

Case Study: Marlborough Street Planters Devonport



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

Marlborough Street is a small commercial centre in Devonport with local shops and a small carpark. It has 6 large permanent planters down the centre of the pedestrian street. The Plymouth City Council owned planters had become neglected with low levels of biodiversity.

The Green Communities team, working closely with the Green Devonport Partnership (a local network of individuals and organisations who aim to improve their local green spaces), decided to focus on this as a joint project. Green Communities consulted with the community, hosted workshops on local biodiversity, co-designing and co-delivering planting and engagement sessions. The planters are now filled with more native, colourful and sensory plants that are great for pollinators. Through active citizenship, the planters project has reached new audiences, created community cohesion, and reactivated the space for local people.

What were we trying to do?

Marlborough Street planters was one of the first projects that Green Communities was involved in in Devonport. Community Builders took the idea to the Green Devonport Partnership with support from local Councillors, having been something identified by local people as a priority.

The project allowed us to focus on the 3 key themes of the GC Project (Nature Recovery, Nature Connection & improved Health and Wellbeing) in a relatively simple but effective way.

Through a co-creation, co design and co delivery process we:

- Increased community connections/cohesion through nature-based activities.
- Created community ownership and increased people's sense of place and identity.
- Increased local biodiversity.
- Developed greens skills and increased access to nature.
- Promoted nature connectedness with new audiences.

LEFT: Local residents carry out the planting in the Marlborough Street planters, Devonport.

Who was involved?

17 different stakeholders engaged in the project, from social enterprises to charities, shops to housing associations. Below is a full list of stakeholders:

- Green Devonport Partnership
- National Trust
- Real Ideas Organisation
- Zebra Collective
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- Local community members
- Shop owners and stakeholders
- Plymouth City Council
- Community Builders
- Local Housing Associations including Plymouth Community Homes
- Local Councillors
- Hamoaze House
- Friends of Devonport Park
- Salvation Army
- Food Plymouth.

Who funded it?

All plants and tools were sourced and provided by Green Communities through local grants. Project management was through the Green Communities team, with support, promotion, and coordination by Zebra Collective via the Green Devonport Partnership, and as part of Nature Neighbourhoods Programme.



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When and where did it happen?

The focus of this project was to increase biodiversity in the Marlborough Street planters, adopting a hyper-local approach to local nature recovery strategy, alongside the community with a bottom-up approach through community consultation and action days.

Supported by Community Builders, we carried out consultation throughout November 2023 and continued until March 2024. Community consultation took place with shop owners and street users and with the Green Devonport Partnership and residents of Marlborough House in the Marlborough House community room. The 2 community planting days took place on Saturday mornings in April 2024.

What did we do?

- Recognised and actioned local priorities for improved Greenspace.
- Identified key stakeholders and consulted with community groups about their views and ideas for the planters.
- Co-designed possible planting schemes with the community, explaining about urban nature recovery and biodiversity net gain.
- Focused on a bottom-up grass roots approach.



LEFT: Community Builder, Lianne, at a Marlborough Street planters event



What were the results?

- The planters now form part of a green corridor that will connect the northern and southern ends of the neighbourhood: Devonport Park to Mount Wise Park.
- Created new connections with local people and local stakeholders. For example, the turn out for the events was fantastic, not only due to the number of people, but the mix of different stakeholders that wouldn't normally work together or cross paths, such as local Councillors, members of the Life House, local schools, and residents
- Built trust between community groups, local organisations, and local authority
- Allowed conversations to happen across the community and an increase in attendance to the Green Devonport Partnership.

How successful was it?

- **The project connected with 102 people, from 17 organisations in 6 months.**
- We planted **384 pollinator friendly plants** in 6 separate planters.
- Awarded **10 nature guardian digital badges**
- Developed **green skills** within the community and educated people about urban nature recovery.
- Created a **legacy of community champions** who have taken ownership over the planters.
- Working with Plymouth City Council gardening teams has further **developed relationships internally** and with community members.
- Having seen the Marlborough Street planters, other community groups in Devonport are now improving their own planters – Green Communities recently advised on the restoration of planters with Morice Town Family Hub.



“Keep up the good work, it looks so much better now, it's made such a difference”

-Marlborough Street shop owner

ABOVE: Community member, Rowena, getting stuck into clearing the planters.

Key learnings

- The importance of existing social hubs such as Devonport Live and Marlborough House Community room in allowing relationships and networking to happen.
- Taking time to do consultation and make connections with the community.
- Grass roots knowledge & importance of ripple effect.
- Importance of relationship with PCC gardeners and involvement of NT and Devon Wildlife Trust.
- Learning on what plants worked well, hardy bug friendly plants such as broom and mint to instant satisfaction.

Next steps

- Work with residents and stakeholders to provide long term maintenance including community watering and community weeding, supported by rangers.
- Support and encourage local shop keepers who have taken ownership of the planters.
- Mapping for interactive walks.
- Promote “The Marlborough Street B-line”.
- Use learning to deliver similar projects in other areas.



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LEFT: The community and the Green Communities Devonport team look over their hard work at the Marlborough Street Planters

