Case Study:
Central Park Golf Course Planting Scheme

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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 https://greencommunitiesplymouth.com/green-communities-case-studies



Overview

The owners of the Central Park Golf Course approached Green Communities about wanting to 'shape the golf course with nature.' They were enthusiastic about nature recovery but didn't yet have the means of making their vision a reality.

Initial ideas for a landscape plan were developed with a Green Minds apprentice in 2022, helping the site owners in their gardening at the site. From 2023, Green Communities further supported Central Park Golf to realise their vision of a golf course shaped by nature.

We collaborated with Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) to create a flagship project on the site. We worked together to create a full planting scheme on the course that helps both improve the course itself, while also increasing biodiversity on the site.

We then worked with the local community to design, plant, and care for the newly planted trees and hedges around the course. Over the last couple of years, over 1000 trees have been planted along with an edible hedge for community foraging, as well as the expansion of wildlife meadow areas. There are also new signs and picnic benches around the course, and we continue to work alongside Central Park Golf to support improvements and engagement.

What were we trying to do?

- Nature recovery and tree planting as part of Plymouth's Plan for Trees
- Facilitating the aspirations of the community at Central Park Golf who lacked the time and resources to carry out the environmental improvements they envisioned
- Increasing engagement by improving one of Central Park's major attractions
- Collaboration with other nature projects and working closely with PSDCF.

Why did we do it?

This project aligned with the following strategic aims:
- Nature recovery
- Health and wellbeing
- Climate action

We wanted to help empower and facilitate positive ecological improvements that the course owners wanted to carry out, but prior to our partnership, had lacked the resources to do so.

Who was involved?

Involved in the design process and the project as a whole:

Green Communities (PCC and the National Trust)
Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest
Central Park Golf
Central Park community members including dog walkers and other site users
PCC Street Services team

In addition to community members, these groups were also involved in the planting and aftercare:
Plymouth Tree People
Montpellier Primary School's Eco Warriors
University of Plymouth Student led volunteers
Improving Lives 'Active for All' group.



Who funded it?

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (through their funding from the Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs- 'Nature for Climate' fund)

When/where did it happen?

Throughout the Central Park Pitch and Putt golf course. Planting took place between January and March 2025. The project was completed in spring 2025.

What did we do?

We co-created a landscape design for the Central Park Pitch and Putt golf course, aiming to shape the course with nature, improve biodiversity, and create a space that is good for health and wellbeing.

Throughout the process, we consulted both the golf course owners, as well as the local community, ensuring they were involved in the scheme. We asked for input on the design, what trees they would like to be planted, and held a month-long consultation with an online survey to ensure anyone who wanted to have their say had the opportunity to do so. The form was sent out to over 900 people via the Central Park Newsletter, and posters were put up in the park and on social media.

We also involved key groups in the planting itself, hosting nine planting events. Six of these events were open community days that anyone could book on to for free, and three were for specific groups we work alongside including Improving Lives, University of Plymouth students, and children from Montpellier Primary's Eco Warrior group.

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What were the results?

Engagement figures:-

- Open community planting days: 70
- Select group planting days: 29
- Meadow sowing sessions: 8
- Google Form consultation responses: 25
- In person community/ stakeholder consultation: 56
- **Total number of community members involved in the project: 188**

Planting scheme:-

- Planted over 1000 trees including over 70 metres of edible hedgerow
- Sown over 1000 square metres of wildlife meadow
- Installed two new interpretation signs showing the golf course itself as well as the new planting and the location of the edible hedgerow
- Installed five new benches around the area

How successful was it?

The project was a huge success with a lot of positive feedback. Together with community organisations and members, we managed to increase the amount of biodiversity around the course which was previously, comparatively empty of nature.

Alongside the ecological benefits, the planting naturally leads you around the golf course without needing a map. This has fixed an ongoing issue on the course with people getting 'lost' or walking to the wrong fairway while playing.

Our involvement of local dog walkers in the park has also been beneficial as we have been able to create safer routes and areas for them to sit that won't interrupt people using the course.

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Key learnings?

A varied approach to collecting surveys was needed, not just digital surveys. We found that working with people in person and meeting them at the area we were working in was particularly successful. Being in the area of the proposed changes meant that people were better able to envisage the changes.

Tree planting is popular, and people are able to plant trees faster than anticipated. We had 20 people per session with each session being 2 hours long. These events were fully booked in advance with many passers-by and unexpected attendees also getting involved. As a result, we regularly needed more trees and amended the way events were run so we didn't run out of tree planting activities.

The local community are passionate about tree planting and all our events sold out. Running several community events over different days lengthened out the tree planting process and was vital in giving the opportunity to involve more people in improving the city's nature spaces.

Next steps?

We are continuing to involve the community in the golf course scheme with plans to host a number of tree care and identification events there over the next three years while the trees are still young.



