

Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project

Autumn 2025

It's been an exciting year so far, with so much activity taking place on site over a particularly stunning summer. We've just passed the halfway point of the project and the interest and support from the community continues to inspire us as we move forward into what's to come. Thank you to all who have been involved, from those who've come to events or volunteered, to those who've shared their ideas and visions for what's next.

Nature Recovery

Part of the Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project involves engaging the local community in a series of training and citizen science projects. In July, we delivered our first training event focussing on 'Grassland Plant Identification' in our meadows. As part of the training, we taught volunteers how to carry out a Rapid Grassland Assessment to monitor the grasslands. This monitoring will show us how the plant communities are changing at Allestree Park over the next few years.



In October we delivered an 'Introduction to Fungi' workshop. This training introduced people to the major groups of fungi found in the UK and gave them the opportunity to explore the species found at Allestree Park and how to record their sightings. We found the classic red toadstool mushroom, Fly Agaric, as well as some more interesting looking species such as Jelly Ear (which as the name suggests look like ears!) and the very striking Yellow Staghorn (pictured).



This summer we carried out our first phase of habitat interventions on some of the grasslands at Allestree Park by kickstarting their floral diversity. To do this, we carried out two different approaches.

In August, volunteers and children from the Pakistan Community Centre joined us to spread flower-rich green hay on a species-poor field. Green hay is harvested wildflowers and grasses collected just before they drop their seed. By spreading this hay, the seeds will have fallen onto the bare ground we created, germinating next year and improving the species diversity in that field.





We were then joined by five local schools and some volunteers to enhance another two fields that are already established meadows but are missing some key wildflower species. Throughout October, they planted 1,258 wildflower plug plants on the A6 fields which included Bird's-foot Trefoil, Ox-eye Daisy, Tufted Vetch, Field Scabious, Betony, Cowslip, Meadow Vetchling, Great Burnet, Meadow Cranesbill and Lady's Bedstraw.

Derby Park Rangers have also been working on site to improve grasslands for wildlife in Woodlands Field at the northwest side of the park. The team took a day off their regular routes to join Sandra, Parks Officer to cut areas of scrub to stop this encroaching into the grassland further. The Rangers also helped to repair steps between Woodlands and Burley Top Field to improve access for park users over the upcoming (and very likely to be) wetter months.

If you'd like to read more, then Emily (Urban Rewilding Project Officer) has written two blogs, which can be found via the QR codes. We have also created a short video detailing what we've been up to over the summer.



Blog 1



Blog 2



Video

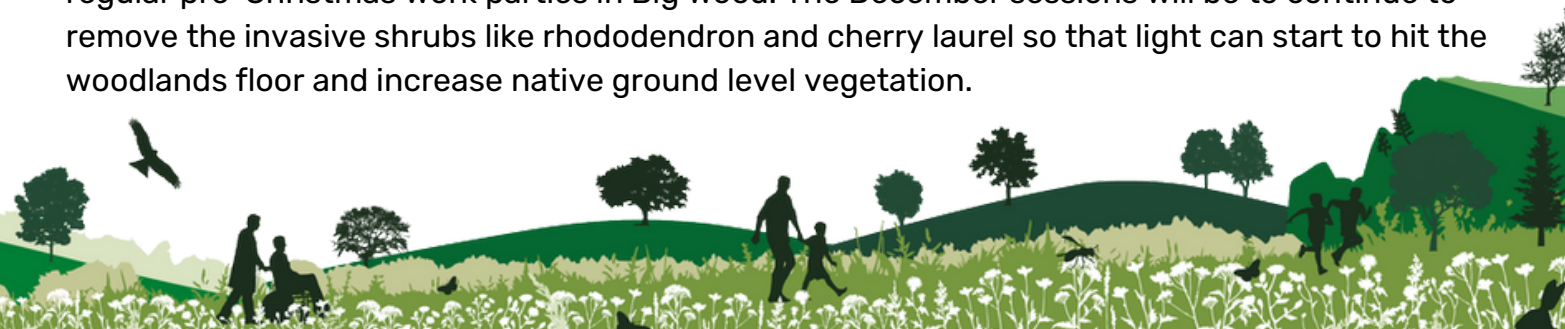


Get Involved

As part of the Community Rewilding Project we are looking for interested, local people to volunteer with us to carry out different practical habitat tasks and surveying at Allestree Park. The volunteering is ad-hoc and may happen in the week or weekend. When a task arises, we will send out an invite to signed-up volunteers. There is no commitment to a certain number of days required as the opportunity is flexible. If you're interested, we'd love to hear from you. No prior experience is necessary, just a willingness to get involved in the rewilding project. To apply for the opportunity, create an account on Team Kinetic (<https://derbyshirewt.teamkinetic.co.uk>) and apply or if you want to find out more then please get in touch at allestreepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk.

Derby Parks Volunteers

Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming works from Derby Parks Volunteers who will be back on site in early November to help with scrub removal in the A6 fields, an area of the park which is vital for wildflowers and invertebrates including a wide variety of butterflies. This will be followed by their regular pre-Christmas work parties in Big Wood. The December sessions will be to continue to remove the invasive shrubs like rhododendron and cherry laurel so that light can start to hit the woodlands floor and increase native ground level vegetation.



University of Derby

Earlier this month, we were joined by 40 University of Derby students for their student induction day. The University of Derby is one of the partners in the community rewilding project and we work closely together to create opportunities for their students to be involved at Allestree Park. The students carried out a range of tasks on the day including scrub control, pond creation, harvest mice and fungi surveying. We have a number of research projects happening at Allestree Park with university lecturers and students, read what one student has been up to:

During the months of July and August, University of Derby Student Hugo Hughes conducted a research project at Allestree Park as part of his MSc in Conservation Biology. The research looked at the biodiversity value of Ancient and Veteran Oak Trees for Birds and Bats. Ancient and Veteran Trees (AVTs) are highly important for wildlife due to the characteristics they have such as deadwood and hollowing which provide habitats for lots of different species. Allestree Park is home to a number of these types of trees and it's helpful to understand the relationship between the AVTs, Birds and Bats, especially within the rewilding project as very little research currently exists.

Hugo focused on 15 Oak Trees across the park, observing and recording Bird and Bat activity. He recorded 56 species of Birds including Jays, Greater Spotted Woodpeckers and Barn Owls and 13 different species of bats including the Grey Long Eared Bat and the Western Barbastelle. Tree 10, a large Oak adjacent to the main path in the southern section of the park (near to the Main Avenue Entrance) was found to be one of the most valuable trees in terms of features and Bird and Bat activity recorded. Hugo Commented about his experience:

"It has been an absolute pleasure doing research in the wonderful Allestree Park. There is certainly a lot more to find out, and I hope there will be further research looking at the Trees, Birds, Bats and other species within the park in the future. One of the most memorable evenings was an observation I did with my colleague, where we heard three different Barn Owls all screeching at once surrounding us. I encourage anyone that loves nature and wildlife to visit the park, you never know what interesting things you might see"

The Landscape Ecology and Ecosystem Function (LEEF) group at University of Derby are working together with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Derby City Parks and university students to take on a project to bring together academic expertise, student opportunities, and modern technology to assess the outcomes of the rewilding at Allestree.



Although we can all see some of the outcomes like longer grass, the LEEF group believe that science can be used to evidence many other benefits and reveal unseen changes in the landscape. In so doing, the Allestree project can advance our understanding of the power of nature to provide for people and planet, sharing this information can have an impact beyond Derby, even throughout the world. Analysis already underway includes drone imagery for measuring photosynthesis, changes in plant species, soil microbiology, and carbon emissions measurements. As part of this project "community transects" have been established throughout the old fairways, identifying places where repeated surveying is being done, and it is hoped in time to be established as long-term monitoring locations that are also available for community engagement e.g. school groups and citizen scientists.



Access and Recreation

Throughout September and October, the project team undertook numerous rounds of engagement with park visitors at the Talking Tents, local school children, attendees of guided walks, residents at a variety of local forums and parks users across the wider city. At the previous consultation you said you wanted better accessibility and more recreational activities, we have spent the first year trialling a few options but recently were asking how we can continue to improve, and you have given us lots of great ideas from new benches in a variety of locations, to activities you'd like to try and ideas for artwork and educational information. Look out for future updates of how these ideas progress!

Pop-up woodland shelters

During September, staff and Derby Parks Volunteers prepared areas for two pop up canopies in the trees – a parachute canopy by the utility building facing the hall, and a tarp canopy close to the entrance near The Evergreen Hall. Both can be put up and taken down as needed to support educational sessions like Nature Tots, Junior Rangers and school groups.



This is a step towards our shared goal of creating a permanent, wooden framed outdoor engagement shelter to complement a new pond dipping area planned for the future. We have been working with local groups and schools to shape the design, and we are now in the early stages of creating plans for this project.



Junior Ranger Collaboration Event

In September, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Junior Rangers teamed up at Allestree Park for the day. Together, they carried out a range of community rewilding activities, including cutting and raking a meadow and clearing bunkers to support habitat creation.

For many of them, sessions like these are a first step into nature conservation, offering the chance to gain new environmental skills, meet like-minded people and build confidence outdoors. It's also a way of inspiring the next generation to take action for nature and see how they can make a real difference in their local green spaces.

Watch the Junior
Rangers
Collaboration Event
video



Nature Tots

A new Nature Tots group has launched at Allestree Park, aimed at giving pre-school children and their families the chance to connect with nature through outdoor play and learning. Led by St Edmund's Baby and Toddler Group and supported with training and resources from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Nature Tots is a playgroup with a difference. Designed to connect pre-school children with nature, encouraging learning, play and fun outdoors.

Sessions run on the 2nd Thursday of the month from 10am – 11.30am

For more info contact Caroline at St Edmunds -

steds.stmatts@outlook.com

Dates for 2025 sessions: Nov 13th & Dec 11th



Be a Jay Day

You may have noticed on your recent walks that acorns have been booming this year, as well as other nuts, fruits and berries. This is great news for our wildlife - being provided with a vital food source throughout the autumn-winter months. Our mammals and birds then do their own bit for seed dispersal: some carry the seed far afield in their guts and package them neatly in natural organic fertilizer (!!) whilst others, like jays and squirrels, bury acorns in the ground to save for the winter. Many don't get found and, in this way, new oak trees are planted.

Beavers, cubs, schools and members of the public have joined us this autumn to give our native trees a helping hand. They mimicked the behaviours of 'nature's foresters', foraging for nuts and berries, using different techniques to gather a variety of native seeds to disperse on Allestree Park. Many took an Allestree acorn away with them to plant, helping the Allestree oaks to spread far and wide.



Be a Wild Pony

Saturday 1st November
1pm - 4pm

Free!

Join the herd at Allestree Park this November as we become wild ponies for the day!

As selective grazers, wild ponies play a crucial role in maintaining healthy ecosystems by managing the spread of tougher grasses and plants.

Using tools, we'll mimic their behaviour - pushing back the brambles to maintain species diversity.

Event suitable for 8 years + with adult supervision.

The 'mane' event will take place from the 'Main Car Park' off Duffield Rd (A6), DE22 2EU. Please meet us at 1pm with sensible footwear & gardening gloves and if possible - tools such as shears, loppers or secateurs.



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Future Events

Be a Bison

Saturday 29th November
1pm - 4pm

Free!

Step into the hooves of the hefty bison this November on Allestree Park!

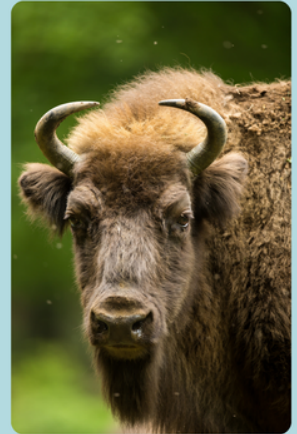
Naturally, bison manage woodlands. They encourage more light to the woodland floor and increase the amount of deadwood to benefit native plants and animals.

Using tools, we'll roam through the Allestree woodlands and mimic the behaviour of these incredible ecosystem engineers.

Event suitable for 8 years + with adult supervision.

Join the herd at 1pm in the 'Main Car Park' off Duffield Rd (A6), DE22 2EU

Please bring sensible footwear & gardening gloves and if possible - tools such as bow saws & loppers.



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Wild Wellbeing

At Allestree Park

Tuesdays 1pm-2.30pm
October 7th | 14th | 21st | 28th
November 4th | 11th 2025

Free!

Join Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to slow down and enjoy some time in nature to give your wellbeing a boost.

We'll be taking a slow, short stroll to see what we can notice together in nature using our different senses. This is an opportunity to relax and take some time out for yourself.

Sessions are free, but booking essential.

If you would benefit from support to access this session, please talk to your social prescriber about our Nature Buddies scheme.

For more details and to book scan here:



www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do
Call or text Kirsty Barker - 07736 291 426



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Friends of Allestree Park

Fungi Walk

Enjoy a morning discovering an array of weird and wonderful fungi in Big Wood.

Saturday 22nd November at 10.30am.

Meet at the Woodlands Road Car Park.

Free event, all welcome, children must be accompanied.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Allestree Park (FOAP) will be held on **Wednesday 19th November** at the Memorial Hall, Cornhill, Allestree. Doors open at **7pm**, meetings starts at **7.15pm**.