

## Prudential Grass Roots

Supporting communities to improve their local environment



### CASE STUDY

## Phoenix Park, Wolverhampton

The Prudential Grass Roots project at Phoenix Park, Blakenhall has revitalised a piece of waste land, transforming it into a nature trail to bring a valuable, much-needed resource for schools and the local community.

BTCV, working in partnership with community group Friends of Phoenix Park, and the Mander Centre, has worked with local volunteers to make Phoenix Park a cleaner, greener and safer environment where wildlife flourishes. The nature trail provides school children with access to an 'outdoor classroom' and is used for a broad range of National Curriculum studies.

Phoenix Park has become the focus for achieving wider social goals amongst the community, tackling social exclusion and encouraging local people to value their environment.

*"Open spaces are an enormous asset to any urban community, but if neglected, they invite crime and anti-social behaviour. This project challenges that behaviour and helps build a sense of ownership and confidence in the community."*

TONY MUSTON CHAIR OF THE FRIENDS OF PHOENIX PARK GROUP

Prudential Grass Roots was launched in 2001. It is run by BTCV, the UK's leading practical conservation charity, and funded by Prudential plc.

The programme is helping to drive regeneration for people and wildlife in communities around shopping centres and business parks throughout the UK, owned by Prudential plc and managed by Prudential Property Investment Managers Ltd.



**PRUDENTIAL**

# Identifying the need

## Phoenix Park, Wolverhampton

Situated just over a mile from the Prudential-owned Mander Shopping Centre, Phoenix Park has experienced high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour resulting in a high turnover of residents. Local people, tired of constant drug abuse and vandalism, have taken action and set up a Friends of Phoenix Park community group to tackle the problems affecting their community and their environment.

BTCV and Prudential believe that long-term sustainable environmental benefits will be best achieved when people take practical action to improve their own community spaces. Phoenix Park is an excellent example of how projects such as Grass Roots can use nature conservation to empower the community and provide a common bond between different cultures and ages.

Extending far beyond practical environmental benefits, this project will:

- Improve community safety and give children a safe place to play
- Enhance community pride and ownership and combat vandalism and crime
- Create a long-term educational and health resource
- Stimulate economic regeneration and social inclusion

## Taking Practical Action

Friends of Phoenix Park and local residents have worked with BTCV to organise a range of practical activities which have engaged the whole community. Hundreds of volunteers have taken part and have been committed to improving the site so that everyone can enjoy it.

Activities have been designed so that every generation has the opportunity to take part. Activities have included:

- Clearing the site of fly-tipped rubbish
- Organising regular litter pick-up groups
- Practical conservation tasks such as bulb and wildflower planting
- Ground preparation and tree planting during National Tree Week
- Creating a nature trail for local schools and the community
- Organising BTCV Green Gym® activity days
- Running special free accredited training days on footpath construction.



## Key population statistics

	Blakenhall	National
% with no qualifications	40.4%	29.1%
% who are unemployed	7.3%	*4.7%
% with a limiting long-term illness	22.0%	18.2%
% population classed as Asian and Asian British	50.3%	4.6%
% population classed as White	39%	90.9%

Ethnic makeup of population of Blakenhall/Parkfields:  
34.5 % Christian, 14% Hindu, 2.4 % Muslim, 29% Sikh

Key Statistics (Office of National Statistics 2003 and \*2004)

# Inspiring people, improving places

## Phoenix Park, Wolverhampton



**“The Mander Centre is at the heart of Wolverhampton and we have always played a significant part in the life of the city. The Grass Roots project at Phoenix Park is a natural extension of this and we are delighted to have been part of this amazing transformation.”**

GRAHAM EVANS, CENTRE MANAGER,  
MANDER SHOPPING CENTRE

**“By supporting people to improve their immediate surroundings, we have built a greater sense of community, ownership and confidence. We hope that our project will inspire other communities to be empowered by what we have achieved.”**

NICK HINTON, BTCV PROJECT OFFICER

Listening to people to find out what they want for their community is vital if we are to build long-term support. Developing a community-based management plan is an essential part of any Grass Roots project and provides a framework for local people to work within, giving them confidence to continue to maintain their newly created green spaces by themselves.

## Encouraging social inclusion

Today, Phoenix Park is a safe and welcoming amenity for all the community to enjoy. Blakenhall's high proportion of Asian residents have been heavily involved in the project's development and have brought together local primary school children, youths, families and elderly residents, all of whom will benefit from this urban oasis.

## Enhancing Community Pride

The image of Phoenix Park has changed forever and there has been a marked reduction in vandalism and anti-social behaviour. This has been achieved through the dedication of local people who have worked hard to turn disaffection into positive practical action. The community now has a real sense of ownership and confidence in an area which now provides a rich resource for all in the community.

## Creating long-term health benefits

The park provides a much needed space for outdoor games and recreation in a community which shows evidence of poor health. With the introduction of the national 'Walk your Way to Health' scheme in 2002, the newly created pathway attracts walkers from all ages and backgrounds and can also be accessed by wheelchair users.

## Creating an 'outdoor classroom'

Phoenix Park now presents opportunities for people to learn about biodiversity, and for school children the nature trails have become a popular and creative learning tool. A joint project between Believe to Achieve, BTCV and children from affiliated schools has been developed to raise awareness of Phoenix Park as an important green space in an urban environment and for the park to be used for science and environmental work.

# Building sustainable communities

## Phoenix Park, Wolverhampton

*"The quality of public space really does matter to people. It also sends out powerful messages about the state of the community."*

(CABE, 2003)

## Long-term benefits

The Phoenix Park project has been a great success story. By working with local volunteers to improve this site, BTCV and The Mander Centre are promoting new partnerships and building much-needed cross community links. The lessons learned from Phoenix Park have been shared in order to establish new community projects in the local area.

100 volunteers and 500 children have been involved in constructing the nature trail

52 members of the local community have had a chance to learn new skills

5 schools now use the park as educational resource

24 park events took place for the community

System of evaluation established to assess project's impact on the quality of life

15 corporate volunteering days were provided for employees of the Mander Centre.

Press coverage equivalent to £2,800 in advertising costs

Local and regional visibility for Grass Roots programme, the Mander Centre and Prudential plc through media coverage reaching a minimum of 278,500 people over one month



## Project costs

Prudential's generous contribution of £10,000 to the project has provided valuable materials to construct footpaths and nature trails throughout the park. BTCV has provided core support, expertise and staff time to assist the community to carry out the work. Support from Prudential Grass Roots has helped lever additional grants to create a lasting resource for the whole community to enjoy.

## Project Partners

BTCV • Prudential plc • Mander Shopping Centre • Shell Better Britain – provided financial help to install nature trails and run workshops in the local schools • Groundwork Black Country – provided a development worker to work within the community and assist in fundraising • Wolverhampton City Council – provided resources and specialist advice • New Deal for Communities – funded a walking tracks project and installed 60 new safety lights • Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust – provided Landfill tax monies • Local community residents of All Saints, Blakenhall and Parkfield donated £10,000 worth of volunteer time.

## Contact us

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