wildlife and biodiversity.

We are pleased to have the support of local and national government, and greatly appreciate Natalie's visit.



Watch a video of Natalie Fleet's visit

We were recently developed a Social Value Policy for Broxtowe Borough Council to help achieve greater local community impacts from its public procurement of goods and services.

The Council wished to focus their principles on employment and training opportunities for hard to reach and access group, in line with their Recruitment Policy and Housing Strategy.

We proposed a flexible framework designed around several key pillars to focus the Council's efforts to create tangible, measurable outcomes that reflect their vision.

Our Executive Director Penny Halewood and Programmes Director Darryl Plummer hosted a full-day training session for key stakeholders across the Council, highlighting the importance of Social Value and gaining insights into what tangible outcomes could look like for each department and local communities.

We drafted a detailed Social Value Policy, outlining clear objectives and measurable targets for maximum local impact. This informed the final adopted policy, leading to tangible social value requirements for capital asset tenders and further advancements in social value commitments.





Social Value

Social value is not just a nice-to-have for businesses, it should be an integral part of strategy and culture to invest in the local community where they live and work.

Whether it's spending on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units, embedding social value into company policy or introducing projects that promote health and wellbeing, we support organisations to explore and achieve.

By introducing meaningful change from the top, businesses can pro-actively make a difference and give back to their local community. It's a holistic approach to success, where financial returns are balanced with social impact.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-social-value

Corporate Volunteering

We facilitate corporate volunteering days around the East Midlands, welcoming organisations of all sizes to get stuck in and make tangible improvements in their environment.

From major national partnerships to one-off employee volunteering events, we work flexibly with businesses to understand their needs and budget to provide them with the best team outing.

It is a chance for staff to be away from their daily routine, get to know each other better by working on a common goal, be active outdoors, and do something special for their community.

We are flexible and can accommodate different group sizes, interests, needs, budgets, and locations.

Earlier this year we welcomed staff from the Nottingham branch of B&Q to our Little Walled Garden Hub. They helped us to clear debris, build benches, a frame for a shelter, level the ground and lay a sleeper bed pathway.

Find out more:
www.groundwork.org.uk/gwfc-corporate







We are so grateful to everyone who supports us, including our volunteers, funders, and partners. Special thanks to:

- Amber Valley Borough Council
- B&Q Nottingham
- Bassetlaw CVS
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Bolsover CVS
- British Gas
- British Red Cross
- Broxtowe Borough Council
- Cadent Foundation
- Comic Relief
- CPRE Derbyshire
- Derbyshire County Council
- Duffield Parish Council / Duffield Millennium Trust
- Education and Skills Funding Agency - Community & Family Learning (Nottingham City Council)
- Electrical Safety First
- Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme
- Groundwork East
- Groundwork Greater Manchester
- Groundwork South
- Groundwork UK
- Groundwork Yorkshire
- Heanor & Loscoe Town Council
- LARA (Local Authority Retrofit Accelerator)
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Resilience Forum
- Leicestershire County Council
- Matlock Town Council
- National Energy Action Centre for Sustainable Energy
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Nottingham Growing Network
- Royal London - Naturally Connected
- RRN Group
- South Derbyshire District Council
- Stearn Electric Co Limited
- Tesco Stronger Starts
- The Energy Saving Trust
- The Gray Trust
- The Jones 1986 Charitable Trust
- The Lady Hind Trust
- The Linder Foundation
- The National Forest Company
- Westville Group

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

www.groundwork.org.uk/fivecounties

Charity registration number: 1003426