

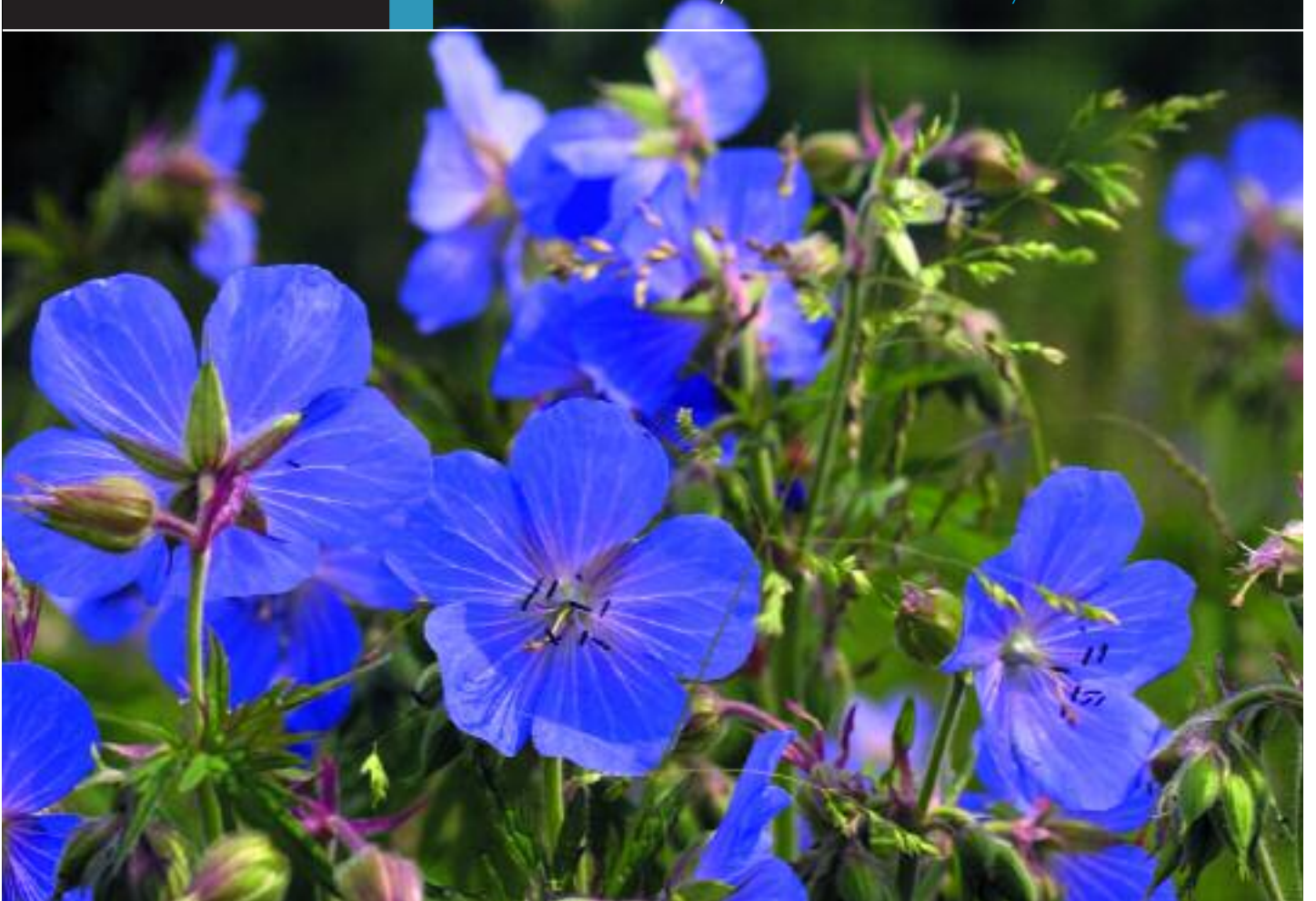
Two thousand and one **two**

# wirking review



**Phew!!** Hectic times in the Irk Valley

It's the end of the first year of our exciting new initiative, and what a year its been! [Find out why inside...](#)





The main focus of the project so far has been to start the rejuvenation of land in the Irk Valley - and getting people involved.



**Local groups have been more than willing to lend a hand, and a measure of this has been the Green Apple environmental award given to the Friends of Blackley Forest for all their hard work and commitment in developing their local greenspace.**

The Valley covers such a wide area, from Collyhurst to Harpurhey, Moston, Blackley and beyond, that our achievements represent a significant step in the right direction. We've had over £160,000 spent on all manner of improvements, from the fantastic new wildlife pond at HMG Paints in Collyhurst to the fencing, stiles, seating and pathwork that can now be seen at Baileys Wood, Blackley Forest, Moston Vale and Broadhurst Clough in Lightbowne. The Project has also engaged communities in over 30 events, from clean ups, nestbox building, healthwalks and practical conservation activities.



But this is just the beginning!

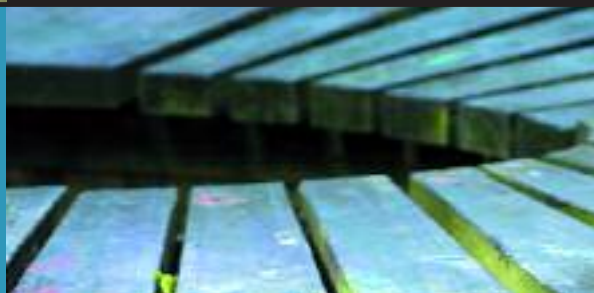
The Irk Valley Project will continue the good work this year, with more events, activities and improvements at an Irk Valley site near you.

**Cllr Paul Murphy**

Chair - Irk Valley Steering Group

**Cllr Joanne Green**

Deputy Chair - Irk Valley Steering Group



**Want to know more or get involved?**

Contact Dave Barlow on 0161 237 5656 or via email at [david.barlow@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:david.barlow@groundwork.org.uk)



Previously under managed and under used, sites in the Valley are now waiting to be explored...



## Best Foot Forward

The Irk Valley Project has made an immediate impact in North Manchester. After years of neglect, certain areas of natural greenspace have already benefited from financial investment and basic maintenance - and what a difference this has made. The idea of linking green spaces can now be seen and used in the lower Irk Valley. It's possible to walk from the city centre, along the river Irk and through developing meadows in Collyhurst at Sandhills and Sand Street, into HMG Paints to visit their wildlife pond at New Era Woods and onto Queens Park, one of the oldest formal parks in the city.

Previously under managed and under used, sites in the valley are now waiting to be explored - so why not give it a try? Manchester Leisure Wardens have already started leading guided walks around sites, Contact them direct on 0161 795 2650.

## Making a Difference - Broadhurst Clough, Lightbowne

Broadhurst Park in Lightbowne is well used by local people but linked to it is an altogether different space - the lower Clough. This area has great wildlife value as the site is a diverse mix of new and maturing woodland, rough, swampy grassland and large amenity mown areas. Several seasonal wetland areas complement the marshland that has abundant stands of yellow flag iris.

Access improvements totalling over £25,000 have been installed on site, funding being provided by Manchester Leisure, Groundwork Manchester and the Countryside Agency.



The Clough is an important 'Gateway' site to the Irk Valley, with good paths offering links to the Moston Brook Corridor and Moston Vale area in the South, and to Shackliffe Green and Boggart Hole Clough in the North.

**The Project has been well received by local people, regular user Dave Drinkwater says...**

"What a difference! Our main problem is with the motorbikes, and the barriers and fencing will certainly help deter them and make the Clough a safer place"

## Making a Difference - Wildlife Pond Creation in Collyhurst

HMG Paints provided the space, Groundwork Manchester the funding to create a fantastic new wildlife pond in the Lower Irk Valley. Both HMG and Groundwork Manchester are committed partners of the Irk Valley Project. HMG have already established an important area of woodland and wildflowers on their site, called New Era Woods. Working in partnership with the Project, both HMG and Groundwork were keen to develop a wildlife pond that would be a great educational resource for local

schoolchildren. Within a week, diggers had excavated the pond and lined it with clay. With a helping hand from Mersey Valley Wardens, water was pumped in from Chorlton Water Park. Soon marginal plants were established and other oxygenating plants introduced. Finishing touches are still being added, but the pond already has regular visitors - Herons have been spotted and local frogs have found a new home.





“Its good to see things happening that improve the local environment”



## People Power...Making it Work

The support of local people will play a key role in the ongoing success of the Irk Valley Project. Community groups across North Manchester are already playing an active role in the positive development of natural green spaces.

The Moston Valley Residents Association (MVRA) are a great example. Formed only two years ago, they have been instrumental in the securing of land plagued by motorcycles along Potters Lane and Ravine Avenue in Moston. They have also been successful in obtaining a £10,000 grant for play area improvements along Church lane in Moston. The group are keen supporters of the Irk Valley Project and will be involved in the regeneration of Moston Vale, an area of open space that backs on to over two hundred houses.

Brenda Collingwood, Secretary of the MVRA says  
"We've seen some real changes in the first year of the Irk Valley Project. Its good to see things happening that improve the local environment"



## It doesn't stop there... Other Achievements in 2001/2

- Friends of Blackley Forest (FBF) become first Manchester Winners of a Green Apple Award for environmental improvements
- FBF are successful in obtaining a £10,000 grant to provide new wheelchair access onto the site from Victoria Avenue
- Crosslee Tenants and Residents Association (CTRA) successfully obtain a £10,000 grant for a wheelchair accessible track and associated path improvements at Baileys Wood
- Over a kilometre of metal knee rail, barriers and stiles are installed to define the perimeter of Baileys Wood, Blackley
- Phil Heaps collects the runners up cheque for £1000 on behalf of the CTRA awarded to them by the NHS Health Challenge Awards
- Boggart Hole Clough achieves Green Flag status, an award for open space excellence given by the Civic Trust

## The future is bright... the future is Irk Valley Blue!!

We've made a good start. We've got great support from all our partners. We want to build on this success systematically and sustainably, to show local people that the Project is a long-term vision, not just here today, gone tomorrow. The Project next year will aim to give Irk Valley sites consistent definition and management.

By this I mean access stiles, fencing and gates in our new Irk Valley Blue colour. Irk Valley signs, with a logo, will be installed at site entrances. Interpretive display panels will provide site specific information.

These all add to giving sites a managed look.

We will also be focussing on diversifying the landscape, improving woodland management and using creative conservation techniques to enhance areas for wildlife. We will be working with more schools and colleges, and hopefully getting more people out and about using the Irk Valley.

### Just Do It!!

#### Practical Conservation in the Irk Valley

Why go on an event? Why Volunteer?

Well, why not attend a day and find out?

In the first year of the Project we've been working with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers midweek group on a number of sites in the Irk Valley. Tasks have included :

- **Step building**
- **Woodland management**
- **Access stile construction**
- **Boardwalk building**
- **Wildflower seed sowing**

The great thing about volunteering is that at the end of the day you can always see the results of your endeavours. It's a good way to find out about new sites close to home, and to contribute a little to the future of the Irk Valley.

Volunteers from the Booth Centre in Manchester worked in all weathers over the winter in Blackley Forest on a range of practical tasks. Ten people regularly attended the Friday sessions run jointly between the Irk Valley Project and BTCV. The commitment has been fantastic, and the Centre Volunteers will continue working in the Irk Valley next year. Manchester City Council Leader Richard Leese also popped down to the Forest to lend his support.



#### People matter

**People care about things they own**

**The people of North Manchester own the Irk Valley**

**Help us to make it work**

**Dave Barlow  
Irk Valley Project Officer**



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