

Case Study: Central Park Composting Project



Green Communities is an exciting, Plymouth-based partnership project which is shaping nature 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

In 2021, the Council teamed up with Generous Earth as a part of the Green Minds project and the Central Park improvements scheme. This was to create a permaculture design for Zoo Field as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

PCC planted an orchard and carried out many other ecological improvements, however, the plans for a composting site were put on hold due to the end of both projects in Summer 2023.

In Autumn 2023 Generous Earth reached out to the Green Communities team regarding the closure of Café Abundance, which left multiple composting Ridans as well as other essential equipment available for purchase.

The Green Communities project assisted Generous Earth in securing funding through Hubbub grants and community fundraisers to get the composting site up and running. We are now running monthly volunteer sessions at the site as a collaboration project.

What were we trying to do?

- Establish sustainable food waste management within the park, taking waste from the on-site cafes and composting it for use in the park by the community.
- Create volunteering opportunities including involvement of local education groups to upskill the community.
- Develop a project in Central Park that can run independently from project funding to ensure its longevity.
- Create community growing space separate from an allotment to tackle food scarcity.

LEFT: A composting volunteering session at Zoo Field, Central Park

Why did we do it?

- Tackling food waste and promoting nature recovery
- Promoting health and wellbeing and nature connectedness amongst participants
- Creating volunteering and upskilling opportunities
- Continuing the permaculture design in Zoo Field that is listed in Plymouth's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Who was involved?

This project is a testament to cross-partner working and involved the below organisations:-

- Plymouth City Council
- The National Trust
- Generous Earth / Food Plymouth
- Starbucks (Hubbub funding)
- Café Abundance CIC (provided the Ridans)

Who funded it?

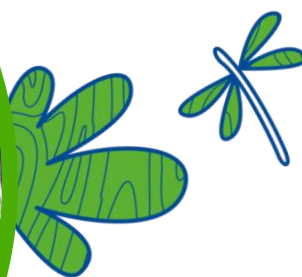
Generous Earth with the assistance of grant funding from Starbucks through their Hubbub funding. Generous Earth also gained extra funding, to help support the project, through community fundraising.

When/where did it happen?

In Zoo Field at Central Park, Plymouth. The project was conceived in 2021 and reached fruition in 2023. There are ongoing volunteer events on the third Thursday of every month.

What did we do?

- Assistance with funding applications
- Community engagement and communications regarding the project
- Secured waste exemption and permission for use of the site
- Collection of the Ridans from Millbrook and set up of the composting site
- Management and engagement of volunteers
- Liaising with Central Park cafés to organise café waste being delivered to site
- Creation of a Zoo Field site management plan



LEFT: Delivery and assembly of composting equipment at Central Park

What were the results?

- Monthly volunteering sessions established at Central Park
- Composting Ridans in place and possibly an extension of the project in the other 2 Green Communities areas in Devonport and Keyham
- Continuation of the Zoo Field permaculture design
- Setting an example that it is possible to sustainably use food waste in the city on a larger scale.

How successful was it?

- We have established regular returning volunteers, sustainable use of the park's resources, and an opportunity for local people and young people to get involved.
- Over the first 6 months of the project, we have engaged with 50+ people.
- These sessions are attended by a diverse number of groups including, but not limited to; Argyle Community Trust's alternative provision students who helped with initial site set up, our regular volunteers who joined through social media and the Generous Earth fundraiser, University of Plymouth student volunteers, and a group of refugees from a project called Roots To Wellness who helped with moving the Ridans and harvesting our first grown food product from the site of over 30 pumpkins!
- We have made our first loads of compost by sieving the broken-down wood chip (and we have more on the way from the Ridans). We have used this to plant a variety of food plants on the site which includes, pumpkins, tomatoes, kale, lettuce, and a variety of herbs and forageable plants.



Key learnings?

- Ensure that timescales and budgets are aligned ahead of carrying out project activities
- Ensure the correct waste exemption has been filed for and that it is in date.
- Ensuring the site is kept clean, and precautions are put in place regarding pests.

Next steps?

- Continued development of the site and reviewing the project in 6 months
- Creating community growing beds
- Setting up similar projects in Keyham and Devonport and taking learnings from Central Park to ensure the set up runs smoothly.

RIGHT: Adding food waste to the composting Ridan

