

Case Study: Blossom Together 2023-24



Green Communities is an exciting, Plymouth-based partnership project which is shaping neighbourhoods in Devonport, Central Park, Keyham and the West of the City.

We have written a series of case studies to highlight the breadth of work taking place with these nature neighbourhoods. You can read these case studies at greenmindsplymouth.com/greenhubs

Overview

Green Communities was invited to join in the National Trust's national Blossom Festival celebrations by co-designing and promoting the festival through a series of Blossom-linked activities. These activities took place with local communities across the Green Communities neighbourhoods, involving approximately 250 people. Plymouth then hosted the world premiere of LYR/Simon Armitage's Blossomise poetry at the Market Hall building in Devonport, inviting all participants to the celebration.

What were we trying to do?

- To promote nature connection between communities and encourage links to their own nature spaces
- To engage communities in blossom and springtime through different nature connection and creative/cultural activities.



"This is stunning, I had no idea this was here, it's small but it's beautiful. It's been lovely to reconnect with some people and meet new ones" - participant in a Blossom Walk at Blackie Woods

LEFT: A Blossom Walk event around Blackie Woods in the west of the city

Why did we do it?

Building on Plymouth City Council's experience of delivering on National Trust Blossom events, we were invited by the National Trust to join them in celebrating the Blossom Festival. Our involvement was predominantly around using our existing knowledge and community connections in Devonport and the West of The City to promote Nature Connection and improve Health and Wellbeing.

Who was involved?

The project was very much a partnership effort, including both regional and national partners. We worked closely with the National Trust national Blossom team, National Trust Saltram and Cotehele teams, Real Ideas Organisation, Zebra Collective, Devon Wildlife Trust, Food Plymouth, Incredible Edible, and Fotonow.

A broad range of community organisations participated in the Blossom Together programme, from youth groups to community run cafés, green community groups to sports groups. Specifically, the following organisations were involved: The Village Hub, Argyle Community Trust, the Men's Shed, Keyham Green Places, Devonport Live, Meadow Café, Green Devonport Partnership, Compassionate Café, Central Park Allotments, Mount Wise Youth Group



ABOVE: The digital gallery of Plymouth's Green Heroes at Real Ideas Market Hall immersive dome.



Who funded it?

£5,000 of funding came from the National Trust national Blossom team. Additional, in-kind funding came from PCC staff time at approximately £2500 cost.

Where did it happen?

Sixteen events took place across all 3 neighbourhoods, and culminated in a celebratory evening event at Market Hall, Devonport. These events ranged from foraging walks to poetry and wellbeing workshops, blossom walks to birdwatching.

What did we do?

- Plymouth hosted the world premiere of LYR/Simon Armitage's Blossomise music and poetry collection at Market Hall, Devonport, on 20 April.
- Green Communities co-ordinated 16 spring/blossom inspired events across our 3 neighbourhoods to promote nature connection and spring celebration. These events ranged from blossom walks to craft sessions, poetry and wellbeing events to foraging walks!
- We arranged for Fotonow to attend a selection of these events and photograph some of Plymouth's Green Heroes for a physical and digital exhibition which was showcased at the celebration event on 20 April.
- We signposted the National Trust team to local choirs, helped to co-ordinate some elements of the Blossom event, and organised our own community celebration event, prior to the main evening event.
- We ran an interactive evaluation activity, accumulating seed paper petals for people to write their response to: 'What does spring in Plymouth mean to you'. These petals were scattered over the audience during the final song.
- We ran poetry workshops in our neighbourhoods, and the resulting poems were read prior to Simon Armitage's performance.

What were the results?

Over 500 people attended Blossom events and we hosted 16 events across the 3 neighbourhoods

Key Learnings

- Uniting the Green Communities team under one campaign was a really positive focus for our work between winter and spring, and during the team's initial months.
- Communities enjoy being exposed to new experiences- be that foraging, walking somewhere new, or trying their hand at a creative activity. Having someone help to facilitate these new activities helps to create a safe, comfortable space needed when trying something new. These activities easily complement nature connectedness.
- Communities enjoyed seeing themselves reflected in the larger event through the Green Heroes exhibition- a national event with a hyper local appreciation
- The National Trust event on 20 April was seen by some to be daunting, or not necessarily for them, hence the preceding smaller community celebrations with peers (and free food!). It would have been good to have some tickets available for community members who changed their mind after the community event so that they could then go to the larger event.
- The brief was really broad, which worked for us, given the breadth of activities we offer, but perhaps a tighter brief would have been better for smaller organisations, or those who are newer to creative projects such as this.



Next steps

- Plymouth City Council's Green Communities, in partnership with the National Trust Cotehele property, have been awarded funding for a 2024-25 Blossom engagement programme.
- Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest have also provided match funding towards the programme.
- The 24-25 programme will answer demand, generated by the 2024 programme, for more creative engagement activities across the 3 Green Communities neighbourhoods. For instance, Devonport Live café have requested another poetry workshop.
- The 24-25 programme will include green skills sharing sessions in which rangers can teach people about different ways of caring for nature and enhancing green space.
- We are hoping to explore a long term Blossom programme with partners.

“Lovely, peaceful time with beautiful people who care about their local community, nature and word weaving” - participant in a poetry and wellbeing workshop at Blockhouse Park



ABOVE: Blossom crafts made at Central Park Meadow Café with the Compassionate Café participants