

introducing The Irk Valley Project



wirk with us

comfortable countryside for local communities

The Irk Valley Project aims to connect local people with their environment. Linking people to places will be the ultimate reward for the Project, providing safe, healthy, accessible green space that is well used by local communities. By working with local people from the start, we are building a strong bond that will encourage pride, respect and involvement with Irk Valley sites.



Irk Valley - the time is now...

One of the last, lost rivers of Manchester, the River Irk snakes down from the spine of the Pennine Ridge at Bacup, meandering inconspicuously into the heart of the city centre where it disappears into the River Irwell at the foot of the CIS Tower. The Irk's progress has been altered directly by human intervention and land in the Irk Valley has suffered greatly over the years. After the Industrial Revolution, the character of the landscape was altered dramatically with extensive economic and residential development. Environmentally, the Irk Valley was left scarred and neglected. Land of no significant use was either left as wasteland or used for landfill. The River Irk itself was culverted and polluted, affecting the wildlife and recreational opportunities along its banks.

But that was then, and this is now.

River Valley reclamation schemes are well established in the North West, with the Croal-Irwell, Medlock and Mersey Valley Projects providing excellent examples of the environmental benefits that can be achieved in a relatively short space of time. The Irk Valley Project will provide the focus and direction necessary for the successful rejuvenation and regeneration of land within the Irk Valley. With a firm commitment from local communities and both the public and private sector, people and wildlife will benefit greatly from a series of sustainable environmental improvements over the coming years.

The Irk Valley Steering Group will guide and support the development of the Irk Valley Project. We are committed to making it Work.

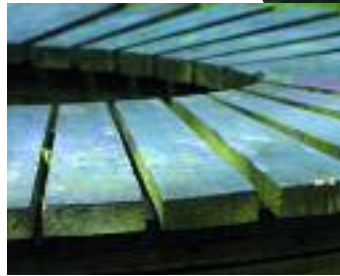
Cllr Paul Murphy

Chair - Irk Valley Steering Group

Cllr Joanne Green

Deputy Chair - Irk Valley Steering Group





A Diverse Landscape

There is a significant amount of open space within the Irk Valley catchment and Moston Brook corridor. Some sites have predefined uses, such as playing fields, allotments and cemeteries. Then there are others. There are over 25 sites within the Irk Valley Project area, covering over 250 Hectares, that are being targeted for environmental improvements. From large mature woodlands like Blackley Forest and Bailey's Wood, to the winding riverside walks around Smedley Dip, the potential for developing a linked-landscape of accessible 'urban countryside' sites is great.

Planning for the Future

The Project aims to rejuvenate and regenerate areas of land within the Irk Valley catchment. Because of the size and complexity of the area, a consistent and prioritised approach to management across the Irk Valley is needed. This will ensure that it develops positively as an important local environmental resource, affecting many aspects of people's lives :

Health, Landscape, Recreation and Nature.

Sustainability is the key to the ongoing development of the Project. Initial work will help to secure and define sites, giving them a managed look. This will provide the essential foundations for establishing site-specific maintenance programmes and long-term management plans. The process will be gradual, but these environmental improvements will benefit both people and wildlife for many years to come.



For more information on the Irk Valley Project contact 0161 237 5656

Reclaiming the Land
- making it work

Many areas of land within the Irk Valley are reclaimed sites. These are sites that may have been used for landfill, then landscaped and left alone. These can have complicated management problems, such as soil quality and land stability. The Project will help to co-ordinate the prioritised management on these sites, consulting with specialists in relation to these problems to ensure that land is safe for both environmental and recreational development. The challenge is to set up maintenance and management programmes for these areas to allow for their sustainable development. The River itself is improving after many years of decline. In 2000, an Environment Agency survey indicated that water quality is getting better and that greater improvements are expected due to upgrades at the sewage treatment works in Oldham and Royton.

The Irk Valley Project - working together

The Irk Valley Project is a true partnership in every sense of the word. The project is a perfect opportunity to make a real difference to local communities and their environment, a vision which is shared by all those involved.

The Irk Valley Steering Group consists of local people who use Irk Valley sites, councillors and officers from both the public and private sector. These include Manchester Leisure, Groundwork Manchester, North Manchester Regeneration, HMG Paints, The Countryside Agency, Red Rose Forest and the Mersey Basin Campaign.

The commitment and determination of people involved in the Irk Valley Project is already having a positive effect on the environment.

The future will be even more exciting.



Site in Focus

Changing Places, Breaking the Mould - Collyhurst

In Partnership with Manchester City Council, Groundwork Manchester secured £2.4 million pounds from the Millennium Commission to carry out a programme of environmental improvements on sites in and around the Irk Valley in Collyhurst. This was part of the national Groundwork Millennium Programme called 'Changing Places', which aimed to work with local people to change their environment for the better.

Phil Heaps and Bailey's Wood

Bailey's Wood is one of only several areas of ancient semi-natural woodland in the City. Dam Head brook runs through the steep-sided clough and the woodland lies immediately next to the Crosslee Housing Estate.

"I've been working on Bailey's for a while now, it's right on my doorstep. It was a bit of a mess, burned out cars and litter all over; but we're really seeing some improvements now. The place is brilliant for local kids and we've been putting up nest boxes and organising litter picks with the local school - the community are really involved."

Phil Heaps is the Bailey's Wood contact for the Crosslee Tenants and Residents Association

John Ashworth and Blackley Forest

Blackley Forest was planted as a community woodland in 1953 and has a rich mix of woodlands, wetlands and meadows with an extensive network of paths throughout.

"This is a significant area of woodland within a stones throw of the city. It's a real benefit for both young and old alike. We've all got a responsibility to protect what we have, and I like to think that I'm helping preserve the Forest for future generations".

John Ashworth is a member of the Friends of Blackley Forest