

# Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project

## Winter Newsletter

2025 was an exciting year for the Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project, with so much activity taking place on site. 2026 is looking to be even more exciting, with many ways for you to get involved in community rewilding. From volunteering, training or attending events, we hope you will be able to join us and make Allestree Park even richer for people and for wildlife. You will find our 2026 timeline at the end of this newsletter but first, we hope you enjoy reading some of the key updates from the project partners.

We organised two new community rewilding activities this winter with **'Be a Wild Pony'** and **'Be a Bison'**.

Junior Rangers, Allestree Volunteers, Derby Parks Volunteers and Derby Park Rangers trotted to either the Woodlands Field or the A6 fields back in November. Here they replicated the work of wild ponies, nibbling (with tools not teeth) some of the more vigorous plant species that the grazing cattle don't particularly like, such as bramble, and created patches of bare ground for new flower species to be able to germinate. Really good progress was made in these areas, and we look forward to replicating this work in other areas of the site.



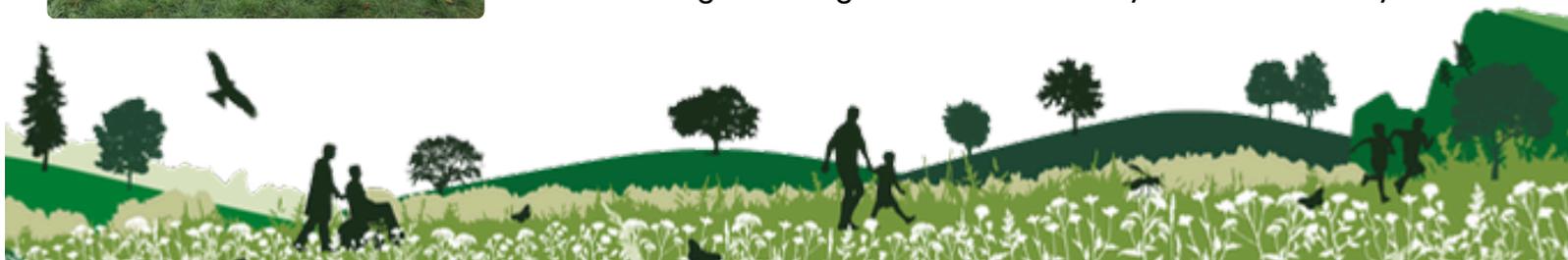
A herd of volunteers then stepped into the hooves of the hefty bison and roamed through the Allestree woodlands, mimicking the behaviour of these incredible ecosystem engineers - nature's woodland managers. Through a variety of techniques, they increased more light to the woodland floor and more deadwood, which will benefit our native plants and animals.



### Tree planting with Trees for Derby and Allestree Volunteers



Trees for Derby returned to site in December and invited volunteers from the Friends of Allestree Park and the Allestree Volunteers to help undertake some maintenance at the Coronation Micro Wood and plant native saplings in the gaps of the hedgerows along the drive from the A6 to the main car park. With barrows of wood chip spread and a little over 300 saplings planted we hope that their efforts will become clear to see over the next few years with a more diverse and healthier hedgerow to greet visitors as they enter the site by vehicle.



## Rhododendron Clearance

Rhododendron is an invasive shrub that has spread rapidly through Allestree's woodlands for many years. This shrub, although pretty in springtime, forms a dense canopy that blocks sunlight from reaching the woodland floor and is also toxic to other plants reducing their ability to germinate. A huge thanks to our army of volunteers who joined us throughout December, including: the Mortgage Advice Bureau, Derby Park Rangers, Junior Rangers, Derby Parks Volunteers, Friends of Allestree Park, the Allestree Volunteers and Nottingham's Keeping it Wild Youth Team. Our army cleared rhododendron from areas around Burley Brook and then used what they cleared to create what has been dubbed by many as "The Great Wall of Rhoddie" in Big Wood - a dead hedge along the top of a steep drop into the woodlands.



## Have you HERD the news?

Some of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's grazing cattle have moo-ved back to Allestree for the winter season. Since early December, 9 cattle have been grazing in the A6 Fields as part of the Higher-Level Stewardship project, funded by Natural England. They will then move around site to help improve other areas of Allestree Park including Woodlands Field and Burley Top. The grazing project been hailed as an example of good practice in the East Midlands region and has won national awards for innovation. Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, the collaboration between Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Derby City Council and volunteer cattle checkers from the Friends of Allestree Park aims to improve biodiversity and maintain the natural beauty of the meadows and semi-improved grasslands. All are welcome to visit and observe the herd hard at work, but please remember these vital safety rules: always walk calmly and keep your dog securely on a lead. It may be tempting but please do not feed the cows - even small treats like apples can hurt their stomachs.

## Join our Volunteering Sessions

As part of the Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project, we deliver a range of ad-hoc volunteering sessions inclusive for all ages and abilities including practical habitat management tasks, surveying for various species and training workshops. In addition, we are now starting a regular practical volunteering programme with Derby City Council, every **second Thursday** and **fourth Saturday** of the month. The first session starts on **Thursday 12th February!** If you'd like to get involved, then please get in touch at [allestreepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk](mailto:allestreepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk)



## Thank you to Oakwood Men's Shed Group

With a growing number of toddlers joining us for our monthly Nature Tots sessions, we were soon stretched for resources. We therefore reached out to Oakwood Men's Shed Group - a social group which aims to form a fully inclusive community workshop where people can come together to make, repair, and repurpose items, for their own benefit or that of the local community.

The 'shedders' immediately came to our rescue, sourcing wood from other Derby parks and cleverly crafted a set of 168 nature blocks which they delivered directly to our Nature Tots session. The blocks provided the children with endless ways to build, stack and engage with natural materials. We're already discussing their next project!



Nature Tots is led by **St Edmund's Baby and Toddler Group** and supported with training and resources from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

Sessions run on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday** of the month from **10am - 11.30am**

For more info contact Caroline at St Edmunds - [steds.stmatts@outlook.com](mailto:steds.stmatts@outlook.com)

Dates for 2026 sessions: **15th Jan, 12th Feb, 12th Mar, 23rd Apr, 14th May, 11th Jun, 9th Jul, No session in August, 10th Sep, 8th Oct, 12th Nov, 10th Dec**

## University of Derby established Community Transects for research and monitoring

A highlight of 2025 for the Landscape Ecology and Ecosystem Function (LEEF) research group at University of Derby has been our research and student engagement in the Allestree project. We have established "Community Transects" in the park, which are simply wooden posts marking the locations where we carry out repeated surveys of all different kinds, from microbes to trees.



We invite you to use these survey locations and add to our data! No observation is too small, and community engagement in learning about our environment is just as important as the data itself. We are planning to create some resources to help community groups make use of the transects, but in the meantime, you can get in touch with us if you would like more information (contact emails at the bottom of next page).



Fig 1 - University staff surveying at the Community Transects



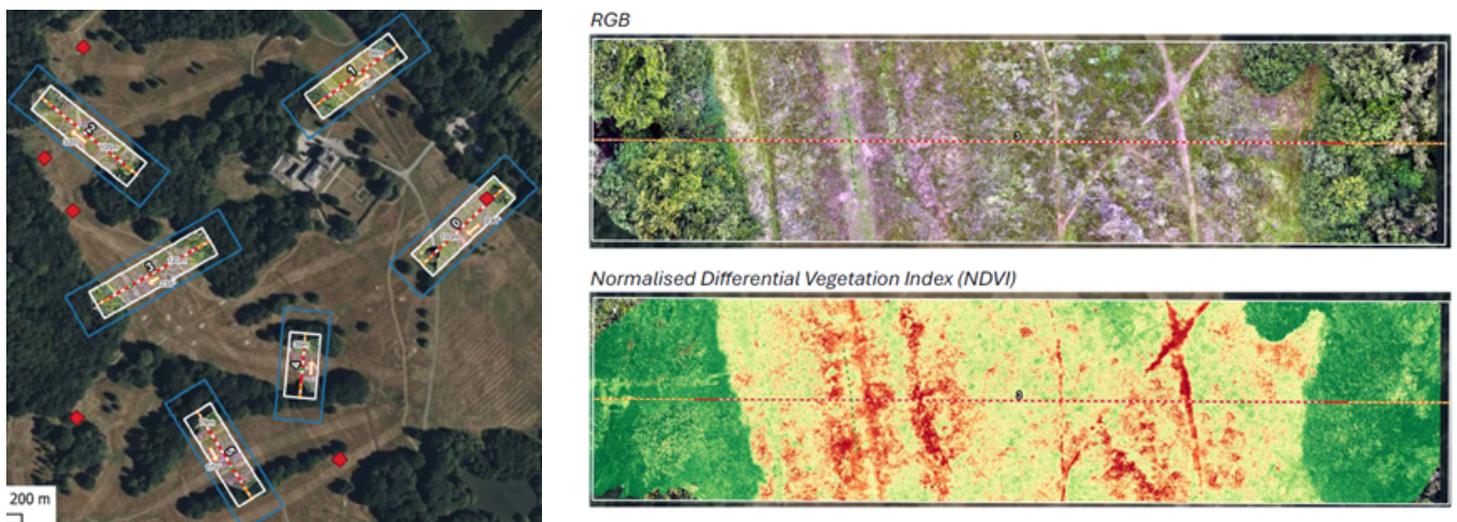
### Continued from page 3...

Involving our students in the research has facilitated us to achieve much more. Student projects on the transects are researching soil properties, invertebrate communities, creating educational resources to name a few. One project about the effect of scrub habitat regeneration upon bird populations was so good that we have submitted it for publication in an academic journal.

Through taught classes and university staff surveys we can see benefits of the reduced management in terms of changes in grass species and encroachment by tree seedlings and saplings including more Oak and Sweet Chestnut coming in. Our research will continue to observe and analyse these changes, aiming to provide information to inform land management choices at Allestree, and beyond. We have also conducted some drone surveys, collected DNA from the transects, and made measurements of soil properties. The DNA will be used to characterise the microbial communities in the soil across the transects under different land use categories of path, grassland, woodland, and woodland edge.

Our first look at the drone survey data shows that we can observe individual plants, so we decided to repeat these surveys to be able to track the vegetation changes over time. Furthermore, we can see how well the ecosystems are working from the multispectral device on the drone, such as estimating the amount of photosynthesis (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. Aerial view of the Community Transects, and a close-up view of the drone imagery from transect 3. The colour scale on NDVI result shows photosynthetic potential from red (low), yellow (intermediate), green (high). Notice how this differs depending on the land use / cover.



In a future update we will report on the DNA results for soil microbiology and the plant surveys. If you would like to get in touch with the **LEEF research group** at the University of Derby, please send email to **Elle** and **David** - [E.Atkins2@derby.ac.uk](mailto:E.Atkins2@derby.ac.uk); [D.R.Elliott@derby.ac.uk](mailto:D.R.Elliott@derby.ac.uk) .

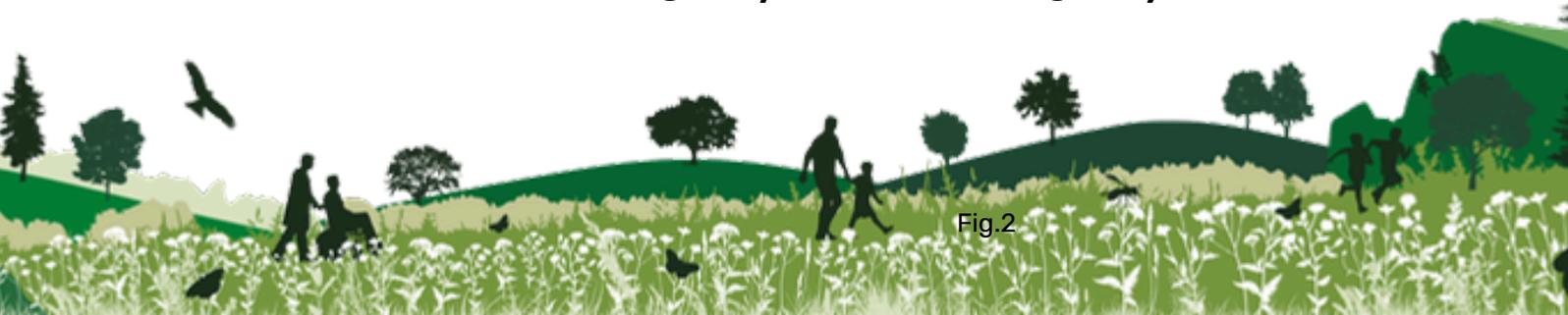


Fig.2

## How can I get involved?

We have created a timeline of events and training opportunities for 2026. Full details of the opportunities can be found on the following webpage

**[www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/rewilding-alleestree-park](http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/rewilding-alleestree-park)** or by accessing the QR code. For any questions or to get involved, please email **[alleestrepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk](mailto:alleestrepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk)**



### 3rd February - Winter Tree Identification

(fully booked)

Learn how to identify different trees on your walk and find out more about them.

### 28th February - Be a Beaver

By mimicking their dam building techniques, become a busy beaver and help us to slow the flow whilst creating some wonderful wetland habitats.

### 1st March - Butterfly Identification Training

Learn how to identify all 59 butterfly species in the UK and how to monitor populations in your local area.

### 18th April - Be a Boar Day

Join us for a 'boaring' time, mimicking wild boar grubbing around in the soil, to disturb dormant wildflowers and encourage them to grow.

### 23rd April - Why do we need healthy soil?

Learn how to tell if a soil is healthy depending on its physical (colour, texture) and chemical (pH, carbon & water content) factors.

### 2nd May - Be a Wolf Day

Join us for a guided walk, where we'll be inviting your four-legged friends to wear a seed pouch and scatter some wildflower seeds.

### 11th - 15th May - Wilder Work Experience Week

We're inviting local Year 10 - 12 students to experience a range of careers led by experts in their field, hoping to inspire the next generation of conservationists!

### May (date tbc) - Bird Identification Training Day

Find out more about the different birds that use Allestree Park and how to begin to identify them by sound and sight.

### June (date tbc) - Grassland Plant Identification Training

Join us to learn how to identify common plants you can see in the flower-rich meadows at Allestree Park.

### Spring and Summer - Moth Breakfast

Explore what moths are using the park and help us identify them.

### Summer - Bumblebee Identification Training

Learn how to identify some of the 270 species of bees in the UK at this training workshop in partnership with Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT).

### Summer - Have a Bash!

Join us to control the spread of the invasive Himalayan Balsam on site through the process of 'bashing', helping to protect our valuable native plants.

### Summer - Community Celebration Event

Join your community to celebrate all of the wonderful projects that are happening at Allestree Park and get involved in actions for nature.

### Summer - Summer Tree Identification

If you've always wanted to know how to identify different trees on your walk, then come along to this workshop.

### Summer - Scything Workshop

Learn how to use a scythe to cut a meadow and find out more about traditional meadow management.

### Autumn - Dung Beetle Monitoring

There are 60 species of dung beetle in the UK - how many do we have at Allestree Park?

### Autumn - Be a Jay Day

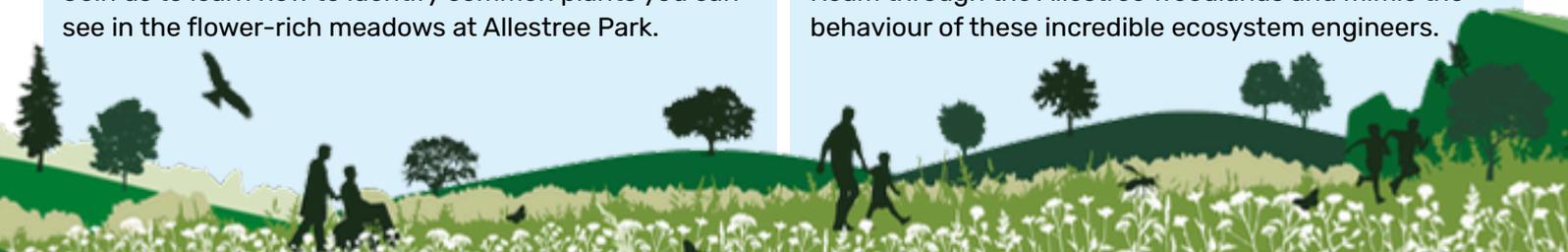
Jays plant thousands of acorns that grow into wonderful oak trees! Now it's your turn to 'Be a Jay for the Day' by searching for nuts and berries and then burying them.

### Autumn - Be a Wild Pony Day

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

### Autumn - Be a Bison Day

Roam through the Allestree woodlands and mimic the behaviour of these incredible ecosystem engineers.



Forthcoming Events

# Be a Beaver

Saturday 28th February  
2pm - 4pm

Free!

Calling all Eager Beavers

By mimicking the dam building techniques of these incredible ecosystem engineers, become a busy beaver and help to slow the flow at Allestree Park whilst creating some wonderful wetland habitats.



All welcome!

Meet at 2pm in the Main Car Park off Duffield Rd (A6), DE22 2EU

Please wear sensible outdoor clothing & remember your wellies!

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Wilder by nature



# Butterfly Identification & Transect Training

Sunday 1st March, 11:30am-2:30pm at Allestree Club, DE22 2FS

Free!

Love Butterflies?  
Interested in Volunteering?  
Butterfly Conservation needs you!

New volunteers are needed to help monitor butterflies at Allestree Park and across Derbyshire as part of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS).

Butterfly Conservation and the Allestree Park Community Rewilding Project are offering free training. This will provide you with the skills needed to carry out the UKBMS monitoring led by County Recorder, Ken Orpe.

Hot drinks and cake will be provided, as well as an optional walk to learn more about the Community Rewilding Project.



© Jon Hawkins

Please let us know if you are attending by emailing - allestreepark@derbyshirewt.co.uk

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# Be a Boar

Saturday 18th April  
2pm - 4pm

Free!

Join us for a 'boaring' time in Allestree Park, mimicking wild boar rooting around in the soil (using tools, not snouts!), to disturb dormant wildflowers and encourage them to grow.



All Welcome!

Meet at 2pm in the Main Car Park off Duffield Rd (A6), DE22 2EU where we'll lead you to our boaring site.

Please wear gloves and sensible footwear!

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Wilder by nature



# Be a Wolf

Saturday 2nd May  
2pm - 4pm

Free!

Before their extinction in the UK, wolves carried seeds in their fur, spreading them across large areas and helping native plants to flourish.

Join us for a guided walk, where we'll be inviting your four-legged friends to wear a seed pouch and mimic the behaviour of their ancestors by scattering some wildflower seeds across Allestree Park. Who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks!



All four-legged friends (on leads) welcome!

Meet at 2pm in the Main Car Park off Duffield Rd (A6), DE22 2EU

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Wilder by nature



# Wilder Work Experience

11th - 15th May 2026  
Allestree Park, Derby

Free!

Are you in school Years 10-13, passionate about the environment and looking for a unique work experience opportunity?

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is hosting a careers week for young people just like you!

You'll spend a week at Allestree Park - the UK's largest urban rewilding project - learning hands-on practical skills to take your first steps towards a possible career in the amazing field of conservation.



Scan to apply



Or visit: jobs.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/job/604250

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# Friends of Allestree Park Events

## Pond dipping

May 16th 1.30pm - 4.00pm



- Mini-beast hunt TBD
- Painting in the park TBD
- Summer event TBD
- Bat walk TBD in Sept