



Community Green Grants Impact Report



West Midlands
Combined Authority



Greener
Together

Contents

Introduction	3	Environmental benefit	35
Background to the grants programme	4	Economic benefit	41
Purpose of this impact report	6		
Funded projects	7	Interpretation of findings	51
		Recommendations	55
Methodology	12		
		Case studies	58
Project impact	14		
Findings	20		
Access to green spaces	21		
Community engagement and wellbeing	29		





Introduction

Introduction

Background to the grants programme

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) delivered the Community Green Grants (CGG) programme between 2021 and 2024, awarding grants to community groups to:

- Increase or improve green spaces close to where people live.
- Connect people to nature, specifically communities with higher levels of multiple deprivation.
- Enhance the local environment (e.g. tree planting, increasing biodiversity).

The WMCA launched the funding programme following the Covid pandemic, which showed people how important it is that we all have the opportunity to spend time in green spaces near our homes. This was supported by research commissioned by the WMCA, and carried out by New Economics Foundation (NEF) Consulting, to investigate the intersection between green space access and social inequity in the West Midlands, and to develop an approach to targeting interventions. The Community Green Grant programme was a recommendation from that report.



The Froglife Trust

“ The funding programme showed people how important it is that we all have the opportunity to spend time in green spaces near our homes. ”

Grant essentials

The CGG programme funded 27 projects across the West Midlands.

Most projects ran for one year.

The total grant funding for the projects was £678,581.

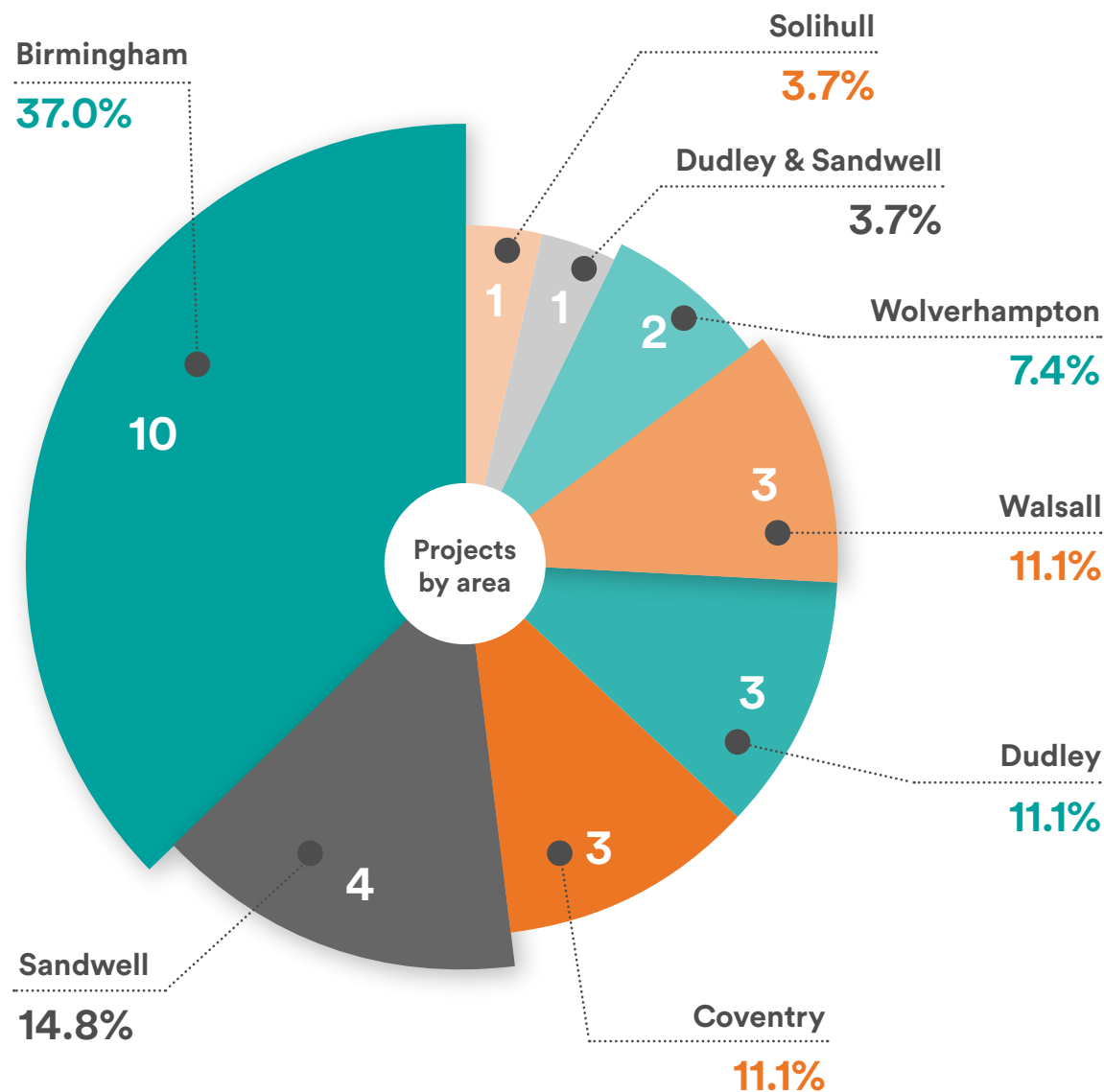


Figure 1: Breakdown of projects by area

Purpose of this impact report

This report is the first comprehensive evaluation covering the full programme period.

The objectives of this report are to:

1 Measure community engagement and wellbeing: to analyse how the grants have increased community engagement, accessibility of green spaces, volunteer participation, and improved social outcomes through involvement in green space projects. This was the main objective in running the CGG scheme.

2 Evaluate the environmental improvements: those made by the funded projects, including the creation or enhancement of green spaces, and increases in habitat and biodiversity.

3 Evaluate economic and social value: to quantify the economic and social benefits generated by the programme, such as employment, skills development, and improvements in physical wellbeing.

4 Assess value for money: to provide a value for money analysis, determining the efficiency and effectiveness of the funds distributed. This includes calculating the net present social value (NPSV) of the programme.

5 Provide recommendations for future programmes: Based on the findings, the report offers practical recommendations for enhancing the impact of future green grants programmes, addressing any challenges identified during the evaluation.



Froglife Trust

Funded projects



Love your River Stour

Table 1: Summary of all 27 funded projects

Organisation	Project	Project description	Grant amount
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	The project transformed unused tarmacked areas at All Saints Community Campus into green spaces, including a pocket park, family playground, urban greening, and a wildlife pond. It now offers habitats like a pond and bird boxes. The playground is now a space for children and families to connect with nature.	£20,206.00
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	An unused car park was transformed into a community garden for residents, college users and the Hindu Temple, providing all-day public access. The garden features wildlife habitats, like ponds, and hosts workshops to engage the community, enhancing green space and biodiversity.	£25,515.20
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	Building on the ‘Love Your River Stour’ project, this initiative restored 3.5 hectares of ancient woodland, enhanced 8 hectares of plantation and woodland, and rejuvenated 2 kilometres of river in the Lye and Cradley Heath area. The project improved the woodland and river habitats and improved access for residents.	£99,990.00
Caldmore Village Festival	Let’s Meet at the Garden, Walsall	The project increased access to green space and established the garden as a place of nature education for the community. Improvements to the garden include efforts to increase biodiversity through a new ‘boggy area’ and collaborating with the Bat Conservation Trust to increase the local bat population.	£17,692.00
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	10 acres of retreating wetland, a series of dried-up ponds and acid grassland that was receding due to invading species were restored at Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens, improving biodiversity and increasing community engagement.	£22,937.00
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	A derelict and unused space was transformed into an allotment plot to expand the existing DIYYA gardening schemes, which provides support for disadvantaged women and families through weekly gardening clubs, opportunities to grow their own produce and learn about nature and biodiversity.	£25,000.00
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	The project transformed two unused allotment plots into a therapeutic and sensory community garden to provide a green space that will improve wellbeing and mental health for the local community, particularly those with mobility challenges. The garden serves as a venue for social prescribing, community events, and workshops.	£23,307.90

Table 1: Summary of all 27 funded projects

Organisation	Project	Project description	Grant amount
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes community allotment garden, Sandwell	The project expanded a community allotment behind Smethwick High Street, offering isolated refugees and asylum seekers access to green space and community agriculture. It also converted unused green spaces into a biodiversity garden and additional areas for sustainable cultivation.	£24,739.63
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	This project is one of three accessible green spaces in Coventry created (Foleshill, Herbert Art Gallery, and Kairos Women's Centre). A community garden was created in each of these three sites to improve access to green space, with a community co-created urban garden area.	£25,000.00
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	The project restored water habitats and improved safe access while preserving the ancient woodland. Pond restoration involved desilting, habitat-strengthening planting, as well as ensuring that the local community has increased access to the pond and woodland.	£24,700.00
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	The project transformed a disused playground area into a Wildlife and Wellbeing Area. Twice a week clubs run to encourage community use and educate people on food, gardening and environment issues.	£8,494.50
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees Project, Birmingham	The project transformed a neglected area of Brookvale Park into a green space for the community. It offered training in horticulture and conservation for young people aged 16-25, providing work experience and the chance to earn accredited qualifications to support future green jobs and apprenticeships.	£19,344.00
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	Unused allotment plots were transformed into a wildlife pond and wildflower meadow, with the site made fully accessible for those with limited mobility. Volunteers run a programme for local groups, including the elderly and young people with special educational needs (SEND), to access nature.	£7,200.00
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	An unused plot was transformed into a community garden for local residents, families in temporary accommodation, and children with special educational needs (SEND). It offers increased green space access and a welcoming environment for the community to spend time outdoors and participate in gardening and activities.	£18,628.00

Table 1: Summary of all 27 funded projects

Organisation	Project	Project description	Grant amount
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	The transformation of an unused green space around the Reaside Community Centre into a community garden for the Northfield Stroke Club and other local community groups. The garden supports rehabilitation and enhances wildlife and biodiversity.	£11,175.00
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	The new pocket park developed a green space for relaxation, social interaction, and engagement with nature. It was developed with active involvement from local residents, including nursery children who participated in planting, gaining educational insights into gardening and nature.	£18,650.00
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	The project opens up access to Cotwall End Nature Reserve. Volunteers from the local community worked together to clear paths of obstacles and overgrown foliage, deliver path and environmental improvements and provide new signage. The project increases accessibility and creates a community connection to the area.	£24,549.00
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	This project restored a pond, which was at risk of becoming overgrown and lost. Focus was on improving the pond as a habitat in part through survey work, allowing the creation of a long-term maintenance plan. The pond is available for the wider community as a place to enjoy and for schools to visit as an educational experience.	£17,200.00
Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation	Time to Grow, Sandwell	The project converted an underused car park into an accessible community garden, maintained by volunteers from Sandwell's African Caribbean community impacted by mental illness. It offers a space for the community to connect with nature, stay active, engage socially, and make better use of their local green environment.	£15,588.00
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	The project transformed an underutilised space near the entrance of Sandwell General Hospital into a sensory garden for hospital patients, staff, and the local community. It increases connections to nature and supported the growth of biodiversity with habitat creation.	£20,189.00
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	The transformation of an area of unused land at the rear of the church into a flourishing community garden, with the installation of a wildflower area, composting area and raised beds. The garden is now a community space for schools, children's groups, a dementia café, and users of a local food bank.	£10,099.00

Table 1: Summary of all 27 funded projects

Organisation	Project	Project description	Grant amount
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	The project opened 2 acres of previously inaccessible park fields and woodland pathways, making the Ten Acres area accessible for commuting, exercise, and leisure. It also enhanced the habitat by removing invasive species, planting an orchard, and monitoring wildlife.	£16,050.00
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library Community Garden with Community Seed Swap, Birmingham	A space behind the library was converted into a community garden. The garden provides a community space for food growing and wildlife habitats. The project also included guided walks in the local area and a 'seed library' where local residents can access free seeds to support planting at home.	£14,631.30
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	The project expanded the successful Bearwood Community Allotments with a second plot and additions to the first, providing a free green space for local people, schools, and mental health support groups while boosting biodiversity.	£23,977.00
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	The project restored two ponds and added two more in Reedswood Park to boost the amphibian population and create wildlife corridors in West Walsall. A community sculpture creation programme engaged local schools and community groups.	£68,718.00
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	This partnership between the University of Birmingham and the Environment Agency has re-naturalised a 1km stretch of the River Cole, enhancing wetland habitats and biodiversity. It established a living lab, improving access to the area while offering education, community engagement, volunteering, and citizen science opportunities.	£50,000.00
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	The project transformed underused land around Witton Lakes Eco Hub, including creating a butterfly garden, bee garden, hibernaculum, and raised beds for wheelchair users. Nature craft workshops offered local people opportunities to create wildlife habitats and access green space.	£25,000.00



Methodology

Methodology

This report employs a combination of the following methods:

1

Document review and literature analysis:

Project reports, funding applications, and panel scoring were analysed to understand the intentions and documented progress of each project. This also involved a review of relevant literature on green space impact to inform the model development and the broader context of our evaluation.

2

Quantitative data analysis:

We reviewed project-level data on beneficiaries, green space improvements, volunteering, employment, training and biodiversity enhancements.

3

Qualitative data gathering:

To capture the more nuanced effects of the projects, we conducted interviews with project leaders, allowing for in-depth exploration of community engagement, challenges faced, and suggestions for future improvements.

A series of economic models were developed from the above. They were used to assess individual overall economic and social returns of the CGG programme laid out in the findings section of this report.

A full explanation of all methodologies employed is provided in Appendix A.



Impact

£4.12

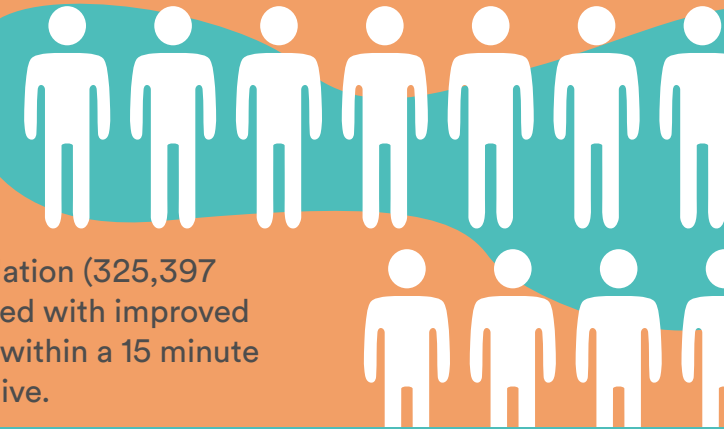
£1

For every £1 grant funding, projects returned on average £4.12 in net economic, social and environmental benefit to the WMCA area.

325,397 people

11%

of the WMCA population (325,397 people) were provided with improved green space access within a 15 minute walk of where they live.



64,764 m2

of habitat was created or improved through project delivery.



61%

of project budgets were spent locally within the WMCA area.



7

FTE jobs created.

JOB



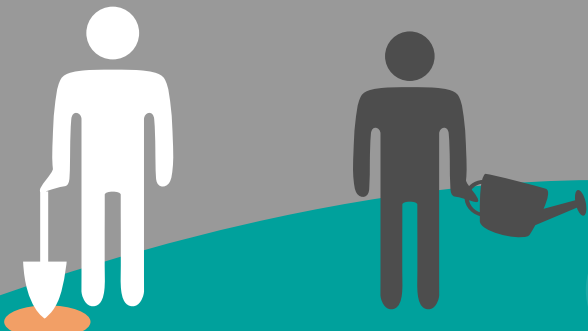
1,563

hours of training was delivered.



148

new weekly hours of community volunteering.



Project impact summary

Table 2: Access to green space, environmental, community, wellbeing and economic impact measures for each of the projects

Organisation	Project	Total grant awarded	Residents living within 15 min. walk	Recreation value	Carbon saving value	New weekly volunteer hours	Volunteer value	Training hours	Training value	Health cost savings	Employment value	Net Present Social Value
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	£20,206	8,852	£96,959	-	-	-	-	-	£436	£12,711	£76,753
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	£25,515	10,150	£1,176	-	3	£10,935	-	-	£474	-	-£13,404
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	£99,990	27,258	£187,704	£869	4	£14,580	40	£3800	£1,580	£61,800	£106,693
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	£17,692	18,992	£124,178	-	-	-	3	£285	£4,740	£6,300	£106,771
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	£22,937	7,105	£100,982	-	4	£14,580	-	-	£9,480	£12,887	£92,625
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	£25,000	4,553	£9,097	-	7	£25,515	34	£3230	£3,666	£11,476	£12,842
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	£23,308	9,752	£7,058	-	4	£14,580	-	-	£2,844	£4,589	-£1,670



Access to green spaces



Environmental benefits



Community engagement and wellbeing



Economic impact

Project impact summary

Table 2: Access to green space, environmental, community, wellbeing and economic impact measures for each of the projects

Organisation	Project	Total grant awarded	Residents living within 15 min. walk	Recreation value	Carbon saving value	New weekly volunteer hours	Volunteer value	Training hours	Training value	Health cost savings	Employment value	Net Present Social Value
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes community allotment garden, Sandwell	£24,739	23,100	£137,340	-	20	£72,900	-	-	-	-	£185,501
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	£25,000	47,437	£139,696	-	2.5	£9,113	-	-	£6,320	£21,100	£123,809
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	£24,700	11,638	£113,369	-	7	£25,515	-	-	£6,320	-	£114,185
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	£8,495	10,373	£7,843	£45	6	£21,870	-	-	£3,160	£6,267	£21,263
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees Project, Birmingham	£19,344	6,176	£102,770	-	-	-	1,280	£121,600	£316	£15,624	£205,026
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	£7,200	6,460	£107,604	-	-	-	-	-	£1,580	-	£100,404
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	£18,628	11,667	£161,185	-	2	£7,290	60	£5,700	£1,580	£17,160	£155,547



Access to green spaces



Environmental benefits



Community engagement and wellbeing



Economic impact

Project impact summary

Table 2: Access to green space, environmental, community, wellbeing and economic impact measures for each of the projects

Organisation	Project	Total grant awarded	Residents living within 15 min. walk	Recreation value	Carbon saving value	New weekly volunteer hours	Volunteer value	Training hours	Training value	Health cost savings	Employment value	Net Present Social Value
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	£11,175	5,358	£392	-	4	£14,580	-	-	£158	£5,700	£3,797
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	£18,650	3,814	£91,159	-	40	£145,800	4	£380	£1,580	£13,450	£218,689
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	£24,549	7,670	£64,543	-	4	£14,580	-	-	-	-	£54,574
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	£17,200	378	£79,754	-	9	£32,805	-	-	-	-	£95,359
Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation	Time to Grow, Sandwell	£15,588	11,603	£87,050	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	£71,462
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	£20,189	9,391	£11,764	-	3.5	£12,758	-	-	£4,740	£13,660	£4,332
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	£10,099	9,594	£11,764	-	-	-	-	-	£4,740	£576	£1,665
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	£16,050	12,782	£117,946	-	6	£21,870	-	-	£632	£16,625	£123,766



Access to green spaces



Environmental benefits



Community engagement and wellbeing



Economic impact

Project impact summary

Table 2: Access to green space, environmental, community, wellbeing and economic impact measures for each of the projects

Organisation	Project	Total grant awarded	Residents living within 15 min. walk	Recreation value	Carbon saving value	New weekly volunteer hours	Volunteer value	Training hours	Training value	Health cost savings	Employment value	Net Present Social Value
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library Community Garden with Community Seed Swap, Birmingham	£14,631	7,773	£3,921	-	4	£14,580	-	-	£1,580	£7,633	£3,870
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	£23,977	6,494	£172,039	-	-	-	126	£11,970	£1,580	£22,817	£160,032
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	£68,718	13,489	£105,384	-	3	£10,935	-	-	£104,090	-	£47,601
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	£50,000	14,662	£158,846	-	-	-	16	£1,520	£18,960	-	£110,366
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	£25,000	18,876	£7,843	-	15	£54,675	-	-	£3,160	£6,816	£37,518
Total		£678,580	325,397	£2,209,368	£914	148	£539,460	1,563	£148,485	£183,716	£257,191	£2,219,648
Average		£25,133	12,052	£81,828		7.8	£19,980			£6,804	£9,526	£82,209



Access to green spaces



Environmental benefits



Community engagement and wellbeing



Economic impact



Findings

Findings

Access to green spaces

The grants programme objective was to fund projects that increase access to green spaces in the WMCA area. Priority was given to projects delivering in areas of multiple deprivation and communities where there is limited access to green space¹.

All CGG projects demonstrate improved access to green spaces; this was a criteria for all projects. Two examples of this are:

Located near Sandwell General Hospital, **Buzz Stop** converted an underused area into a garden for hospital patients, staff and visitors, and the local community. This location was chosen to address common barriers to green space access, such as health limitations, disabilities and time constraints. The easily accessible, and centrally located, garden involved design features to cater to various sensory and mobility needs and to encourage use as a social hub.

Opening up KRAKEN to Kingstanding addressed the lack of green spaces in the densely populated area of Birmingham by transforming a disused playground into a “wildlife and wellbeing area”. The project focused on creating a variety of accessible spaces that would appeal to a wide range of residents, incorporating features like a woodland meditation area, raised growing beds, and a forest school area.

Beyond the qualitative evidence, this report lays out analysis of two sets of data to underline the impact of improved access through the CGG funding.

¹Heart of England Community Foundation Community Green Grants Application Guidance (2022)

Total residents living within 15 minutes walking distance of the projects.

We identified how many people live within a 15-minute walking distance of the new or improved green spaces funded by the programme. This is in line with the Accessible Greenspace Standards used in the UK Government's Environment Improvement Plan 2023: "that everyone should live within 15 minutes walk of a green or blue space"² and therefore benefit from them.



Figure 2: Map showing the residential areas within a 15 minute walk of funded projects.

²HM Government Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 p.13

Table 3: Total number of residents living within 15 minutes of each of the improved project spaces.

Organisation	Project	Total residents living within 15 minute walk
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	47,437
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	27,258
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes community allotment garden, Sandwell	23,100
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	18,992
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	18,876
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	14,662
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	13,489
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	12,782
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	11,667
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	11,638
Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation	Time to Grow, Sandwell	11,603
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	10,373
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	10,150
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	9,752
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	9,594
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	9,391



The Froglife Trust –
Coalface to Wildspace

Table 3: Total number of residents living within 15 minutes of each of the improved project spaces.

Organisation	Project	Total residents living within 15 minute walk
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	8,852
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library Community Garden with Community Seed Swap, Birmingham	7,773
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	7,670
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	7,105
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	6,494
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	6,460
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale’s Birds & Bees Project, Birmingham	6,176
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	5,358
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	4,553
Old Hall People’s Partnership	The Bentley ‘Growing Great’ pocket park, Walsall	3,814
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	378
Total		325,397
Average		12,052



The Dorothy Parkes Centre – Community allotment, Sandwell

Through the analysis, the CGG programme improved green space access for 325,397 people, or 11.1% of the WMCA population (2,919,654, 2021 Census), within the defined walking distance.

We can extrapolate a grant cost of £2.09 per resident living within 15 minutes of these improved spaces. This provides a rough benchmark for the potential delivery cost of meeting the UK Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 standards.

While no comparable figures are available, the £2.09 per person suggests good value for reaching 11.1% of the region's population. However, this figure does not account for the broader social, environmental, or economic benefits of the programme, which may further enhance its overall value.

325,397

people who have improved green space access.



£2.09

is the cost per resident living within 15 minutes of these improved spaces.



11%

of the regions population reached.



Recreation value

An important measurement of social value is the recreational value that the local residents place on local accessible green space. Using a recreational value allows us to quantify the day-to-day benefits the community gets from the improved spaces. We use a willingness to

pay (WTP) model based on welfare-weighted estimates by Fields-In-Trust (FiT) for the different regions, from their report: **Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces**. A full methodology for the modelling of these values is outlined in Appendix A.

Table 4: Recreation value of the improved spaces to local residents over 5 years.

Organisation	Project	ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES	
		Access	Recreation value
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	Open	£187,704
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	Open	£172,039
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	Open	£161,185
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	Open	£158,846
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	Open	£139,696
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes community allotment garden, Sandwell	Open	£137,340
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	Open	£124,178
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	Open	£117,946
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond Restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	Open	£113,369
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	Open	£107,604
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	Open	£105,384
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	Open	£102,770

Table 4: Recreation value of the improved spaces to local residents over 5 years.

Organisation	Project	ACCESS TO GREEN SPACES	
		Access	Recreation value
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	Open	£100,982
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	Open	£96,959
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	Open	£91,159
Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation	Time to Grow, Sandwell	Open	£87,050
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	Open	£79,754
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	Open	£64,543
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	Club	£11,764
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's community garden, Coventry	Club	£11,764
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	Club	£9,097
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	Club	£7,843
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	Club	£7,843
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	Club	£7,058
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	Club	£3,921
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	Club	£1,176
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	Club	£392
Total			£2,209,368
Average			£81,828

Recreational value is the most significant financially quantified social impact of the grant programme. It is the largest single social value return on investment.

The projects delivered accessible green space valued by the local community. The **Bentley ‘Growing Great’ pocket park** is an example of a project designed to improve enjoyment of a redeveloped local space to serve as a green, tranquil area for relaxation, social interaction, and engagement with nature. It offers a space for children and families to enjoy outdoor activities.

Notably, the recreational value varies considerably on whether the green spaces were always publicly accessible (open) or had restricted or partially restricted access (club), such as in the case of projects within allotments. This has to be accounted for as ‘restricted access projects’ where benefits are limited to a defined number of beneficiaries, rather than the wider WMCA population as outlined in Appendix A. A clear benefit of the CGG projects funded is the significant enhancement of access to

green spaces in areas with high deprivation and limited access to natural environments. The grant monitoring and survey data shows that the programme met its aims here. Grantees were able to use their strong links to deliver within the community. Projects like **St Catherine’s Community Garden** and others provided accessible, safe, and inclusive spaces that catered to diverse needs. These spaces transformed underutilised areas into valuable community assets, enabling frequent, casual interaction with nature, which can be out of reach for urban populations.

The programme design demonstrates that funded projects were selected based on the potential for opening up access to green spaces in areas of high deprivation – just under 50% of the scoring for grant applications was attributed to how projects would improve access for target communities. Having that focus on the selection of projects appears to have helped meet the aims of the programme.

“ Just under 50% of the scoring for grant applications was attributed to how projects would improve access for target communities. ”



BCU UK Trust

Community engagement and wellbeing

By involving local residents, and creating opportunities for collaboration, the CGG programme has had a positive impact on individual wellbeing and community connection.



Feeding Coventry

► Volunteering

“By engaging with the gardening group improving the green spaces around the All Saints Community Centre my confidence levels have increased. I feel it makes me less stressed and reduces my anxieties.”

Greening All Saints project participant

The CGG projects were able to involve local volunteers in all stages of development, from planning and planting to maintaining these green spaces. This engagement promoted a sense of ownership and pride among residents. Applications and interviews reveal that resident volunteers were regularly deeply involved in project delivery, likely leading to long term connections to the spaces and repeat visits.

The **Access to Ten Acres** project, for example, focused on opening up two acres of previously inaccessible parkland. Local residents volunteered in maintenance, planting, and conservation efforts,

demonstrating a strong sense of community ownership.

The report measures the change in weekly volunteer hours after the project compared with before, as reported through the survey or end of grant monitoring reports. Table 5 shows the changes in volunteering and the volunteering value estimate.

Table 5: Change in weekly volunteer hours after the project and valuation of the increase in volunteering over 5 years.

Organisation	Project	Increase in volunteer hours after project	Volunteering value
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	40	£145,800
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes community allotment garden, Sandwell	20	£72,900
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	15	£54,675
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	9	£32,805
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	7	£25,515
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	7	£25,515
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	6	£21,870
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	6	£21,870
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	4	£14,580
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	4	£14,580
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	4	£14,580

“ The Access to Ten Acres project focused on opening up two acres of previously inaccessible parkland. Local residents volunteered in maintenance, planting, and conservation efforts, demonstrating a strong sense of community ownership. ”

Table 5: Change in weekly volunteer hours after the project and valuation of the increase in volunteering over 5 years.

Organisation	Project	Increase in volunteer hours after project	Volunteering value
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	4	£14,580
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	4	£14,580
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	4	£14,580
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	3.5	£12,758
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	3	£10,935
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	3	£10,935
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	2.5	£9,113
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	2	£7,290
Total		148	£539,460
Average		5.5	£19,980



Pitts Wood pond

The value of volunteering is the second biggest contributor to the social value of the grants programme. Many CGG projects experienced an increase in volunteer involvement, with residents contributing time and effort to the creation and maintenance of green spaces. Volunteer engagement appears to significantly boost both the social value of projects and long-term community ownership and likely legacy. There may also be untapped potential in mobilising volunteers for future projects.

“I enjoy volunteering in the café because I get to meet lots of different people and I get to use my skills cooking meals for the children at the holiday playscheme. I have also learnt new skills and have learnt a lot about gardening and growing my own vegetables. It has helped bridge the gap for me between work and retirement.”

Let’s Meet at the Garden project participant

▶ Training

“I had a brilliant time at the course and you helped me with everything I needed. You gave me extra skills ready for work. I got a job working within a week of finishing at KRT”

Brookvale’s Birds & Bees project participant

Several projects offered training sessions on gardening, sustainability, and biodiversity, providing valuable skills to participants. Training ranged from basic gardening techniques to specialised workshops like Hugelkultur and permaculture. Two of the projects included accredited qualifications as part of their offer. **Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye** used the AIM Level 1 Use of Tools and Equipment for a practical activity qualification and **Brookvale’s Birds & Bees** project offered the Level 1 Award – Health & Safety in a Construction Environment – CSCS Green Card.



Love your River Stour

Eight projects reported through the survey that they had a training element as part of the project. We have analysed the training hours per project, taken from the information provided in the project applications. A conservative training value has been assigned by using a Department for Education impact assessment valuation. The value has been modelled forward over 5 years, with years 2-5 discounted at 3.5% annually. A full methodology for the modelling of these values is outlined in Appendix A.

Table 6: Training hours and training value for projects which included a training element

Organisation	Project	Training hours	Training value
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	1,280	£121,600
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	126	£11,970
Newbiggin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	60	£5,700
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	40	£3,800
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	34	£3,230
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	16	£1,520
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	4	£380
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	3	£285
Total		1,563	£148,485

Whilst formal training and work experience in horticulture and conservation, as in the case of **Brookvale's Birds & Bees project**, demonstrates a greater value, it should be recognised that it is specific to the needs of a particular target group and needs greater resources not available to all projects.

Encouraging more informal training, demonstrated through projects such as **The Dorothy Parkes Centre's community allotment project's** Nature Buddies, or hands-on horticultural sessions, would be a way to widen the training benefits across more projects. These make use of training expertise within a project's delivery team to emphasise and pass on lifelong interest in gardening and nature to the participants, whether or not that is to encourage a particular outcome such as employment.



Love your River Stour

► Social cohesion

“I’m feeling more of community and feeling more confident. I’m able to take food home to eat, and I’ve gained some independence.”

Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill Green Spaces project participant

There is evidence that the projects created inclusive spaces that bridged social divides, bringing together people of different ages, backgrounds, and circumstances. Shared activities such as gardening, workshops, and social events enabled participants to form connections and reduce feelings of isolation, particularly among vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those with disabilities, and individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

Creating shared spaces:

Funded projects act as vital hubs for social interaction, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and abilities. For example, **Brookvale’s Birds and Bees project** developed a communal space now hosting open days and events like tree giveaways and habitat development workshops. These activities attracted local families and community members, strengthening social ties through shared experiences. Similarly, the **Greening All Saints project** involved various community groups, including Mehl Johl Asian Women’s Group, in gardening activities, reducing social isolation and fostering new connections among participants.

Promoting social inclusion:

Many projects explicitly addressed issues of green space access inequality. The **Let’s Meet at the Garden project in Caldmore** focused on providing improvements to a community garden and a range of events for residents of high-rise flats and houses without gardens, recognising the unequal distribution of private green space. This initiative ensured that individuals without access to private gardens could still benefit from the social and wellbeing benefits of nature.

“I met people that I usually wouldn’t engage with. Even though I am a chatterbox, I do find it difficult to initially speak and hold conversations with others. Once I am comfortable with a person or group there is no stopping me.”

Greening All Saints project participant

Environmental benefit

► Habitat development

In addition to increasing green space access, the CGG programme has enhanced biodiversity through habitat creation. The table below shows the total habitat improvement for the projects. These were gathered from responses to the survey.



Caldmore Village Festival

“My 20-month-old daughter loved Little Bugs Club – especially watering the plants! She was so happy surrounded by nature, it’s made me want to do more with her in our garden at home.”

Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding project participant

Table 7: Habitat creation delivered by each project. Table excludes 5 projects that are ongoing and do not have data available, and 5 projects for which there is no habitat improvement data reported.

Organisation	Project	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS						
		Habitat total area (m ²)	Habitat type(s)	Area (m ²)	Notes	Trees planted	Shrubs planted	
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	58,060	Woodland	50,000		Riverbank habitat improvement for a range of wildlife	1,020	150
			Grass Meadow	8,000				
			Riparian Habitat	1,600				
			Pond	60				
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	5,050	Woodland	5,000		2 small ponds, wildlife homes, bird boxes, mini meadows	800	0
			Pond	30				
			Neighbourhood wildlife corridor	20				

Table 7: Habitat creation delivered by each project. Table excludes 5 projects that are ongoing and do not have data available, and 5 projects for which there is no habitat improvement data reported.

Organisation	Project	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS					
		Habitat total area (m ²)	Habitat type(s)	Area (m ²)	Notes	Trees planted	Shrubs planted
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	756	Bee & butterfly habitat	360		0	0
			Wildflower meadow	180			
			Wetland	144			
			Pond	72			
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	292	Mixed	292	Garden habitat: pond, bee & butterfly habitat, wildflowers	0	0
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	160	Grass meadow	160		0	0
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	119	Butterfly habitat	32		10	0
			Frogs and newts habitat	30			
			Bee habitat	57			
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	84	Grass meadow	40		14	50
			Scrub	40			
			Pond	4			
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	76	Pond	3		0	0
			Mixed	73	Bird & bat boxes, hedgehog habitats, bug housing, flowering plant, wild grass area		
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	46	Wildflower area	20		0	0
			Pond	16			
			Vertical growing wall	10			

Table 7: Habitat creation delivered by each project. Table excludes 5 projects that are ongoing and do not have data available, and 5 projects for which there is no habitat improvement data reported.

Organisation	Project	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS					
		Habitat total area (m ²)	Habitat type(s)	Area (m ²)	Notes	Trees planted	Shrubs planted
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	32	Bog garden	16		0	0
			Wildflower meadow	16			
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	30	Wetland	20		Unknown	Unknown
			Pond	10			
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	30	Mixed	30	Hedgehog habitats, bird & bat boxes, bug housing	4	0
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	19	Grass meadow	19		0	0
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	10	Forest garden	4		3	20
			Pond	2			
			Dead Hedge	2			
			Bug housing	2			
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	None	None			60	0
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	None	None			0	0
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	None	None			0	0
Total		64,764				1911	220

► Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are defined as services provided by the natural environment that benefit people. In considering the ecosystem services delivered by a project, it is possible to get a full picture of the benefits it provides. Consideration is given here to the four classes of ecosystem services³ and how the CGG programme has delivered outcomes in respect of each of these categories.

Ecosystem services can be grouped into the following:

1

Regulating services help with climate resilience, pest control, air and water quality and pollination.



2

Cultural services are those that provide societal value such as recreation and education.



3

Supporting services are those on which other aspects may rely, such as generating oxygen or cycling water and nutrients.



4

Provisioning services are the materials an ecosystem can supply, such as water, wood or food.

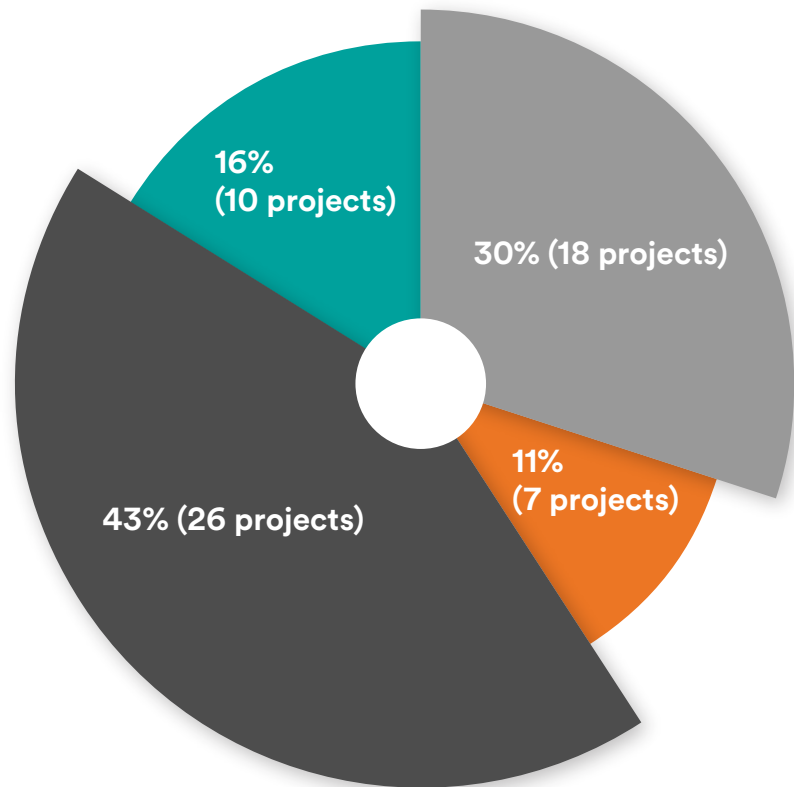


BCU UK

As the projects are often diverse, they span across multiple ecosystem services.

³as defined by the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

Ecosystem service provision by Community Green Grant projects



- Regulating (climate, pest control)
- Cultural (education, recreation)
- Supporting (water cycle, O2, soil)
- Provisioning (food, materials)

Figure 3: How the 27 CGG projects deliver on each ecosystem service. The number of projects which fall into each category, followed by the percentage of the total number of projects, are represented on each slice of the pie chart.

Regulating services: 18 of the 27 projects are deemed to provide elements of regulatory services, with the conversion of land or additional habitat creation providing increased climate resilience and mitigation, particularly where projects involve the conversion of urban or derelict areas of hard standing such as the *BCU Community Garden* and *Greening All Saints* projects.

Cultural services: All but one of the projects provide cultural services, with the majority of projects providing recreational access to green space or encompassing an element of education and learning within their scheme.

Supporting services: Supporting services are generated by 10 of the projects, though this ecosystem service is a less definable aspect such as water, soil and air cycling. The projects considered to provide this service were larger or working with existing natural habitats, rather than those based around the conversion of hardstanding.

Provisioning services: The majority of projects funded don't support provisioning services. Those that do are predominantly allotment projects (or similar) and include an element of plant growing and education within their project description, although where community engagement and education is involved in other projects this may include identification skills of edible plants which naturally establish.

► Carbon footprint reduction

We calculate the estimated CO₂ sequestered per hectare over a 50 year period using a model outlined in Appendix A. Two projects with measurable changes in vegetation cover showed carbon savings: **Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding** and **Love Your River Stour-Cradley and Lye**.

Whilst not a measurement that allows us to draw conclusions for the whole programme, it is an important and useful first step in understanding the potential for how carbon savings and sequestration can be included to a greater extent in future programmes of this type.

Project	Carbon saving £/ year	Estimated carbon saving over 50 years (£)
Love Your River Stour– Cradley and Lye	£869	£43,460
Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding!	£45	£2,229
Total	£914	£45,689

Table 8: Estimated Carbon Savings for projects with the required tree cover data to make carbon sequestration value estimates.



The Froglife Trust

Other regional green infrastructure projects such as Sheffield’s Grey to Green programme have incorporated independent monitoring standards⁴ into the project delivery. It may be worth considering adopting a suitable standard in the future. Although a challenge, it will be one that is simple to apply and cost effective enough to be suitable for the range of grassroots-led activity this programme is set up to support.

⁴For example BREEAM

Table 9: Number of jobs created by the projects and the employment value

Economic benefit

► Employment

While direct employment creation was limited, projects supported the local economy by engaging local suppliers, environmental regeneration and community engagement professionals and other small businesses.

The employment value defined to the right is defined by the job numbers and employment values taken from the declared staff costs within the application form budgets.

Organisation	Project	Number of jobs created	Employment value
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	2	£61,800
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	2	£22,817
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	2	£21,100
Newbiggin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	1	£17,160
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	6	£16,625
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	1	£15,624
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	7	£13,660
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	4	£13,450
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	2	£12,887
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	1	£12,711
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	2	£11,476
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	1	£7,633

Table 9: Number of jobs created by the projects and the employment value

Organisation	Project	Number of jobs created	Employment value
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	1	£6,816
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	1	£6,300
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	1	£6,267
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	1	£5,700
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	2	£4,589
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	1	£576
Total		38	£257,191

The survey asked for a further breakdown of the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) hours of the jobs created. Of the 38 jobs created, the majority were part time – averaging 7.5 hours per week – reflecting the limited term nature of a lot of the work happening within a defined project period.

This gives a total job creation from the programme of 7.1 FTE jobs.

Whilst it is wrong to conclude that the programme is having a substantial impact

on local green employment, the benefit that this increased employment has, particularly in building capacity within the grantee organisations, could help sustainability for small local charities.

In addition, it can be concluded that the skills developed through volunteer involvement and training delivery outlined earlier in the report also enhanced employability, particularly among the economically inactive.



BCU UK Trust

“ Whilst it is wrong to conclude that the programme is having a substantial impact on local green employment, the benefit that this increased employment has, particularly in building capacity within the grantee organisations, could help sustainability for small local charities. ”

Table 10: Local economic value. The proportion of grants spent within the WMCA area

► Spending in the local economy

We wanted to understand the impact the grants had on spending within the local area. The survey asked for estimates of the proportion of the grant budget spent buying inputs (services, products, labour, etc.) from organisations owned and run regionally (in the WMCA area). Table 4 outlines the amount reportedly spent by those who completed the survey. It also shows an estimate of the amount of the grant budget that would be spent locally, using the midpoint of the estimated ranges (e.g. 90% for '80-99% (Almost all)').

Organisation	Project	ECONOMIC IMPACT	
		Locally bought inputs estimate	Locally spent grant value estimate
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	100% (All)	£20,206.00
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	100% (All)	£25,515.20
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	80-99% (Almost all)	£89,991.00
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	80-99% (Almost all)	£15,922.80
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	80-99% (Almost all)	£20,643.30
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	80-99% (Almost all)	£22,500.00
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	80-99% (Almost all)	£20,977.11
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	60-79% (Most)	£17,317.30
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	60-79% (Most)	£17,500.00
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	60-79% (Most)	£17,290.00
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	40-59% (Around half)	£4,247.25

Table 10: Local economic value. The proportion of grants spent within the WMCA area

Organisation	Project	ECONOMIC IMPACT	
		Locally bought inputs estimate	Locally spent grant value estimate
Newbiggin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	20-39% (Some)	£5,803.20
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	20-39% (Some)	£2,160.00
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	20-39% (Some)	£5,588.40
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	0-19% (Little)	£1,117.50
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	0-19% (Little)	£1,865.00
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	0-19% (Little)	£2,454.90
Total			£291,099

Using the average across all projects that responded, we can extrapolate an average of 61%, or £413,934 of the grant value, spent locally across the grant programme. The projects with the higher proportion of local spend estimates were those with relatively high labour costs as a proportion of the budget, thus making it easier to estimate local spend.



Caldmore Village Festival

“My anxiety is going down. I feel less nervous and more chilled. I think I’m getting more confident and happier as well.”

Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill Green Spaces project participant



Love your River Stour

► Health cost savings

The therapeutic effects of interacting with green spaces are evident, with participants reporting improved mental and physical health in the grant monitoring reports and interviews.

Some projects, such as *Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate* project at the Northfield Stroke Club, used the green spaces directly to encourage specific health outcomes such as improving the coordination and rehabilitation of club members through planting and raising plants.

Other projects offered a respite from urban stressors, providing calm environments that supported recovery, relaxation, and wellbeing. In particular it is clear that these projects were effective in reducing social isolation, causing improvements in mood, and encouraging physical activity, which can all alleviate pressure on health services.

Reducing social isolation

Causing improvements in mood

Encouraging physical activity

Alleviate pressure on health services

Table 11: Estimated health cost saving of each of the projects. The table excludes four projects still underway for which data was not available

We have modelled the health cost savings associated with the encouragement of healthier lifestyles from using green spaces. Studies find a strong, positive link between frequent use of parks and green spaces and better general health, which encompasses both physical and mental health.

Park and green space use correlates with improved self-reported health, which translates to potential NHS savings. The Fields-in-Trust report finds a 4.2% increase in reporting good health among park users; that is associated with reduced GP visit frequency, with a related annual cost saving of £3.16 per person for the NHS⁵. A full methodology for the modelling of these values is outlined in Appendix A.

⁵Fields in Trust: Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces Report, 2018

Organisation	Project	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING
		Health cost savings
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	£104,090
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	£18,960
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	£9,480
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	£6,320
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	£6,320
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	£4,740
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	£4,740
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	£4,740
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	£3,666
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	£3,160
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	£3,160
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	£2,844
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	£1,580

Table 11: Estimated health cost saving of each of the projects. The table excludes four projects still underway for which data was not available

Organisation	Project	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING
		Health cost savings
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	£1,580
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	£1,580
Old Hall People’s Partnership	The Bentley ‘Growing Great’ pocket park, Walsall	£1,580
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	£1,580
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	£1,580
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	£632
BCU UK Trust	Community Garden Project, Wolverhampton	£474
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	£436
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale’s Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	£316
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	£158
Total		£183,716

We include these with the caveat that these benefits are not fully attributable to the funding of the project and are down to the existence of the green spaces rather than the work done within a CGG project. However, this information is instructive in understanding how even small green space projects can have different potential health benefits and may lay the groundwork for future inclusion in project planning.

“ Park and green space use correlates with improved self-reported health, which translates to potential NHS savings. The Fields-in-Trust report finds a 4.2% increase in reporting good health among park users. ”

► Net Present Social Value (NPSV)

This report has constructed a model that calculates the NPSV for the CGG programme. It is calculated by adding the values of all the benefits attributed entirely to the grants programme.

Each of these values is calculated as present value (PV) based on a recurring stream of equal future values for a period of five years, with years 2-5 discounted at 3.5% annually, as per Green Book guidance.

The cost of the grants programme is finally subtracted from the benefit values to give the NPSV.

The totals modelled for each project are presented in the table below.

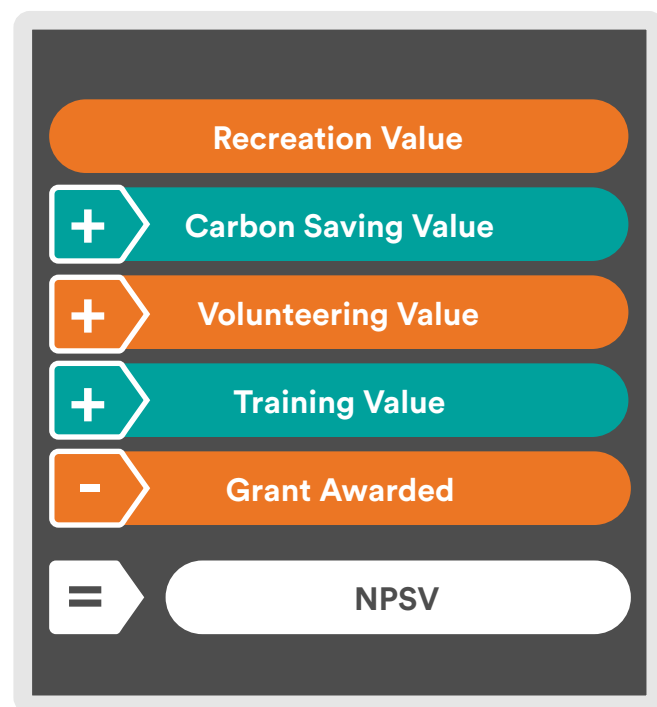


Table 12: The Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and NPSV generated per £1 of grant funding per project

Organisation	Project	Net Present Social Value (NPSV) total	£ NPSV generated per £1 of CGG grant
Old Hall People's Partnership	The Bentley 'Growing Great' pocket park, Walsall	£218,689	£11.73
Kingstanding Regeneration Trust	Brookvale's Birds & Bees project, Birmingham	£205,026	£10.60
Father Hudson's Care / Brushstrokes	Brushstrokes Community Allotment Garden, Sandwell	£185,501	£7.50
The Dorothy Parkes Centre	Community allotment, Sandwell	£160,032	£6.67
Newbigin Community Trust	Community garden project at Windsor Olympus Academy, Birmingham	£155,547	£8.35
Feeding Coventry	Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill green spaces, Coventry	£123,809	£4.95

Table 12: The Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and NPSV generated per £1 of grant funding per project



Caldmore Village Festival

Organisation	Project	Net Present Social Value (NPSV) total	£ NPSV generated per £1 of CGG grant
Sustainable Life	Access to Ten Acres, Birmingham	£123,766	£7.71
Friends of Pitts Wood	Pond restoration, access works and habitat management at Pitts Wood, Birmingham	£114,185	£4.62
University of Birmingham / Birmingham Energy Institute	Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham	£110,366	£2.21
Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	Love Your River Stour – Cradley and Lye, Dudley and Sandwell	£106,963	£1.07
Caldmore Village Festival	Let's Meet at the Garden, Walsall	£106,771	£6.04
Marsh Hill Allotments	Nature area – accessible green space, Birmingham	£100,404	£13.95
RSPCA Coventry and District Branch	Coundon Wedge Drive pond exploration, Coventry	£95,359	£5.54
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens	Reviving blue / green corridor in the historic parkland, Solihull	£92,625	£4.04
All Saints Action Network Ltd.	Greening All Saints, Wolverhampton	£76,753	£3.80
Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation	Time to Grow, Sandwell	£71,462	£4.58
Ramblers Association	Green Routes to Cotwall End, Dudley	£54,574	£2.22
The Froglife Trust	Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall	£47,601	£0.69
Witton Lodge Community Association	Witton Lakes Eco Hub, Birmingham	£37,518	£1.50

Table 12: The Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and NPSV generated per £1 of grant funding per project

Organisation	Project	Net Present Social Value (NPSV) total	£ NPSV generated per £1 of CGG grant
Kings Rise Academy	Opening KRAKEN to Kingstanding, Birmingham	£21,263	£2.50
DIYYA	Grow Your Future – More Than Just an Allotment Project! Dudley	£12,842	£0.51
Spectra Arts CIC	Buzz Stop, Sandwell	£4,332	£0.21
TCV (The Conservation Volunteers)	Bartley Green Library community garden with community seed swap, Birmingham	£3,870	£0.26
Northfield Stroke Club	Relax, Refresh and Rejuvenate, Birmingham	£3,797	£0.34
St Catherine's Church	St Catherine's Community Garden, Coventry	£1,665	£0.16
EKHO Collective CIC	EKHO Therapeutic and Sensory Community Garden project, Dudley	-£1,670	-£0.07
BCU UK Trust	Community garden project, Wolverhampton	-£13,404	-£0.53
Total		£2,219,648	
Average			£4.12

For every £1 grant funding, projects returned on average £4.12 in net economic, social and environmental benefit to the WMCA area.

There are two projects with negative NPSV values. These are not to say they are removing value from the region. But they are examples of projects where the closed access means a lower number of beneficiaries reducing their recreation value.



Interpretation of findings

Interpretation of findings and value for money assessment

This report is the first of its kind in the West Midlands, in a context where there is limited national benchmarking data of the value of urban green space regeneration over time. There are some issues to bear in mind:

There are some limitations to both the data and to the statistical models used, discussed in more detail in Appendix A.

By being conservative in our calculations we are confident we have not overstated an likely impact.

We expect this report to be used as a benchmarking tool for future analysis rather than a complete picture of how the CGG funding was solely responsible for the impact we have calculated.

We can summarise the overall project benefits in these ways:

▶ Improved access to green spaces



The programme expanded green space access for an estimated 325,397 residents, improving environmental quality in urban areas. This access will have a net positive effect on local engagement and use of natural areas, potentially increasing outdoor activities, community events, and environmental stewardship. **The whole programme has delivered this access for less than £2.09 of grant funding per resident impacted.**

The programme has clearly improved and expanded green spaces for local residents, making progress in addressing inequalities in access by focusing on areas of highest deprivation. **The recreation valuation of over £2m as a result of the grants** highlights the significant enjoyment and day-to-day benefits the community gains from these enhanced spaces.

▶ Environmental improvements



Compared to large scale habitat improvement valuations, the value for money of the habitat improvement is not high. However, the context of the work being done in urban settings and giving agency to the local community to be involved should be taken into account. As should the variety of habitat types that have been created. The programme not only focused on large woodland areas but also included grass meadows, insect and bird habitats, and smaller-scale ponds, which cater to different species and ecological needs and can have long-term benefits to biodiversity in urban areas.

▶ Community engagement and wellbeing



Volunteer participation surged, with **some projects reporting up to a 400% increase in volunteer hours**, with just under £1 of volunteer value generated from each £1 of grant investment. This is potentially higher if ongoing projects yet to complete are taken into account. We know that higher levels of volunteering leads to stronger community ties and will also ensure long-term stewardship of the spaces. Shared ownership over these green spaces empowers local residents to take collective responsibility for their upkeep and use as well as increase their awareness and understanding about biodiversity loss and local habitat management.

Training benefits were limited to a small number of projects, with one project – **Brookvale Birds & Bees** – accounting for 97% of the benefits. The value for money of the programme does not compare particularly favourably with training-focused initiatives, with a cost of £434 per hour of training (excluding other benefits). However, **Brookvale Birds & Bees** demonstrates the potential for high-value green skills training, costing only £19.17 per hour of training. In addition, the flexibility for projects to define community engagement in a range of ways allow the grants to help fund larger scale training projects or more small-scale informal skills development. Maintaining this flexibility in future programmes is recommended to continue accommodating diverse forms of community engagement.

▶ Economic benefits



The CGG funding has supported some employment and skills development, **creating 38 direct jobs equivalent to 7.1 full time roles across various projects**, including gardening, landscaping and project management roles. Additionally, skills training for volunteers, particularly in sustainability and conservation, increased employability in sectors like green tech and environmental management, contributing to local economic resilience.

When combining the grant funding of the job-creating projects, that equates to an investment of £11,569 per individual job created, and £61,916 per full-time job not taking into account every other impact.



Recommendations

Recommendations

We have identified six recommendations to build on the strengths and address the limitations of the programme. These recommendations emerged from our analysis and modelling work and were further refined through debate and discussion, testing early ideas with project leads during interviews.

1 Prioritise open access projects

Given that the majority of social value stems from the recreational, social, community, and health benefits that residents gain from freely using local green spaces, future funding could consider prioritising projects that offer full open access. While there are valid reasons to support projects with restricted access – such as those within community spaces with limited hours or allotments – the wider benefits of fully open access spaces, which reach a broader population, should be weighed against the more targeted benefits, like increased volunteering or training, that restricted projects may offer. Balancing these considerations will help maximise the overall impact of funded projects.

2 Standardised data benchmarking

Implement both pre- and post-project surveys to gather consistent data on green space usage, biodiversity, and community engagement. Grantees have given positive feedback about the application process, and the scoring system is thorough and uses geographical-need data effectively. The grant programme seems well-positioned to make small adjustments, such as adding a section in the application to assess pre-grant usage or requiring grantees to provide usage data as part of the initial grant acceptance conditions.

3 Real-time monitoring and knowledge share tools

Promote the use of digital tools (apps, sensors, logs) to track visitor numbers and volunteer involvement. As well as filling important data gaps, automating this process would also help grantees save time and resources. This will allow them to focus more on engaging with their communities and achieving other impact outcomes of the grants. Use platforms such as OnePlanet to share and compare data and insights from the West Midlands with other partners across the UK.

5 Collaboration with local experts

Engage environmental scientists and community planners in project design and ongoing evaluation. Inviting research institutions to monitor the impact of distinct outcomes of future initiatives would be beneficial. For example, work similar to that done by Sheffield's Grey to Green project for which Ph.D. studies conducted ongoing monitoring of "heat island" effects. Involving expert partners who may also play a role in community engagement may increase the number and quality of community volunteers, including in roles such as peer researchers.

4 Post-project evaluations and longitudinal studies

Much of the impact is long-term. Green space regeneration and economic impact take time to show their true value. Building a plan to conduct follow-up touchpoint evaluations 3-5 years after project completion would help guarantee a more detailed understanding of long-term impact. Tracking long-term economic and health outcomes for participants from a sample of local residents would also better quantify impact currently we can only approximately measure.

6 Expanded project types

The data shows the carbon-sequestration impacts of the programme were limited and/or had a high cost associated with it. Future programmes may consider adopting a specific strategy and look to fund a broader range of climate-related projects in order to support longer-term impact.



Case studies

Case studies

Organisation: Feeding Coventry

► Project: Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill Green Spaces, Coventry

Feeding Coventry, is a charity that provides food, advice and support services for individuals and families in Foleshill, with an aim to end food poverty locally.

The grant funded the creation of three community gardens, one at Foleshill Community Centre, another at the Herbert Art Gallery, and a third at Kairos Community Centre, located at All Saints Church.

The funding went towards the construction of three gardens, including building wooden beds, terracing, creating garden beds, and composting. It also supported a range of activities including 12 training workshops for local residents, 26 weekly open gardening sessions and 6 gardening activity sessions for children. It also funded a gardener with a remit for community engagement.

The gardens have become valuable spaces for community engagement, offering a safe and quiet area for wellbeing activities and social interaction. They have helped families to connect with nature, learn about growing and cooking food, and take part in a range of activities with other members of the community. A big success of the project was hosting the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme during school holidays for children on free school meals. Children who participated in the programme enjoyed planting, growing, and even harvesting vegetables they had sown months prior. This project was singled out for praise by an independent charity reviewer who commented that the level of engagement they witnessed at the HAF programme was one of the best they had ever seen.

Residents were involved as volunteers helping maintain the gardens. Volunteers

at the Foleshill Community Garden, in particular, have become recognised ambassadors for environmental protection in the area. Feeding Coventry is currently fundraising to continue employing the gardener to lead the project.

Feedback from participants highlights the positive impact the gardens have had on their lives. Individuals reported feeling more confident, and happier as a result of their involvement in the project. The gardens have fostered a stronger sense of community, encouraged healthier eating habits, and improved social connections and overall wellbeing.

“I look forward to coming to the garden. We’ve met some lovely people. My stress levels are way better on a Friday whilst I’m here, and I really hope it will continue.”

Herbert, Kairos and Foleshill Green Spaces project participant

Case studies

Organisation: **Froglife Trust**

► **Project: Coalface to Wildspace, Walsall**

Froglife Trust works in disadvantaged areas across the UK, focusing on improving habitats and connecting communities with local green spaces. They received a £68,718 Community Green Grant to create new wildlife habitats in Walsall, specifically targeting amphibian and reptile species, which had been in decline in the area.

The grant allowed Froglife to create several large habitats, providing crucial support for amphibians and reptiles, whose presence in Walsall had significantly decreased due to a lack of suitable environments. These large, lake-sized ponds have not only benefited wildlife but have also provided the local community with new green spaces to enjoy and engage with. The project has been particularly effective in working with disadvantaged groups, helping them connect with nature and gain a sense of ownership over their local environment.

Through the project, local residents learned how to create and manage wildlife habitats, including ponds, with some groups, such as local allotment societies, taking this knowledge forward to create and maintain habitats independently.

A key aspect of the project was the integration of a sculpture making activity, which attracted broad community participation. Hundreds of local residents contributed to the sculptures that were installed in the newly created green spaces.

The local authority's parks department provided strong support, helping to overcome common obstacles related to health and safety regulations. Froglife Trust has experience delivering community environmental improvement projects across the UK and they were keen to note that few local authorities fund this type of work,

“One of the most memorable aspects was working with an Asian women’s group, a demographic we don’t often engage in the conservation sector. Seeing their concentration, the joy on their faces, and the beautiful things they created was truly striking. It was incredible to watch their deep involvement and pride in what they accomplished.”

— Project Lead, Froglife Trust

making the grant particularly valuable. This project is part of a 3.5-year initiative, with the Community Green Grant playing a crucial role as match funding that makes this part of a larger project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Froglife will continue working with local communities, expanding habitat creation efforts and educational activities through to November 2025. The long-term aim is to foster sustainable engagement with green spaces, encouraging residents to become more comfortable using their local parks.

Case studies

Organisation: **Birmingham Energy Institute**

► **Project: Re-naturalising the River Cole in Tyseley and Hay Mills, Birmingham**

The Birmingham Energy Institute (BEI) at the University of Birmingham received a £50,000 Community Green Grant to re-naturalise a 1km stretch of the River Cole in Heybarnes Recreation Ground, East Birmingham.

Funding was for capital works to improve wetland habitats and biodiversity; creating a “living lab” for research, outreach, engagement, and education; and addressed specific reasons for under-use by the local community.

There has been a range of community involvement including events, school engagement, and citizen science activities. A key part of this project was community biodiversity monitoring to measure river quality, habitats, and species.

The project had a big focus on improving access to and use of the currently underutilised

greenspace. Work was done to remove barriers blocking residents from using the area such as overgrown vegetation, litter, perceived poor water quality, and safety and anti-social behaviour concerns. The project successfully cleaned up the river area, removing litter and improving the overall appearance. Visible work on the river raised awareness among residents, even those not directly involved in the project. Feedback from the project’s local community policing advisor suggested environmental improvements such as those carried out see a reduction in local anti-social behaviour, underlining the wider social impact of opening up access to underused space.

The area now plays host to a living lab site for research, outreach, engagement and education for local schools and residents, giving them the chance to take part in measurement and monitoring exercises and other citizen

science activities around the themes of river restoration, nature and biodiversity. This gives the local community both a chance to develop new environmental skills and understanding, and also a way to be involved in the ongoing development and maintenance of the area long-term. It is also being used to contribute to other citizen science projects happening at the University of Birmingham.

This project involved partnership working between The Environment Agency, which acted as strategic lead, Birmingham City Council, the landowner, providing advice; The Active Wellbeing Society, which supported community engagement and local schools, including St Bernadette’s RC Primary School, Ark Victoria Academy, Eden Girl’s School, Redhill Primary and Starbank School.

This project is part of a longer term community stewardship plan for the area: The River Cole and Tyseley Energy Park Creation of a Community Commons. Long-term stewardship aims to pass on ownership to the local community, supported by the project partners and the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust. This phase will include partnerships with local schools to ensure the area’s use for play, active travel, and educational activities.

