

GROUNDWORK LAUNCHES NEW 'NORTHERN NETWORK' OF GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, and Merseyside (CLM) have today launched the Northern Network, a new community of people and projects involved in the set up and running of shared green spaces.

Groundwork's aim for this project is to use its extensive experience, connections and research to build a thriving network of Green Community Hubs right across the North of England. This coming-together of people and projects will provide peer support, opportunities to swap ideas and to share resources, and to take part in a programme of events and training, all ultimately driving a movement of greener communities, for the benefit of all.

Sam Marine, Northern Network Project Manager said of the launch *"We're thrilled to have now officially launched the Northern Network. The last 6 months has seen us developing our vision and objectives, engaging with various partners and communities to understand how they would benefit, and building an online hub and learning programme."*

The Northern Network can be found at www.northernnetwork.org and anyone involved in Green Community Hubs can sign up as a member for free. Membership offers access to a host of resources and events.

Sam continues *"Our launch also marks the beginning of our events programme and we're offering a number of free sessions in May, including an online networking evening, two marketing workshops, and a guest speaker. -On 10th May, the eco-activist and entrepreneur Ruth Watson will be joining us to discuss how her businesses allow her to follow her values and benefit her community."*

To power the growth of the network, Groundwork CLM are working with four other Groundwork Trusts in the North and each Trust has a project facilitator supporting a pilot Green Hub in their local area.

GROUNDWORK LAUNCHES NEW 'NORTHERN NETWORK' OF GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

The role of these pilot hubs is to provide learning for other network members through practical action on the ground and in the community. Learning resources include case studies, how-to guides, skills-sharing events, and training sessions.

Jon Hutchinson, Programme Director for Communities explains *"The aim is to co-create a vibrant network of pilot hubs in partnership with members of their local communities. The hubs are utilising existing assets and providing a broad range of services that build resilience and improve health outcomes. Some of the types of activities that are being offered at the hubs include: volunteering, educational workshops, community gardening and wellbeing sessions, food growing and conservation projects. We'll share this wealth of experience with others to inspire more people and communities to take action."*

The pilot hubs are:

- **Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, and Merseyside** Clay Pitts Park, Morecambe
- **Groundwork Greater Manchester** West Gorton Community Park
- **Groundwork Yorkshire** Horton Community Farm
- **Cumbria and North East** Workington Green Community Hub
- **South and North Tyneside** West Boldon Lodge

The Northern Network is also mapping Green Community Hubs across the North and anyone can add their shared green space, whether that be a park, community garden, allotment, or even a shared alleyway. <https://www.northernnetwork.org/green-map-of-the-north/>

Get involved

The Northern Network is open to anyone to join and benefit from shared learning, for free. Members are also encouraged to share their own news, events, reports and case studies.

To join, visit <https://www.northernnetwork.org/>

The Northern Network project is supported by The National Lottery Community Fund and the team are working with evaluation specialists Wavehill to report on the project.

-ENDS-

CONTACT

For more information, including images, or to arrange interviews or site visits, contact:

Amy Bishop

Communications Officer, Northern Network
Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, and Merseyside
Amy.Bishop@groundwork.org.uk

GROUNDWORK LAUNCHES NEW 'NORTHERN NETWORK' OF GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

NOTES TO EDITORS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Northern Network project was created on the back of growing evidence of the benefits of shared green spaces and community hubs. Groundwork's 2020 report **Growing Spaces: Community hubs and their role in recovery** explored the benefits that three Green Community hubs in different parts of the country were creating for local people, and imagined the role they could play as we emerged from the Covid-10 pandemic.

Graham Duxbury, Groundwork's national Chief Executive has said *"The pandemic showed us how important our social connections, and our ability to be active in green spaces are to our health and wellbeing. It also unlocked a whole new appetite for local volunteering. Green Community Hubs provide a focus for this voluntary action and a platform for delivering a much broader range of social, environmental and economic benefits in local areas"*

With 87% of adults, reporting an increase in their cost of living there will be an increasing number of individuals who will seek additional support to deal with the financial, social and health effects this will create. The outdoor spaces and green aspects of Green Community Hubs help build community resilience and provide a welcoming and safe space for individuals and their families.

Read the report: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/about-groundwork/reports/growingspaces/>

ABOUT THE NORTHERN NETWORK

The Northern Network is a new movement powered by Groundwork that connects green community spaces across the North of England.

Shared green spaces such as community farms, parks, fields, and allotments can all help to create thriving and resilient communities. They have the potential to bring people together, enhance prospects, improve health and wellbeing, and take positive action on the environment.

To power a vibrant green renaissance across the North, this new network connects communities, places, and projects, and provides learning exchanges, peer support, training, toolkits, and more.

As a result, we're helping to create a future where every neighbourhood is vibrant and green, every community is strong and able to shape its own destiny, and no-one is held back by their background or circumstances.

More information: <https://www.northernnetwork.org/>

ABOUT GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

Green community hubs are natural, outdoor spaces that are activated as a base for community activities. They might be community gardens, parks, nature reserves, or even just a small pocket of land on a housing estate.

Whatever form they take, they become part of the social infrastructure of a neighborhood or community – the places and spaces that enable social connections to flourish.

Although all Green Community Hub is unique, they often all share a series of recognizable, and replicable, features and are able to deliver broadly similar outcomes for people and places:

GROUNDWORK LAUNCHES NEW 'NORTHERN NETWORK' OF GREEN COMMUNITY HUBS

- **Social Spaces** Green Community Hubs are fundamentally social spaces that help people to broaden their networks and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Equality and Inclusion** The contribution of every individual is valued equally at Green Community Hubs, no matter their starting point.
- **Enhancing Prospects** Green Community Hubs can act as stepping stones, helping people into employment or back into education.
- **Health and Happiness** People who spend time at Green Community Hubs report a significant impact on their health and wellbeing.
- **Enabling Community Life** Green Community Hubs bring together people from different walks of life, fostering greater community cohesion the skills and knowledge of dedicated staff play a crucial role in enabling community life in and around the hub.
- **Improving the Environment** Green Community Hubs help to improve the local environment on the sites themselves, promote connection to nature and horticultural skills, 'green' the local area, and can play a role in raising awareness of climate change and biodiversity loss.

More information: <https://www.northernnetwork.org/about-green-hubs/>

ABOUT GROUNDWORK

Groundwork is a federation of UK charities working locally and nationally to transform lives in the UK's most disadvantaged communities. We're passionate about creating a future where every neighbourhood is vibrant and green, every community is strong and able to shape its own destiny, and no one is held back by their background or circumstances. We help people gain confidence and skills, get into training and work, protect and improve green spaces, lead more active lives and overcome significant challenges such as poverty, isolation, low skills and poor health.

More information: www.groundwork.org.uk

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

We are the largest funder of community activity in the UK – we support people and communities to prosper and thrive. We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with Government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives.

Our funding has a positive impact and makes a difference to people's lives. We support projects focussed on things that matter, including economic prosperity, employment, young people, mental health, loneliness and helping the UK reach NET Zero by 2050.

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £43 billion has been raised for good causes. National Lottery funding has been used to support over 635,000 projects - 255 projects per postcode area.

More information: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/>