

# Natural Neighbours

Norfolk's community biodiversity conference



Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, Knights Hill Hotel, King's Lynn

## Post-Conference Report

This event was organised by BTCV on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and funded by the Gaywood Valley Project, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, Geoffrey Watling Charity and The Paul Bassham Charitable Trust.



**Norfolk** County Council



## **1. Introduction**

The idea for 'Natural Neighbours' arose from discussions within the 'Communities and Nature' Topic Group of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership about implementing the Partnership's communications action plan.

The event was first held in 2009 and was so successful that a repeat event was organised for 2011. The primary objective of the conference was to provide a way to celebrate and recognise community groups' environmental achievements and the contribution that they are making to the biodiversity agenda for Norfolk, with a secondary aim of attracting attention and helping bring the priorities and targets to a wider audience and encourage them to take appropriate actions in their locality.

It was hoped that this would lead to a better informed and strengthened community biodiversity sector in the county that is networked, resourced and engaged with the BAP process. The Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership was thus also able to find out what is being done 'out there'.

The first conference feedback overwhelmingly supported the production of an accessible county wide directory of biodiversity projects. This would enable potential volunteers to find their nearest group, and groups to network amongst each other. It would also enable the Biodiversity Partnership, and other organisations to disseminate and collect information eg about what needs there are in this sector, as well as promoting forthcoming training courses, events and grants. It was hoped to launch the Community Projects Directory at this second conference, but while BTCV had completed the data collection work, the loading onto the NBP website had been delayed and so missed this event.

## **2. Publicity**

Generally, the main promotion tool was targeted emailed fliers and invitations. A press release was sent out to local North Norfolk newspapers. Fliers/invitations were sent by email to:

- Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
- BTCV community group network
- Norfolk Biodiversity Award winners
- Delegates who attended the first Natural Neighbours event.
- Parish Councils
- Borough Council Environment & Regeneration Committee and other "VIP"s

Postal invitations were sent to groups not on email. A press release was sent to EDP, Radio Norfolk, BBC Look East and King's Lynn News.

### 3. Programme



See Annex 1. The day was a combination of presentations and workshops. Eight presentations were from community groups. From the feedback, the well targeted talks were helpful and interesting and the format of the day was generally well received. The workshops were rated 'excellent' by many, the comments asking for more

time in workshops for discussion, and again more time after each talk for Q and A sessions. The information provided in them was rated 'new' and 'relevant'.

The most popular presentations were the 'Our project' contributors who were, by general agreement, greatly inspiring. They were given a specific brief which they kept to by and large. Having a short slot was an advantage as it encouraged reticent speakers, avoided too much detail and left the audience wanting more.



Gemma Cousins' presentation on the 'Gaywood Valley Project' was also popular, giving the audience an interactive 'fly' over the valley by way of Google maps imaging.

## **4. Workshops**

Delegates were offered a choice of five workshop topics. We chose the four most popular to run on the day and because of the spread of choices almost everyone got their first or second choice. The workshops were run in an hour slot before lunch, with each delegate attending one workshop each.

The workshop leaders worked very hard in advance to cover a wide range of issues within their topics, giving the groups a chance to interact and share ideas. Feedback was very positive and left people wanting more.

Here are the main issues covered in the workshops:

**‘Surveys’:** David North (Norfolk Wildlife Trust) and Martin Horlock (NBIS)

- How to record wildlife
- The use of keeping records
- The information required for records and where it is stored (Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service)
- What to do with your data after it has been collected
- Where to get help and advice on surveying (organisations/Norfolk Wildlife Trust)

**‘Community Woodland’:** Jason Kidman (Norfolk County Council)

- What is a community?
- Public and community ‘needs’ when creating a woodland
- Who to engage? Specific groups of people or holistic approach?
- Why create a community woodland?
- Ideal spaces to plant a woodland
- How to implement and propose the beginnings of a community wood?
- Barriers to creating a community woodland and ways around them

**‘Volunteer Recruitment’:** Mark Webster (BTCV Green Flag For Communities)

- Recruitment tactics
- Using activities and events to attract a diversity of volunteers
- Good leadership practice – encouragement, friendliness
- Bad leadership practice – negativity, ingratitude
- Importance of Pre- and Post- task behaviour towards new volunteers

**‘River Life’:** Carl Sayer (River Glaven Conservation Group)

- Introduction to river life
- Important conservation species

- Threats to lowland river life ecology
- What can we do to help?
- Good management practice

## **5. Attendance**

There were 43 delegates, including volunteers and speakers. Twenty-eight community groups were represented and there were 15 exhibitors. We were pleased with the number of delegates willing to have a display, making the information market diverse and interesting. Total numbers attending the conference were lower than target, although this did not affect the aims of the day. The low numbers may have been due to the location, a shorter lead in time than last time, the £10.00 charge, and/or a clash of dates with the Narborough wildlife event.

The small booking fee charge of £10 led to a 0% no show rate - an improvement on the previous event.

Invitations were sent out to local councillors who serve on the Environment and Regeneration Committee. Cllr Lori Allen [Green Party] attended the event.

## **6. Evaluation of Feedback**



Venue:  
 100% found the location easily  
 100% found the conference venue  
 satisfactory  
 91% thought the lunch  
 arrangements satisfactory  
 Comments: More vegan provisions

97% thought the prior organisation was satisfactory  
 100% thought the organisation on the day was  
 satisfactory  
 Comments: No public transport

94% found the information market useful (6% found it  
 adequate)  
 94% found the pace about right (3% too fast, 3% too  
 slow)



65% said the event met their needs fully (35% partly)

Comments: Individual contacts would have been useful at the information market.

### **Comments on content/presentation of conference**

Generally very **positive**: (e.g. workshops were good, lots of new information, excellent, good format, well targeted talks, helpful, interesting.

A few **negative**: microphone poor, uneven level of presentation (due to technical difficulties), more time needed for q and a after talks, more time needed for workshops, more workshops, more discussion required in workshops.

**Likes**: Meeting others with similar interests, group presentations informative, diverse range of talks, diversity of approaches and revisits, opportunity to network, discussions on global and green issues, structure of talks and workshops good, good balance between formal presentations and networking, lunch.

**Dislikes**: No afternoon tea break, shorter lunch could fit more into the day, more activity and interactive workshops, more discussion, talks were in the 'graveyard' slot – swap them to the morning and run more active workshops in the afternoon.

**Similar event next year? Yes**: 24 (71% of returned forms) **Every 2 years/occasionally**: 5 (15% of returned forms) **No comment**: 5 (15% returned forms).



**Possible topics**: Value and management of heathland, creating dipping platforms, wildflower meadows, encouraging volunteers, pond management, coastal and marine protection, work planning, solutions to funding problems, woodland management.

**Other comments**: Longer talks from local groups, promotion of traditional woodcraft, making the conference open to members of the public, updates on group progress.

## **8. Recommendations**

In summary, Natural Neighbours was very successful, and this is best demonstrated by a 100 percent response (from those who gave feedback) in favour of having an annual or once every two year event. Different topics (such as pond management or work planning) would be covered, although the nature of the whole event would be similar.

Based upon analysis of the evaluation feedback received, there are some recommendations to be made if the event were to take place again. Whilst the response was overwhelmingly positive, there were some issues with certain aspects of the day. Some people commented that whilst the aim of Natural Neighbours was a day for communities to share ideas, there was not enough time to discuss the ideas after presentations and during workshops.



There was an almost unanimous consensus that the community project presentations were highly interesting and informative; and the workshops were highly popular, although more time should have been devoted to these with opportunity to be involved in more than just one topic. Finally, there were some comments that the afternoon talks would have been better received if they were presented during the morning, with the workshops taking the afternoon slot.

## Appendix 1 – Delegates

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Group/Organisation</b>
Sarah	Abercrombie	Norfolk County Council
Lori	Allen	Cllr The Green Party
Stuart	Andrew	Norwich Community Green Gym
Andrew	Bickerton	Great Massingham Parish Council
Jackie	Bircham	Chedgrave Parish Council
Rachel	Bolt	Conference Administrator
Pamela	Bond	Aylsham Wildlife Society
Richard	Brown	Heacham Parish council
Brendan	Chester-Kadwell	Draituna Trees
Pat	Chester-Kadwell	Draituna Trees
Gemma	Cousins	Gaywood Valley Project
Carla	Davis	Green Flag for Communities [BTCV]
Fin	Duncan	North Norfolk Workout project
Tony	Escritt	Aylsham Wildlife Society
Francis	Farrow	Sheringham Loke
Geoff	Fletcher	Fakenham Area Conservation Team
Catherine	Foreman	Natural England
Chrissie	Gooda	Norwich Community Green Gym
David	Gosling	North Norfolk Community Woodland
Chrissie	Gooda	Norwich Community Green Gym
Martin	Horlock	Norfolk Biodiversity Information service
Jason	Kidman	Norfolk County Council
Rowena	Langston	Little Ouse headwaters project
Prue	Lester	Upwell Parish Council
Rick	Morrish	Hardings Pit
Debbie	Murray	Conference helper [BTCV]
David	North	NWT
Marya	Parker	Conference Organiser [BTCV]
Scott	Perkin	Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
Mark	Pogmore	Boughton Fen
Philip	Poll	West Norfolk Conservation volunteers
Sonia	Reveley	Natural England
Tom	Roberts	Conference helper [BTCV]
Carl	Sayer	River Glaven Conservation Group
Ian	Shepherd	River Glaven Conservation Group
Edward	Simmons	Friends of Thetford Forest
Mark	Smith	Conference helper [BTCV]
Michael	Sutton-Croft	Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative
Roger	Turff	Hardings Pit
Mark	Webster	North Norfolk Workout Project
Duncan	Westlake	South Repps Common
Tracey	White	Fakenham Area Conservation Team
Chris	Yardley	Fakenham Area Conservation Team

## Appendix 2 – The Programme

<b>9.30</b>	Coffee & registration	
<b>10.00</b>	Welcome & Aims of the Day, Keynote: <b>The Future is in our Hands</b>	Marya Parker
<b>10.15</b>	<b>The Gaywood Valley Project</b> – The innovative new three year project to improve the usage of the valley by enhancing green spaces, making the area more accessible and increasing awareness	Gemma Cousins
<b>10.40</b>	Coffee	
<b>11.00</b>	<b>Our Project</b> – presentations from 4 community groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>River Glaven Group</b></li> <li>2. <b>Draituna Trees</b></li> <li>3. <b>Sheringham Loke Rivercare</b></li> <li>4. <b>Little Ouse Headwaters</b></li> </ol>	Carl Sayer, Ian Shepherd Brendan Chester-Kadwell Francis Farrow Rowena Langston
<b>12.00</b>	Workshop* session  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>River life</b>, led by Carl Sayer</li> <li>• <b>Surveys</b>, led by David North &amp; Martin Horlock</li> <li>• <b>Recruiting &amp; keeping volunteers</b>, led by Mark Webster</li> <li>• <b>Creating a Community Wood</b>, led by Jason Kidman</li> </ul>	
<b>1.00</b>	Lunch & information market	
<b>2.15</b>	<b>Our Project</b> – presentations from 4 community groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Norwich Community Green Gym</b></li> <li>2. <b>Fakenham Area Conservation Team</b></li> <li>3. <b>Hardings Pit</b></li> <li>4. <b>Southrepps Common</b></li> </ol>	Stuart Andrew, Chrissie Gooda Geoff Fletcher  Richard Morrish John Dowland
<b>3.15</b>	<b>Space Invaders</b> – Norfolk Non-Native Invasive Species Initiative	Mike Sutton-Croft

<b>3.40</b>	<b>Green Flag for Communities, BTCV</b>	Carla Davis
<b>4.00</b>	<b>Summing Up and Next Steps</b>	Marya Parker
<b>4.15</b>	Close	

