

Excellence in Forestry Awards

Winner: Urban Forestry 2013

Name of Wood

**Northwood Forest Hills and
Northwood Green Streets, Knowsley, L33 9TW**

Background



Northwood Forest Hills offers a warm welcome

Northwood Forest Hills and Northwood Green Streets is a partnership project between The Mersey Forest, Knowsley Metropolitan Council and many other organisations including Northwood Allotments Association.

It is located in a socially and economically deprived neighbourhood on what had, for 20 years, been a derelict brownfield site. The site falls into three distinct sections:

- *Northwood Forest Hills, a 10 hectare site, lies on the northern edge of the housing estate. It is a mosaic of woodland, grasslands, wildflower meadows and a long stretch of water on what had been old railway sidings, industrial buildings, school and former housing*
- *The Rough - an area of established woodland, open space and wildflower meadows surrounded by high rise accommodation on one side and housing around the remainder*
- *200 street trees linking the two sites*

The woodlands

During 2011-2012 an incredible transformation took place. Where once the area was known for being ugly, scary and unwelcoming, a woodland and waterside mosaic of habitats has been created. The Rough includes some mature trees, grasslands and wildflower meadows. Landlife helps manage the wildflower meadows every year.

There is a low density mix of relatively young native trees in the north east amongst the water features and meadows. On the streets, specimen trees provide a green link between the two - a scheme which proved immensely popular with local residents vying to have the trees in front of their homes.

It was the linkages between the sites and the enthusiasm of the local community - the 'Northwood Mums' in particular - in deterring antisocial behaviour and promoting the woodland for use throughout the neighbourhood that won over the judges.



From railway sidings and derelict buildings to a mosaic of wetland, meadow and woodland habitats

Community involvement



The Rough transforms annually into a wildflower meadow loved by many

Northwood Forest Hills was a name chosen by local school children in a competition.

Almost everyone the judges spoke to talked about the huge transformation of the area.

From land which had been barricaded off behind a metal security fence - a place that attracted antisocial behaviour and rubbish dumping - it has become a well used and loved wooded green space with a mix of water and wetland features, grasslands and wildflower meadows.

The project has contributed significantly to the revitalisation of a neighbourhood which had previously been characterised by vandalism and empty houses, turning it into an area where people are proud to live.



An area well used by the local community

Recreation

As well as being well used by dog walkers, families, anglers and wildlife watchers it is also used as by three local primary schools and a secondary school as an outdoor classroom.

Community run Fun Days and other events have attracted hundreds, helping to develop and reinforce a community spirit.

The project has been so successful that Northwood Forest Hills is now classified as a Local Wildlife Site.

Innovation

The removal of a heavy steel security fence that had surrounded part of the site to incorporate fully the area into the community was praised by judges. The planting of the street trees to link the two schemes was also highlighted for the sense of continuity and involvement it brought to the neighbourhood - and as the only such linkage witnessed by judges amongst other entries.

Funding



Street trees are used to link the Rough with Northwood Forest Hills.

The project has been funded through the Forestry Commission's Setting the Scene for Growth programme, Big Lottery Fund, EWGS and M&S Green Living Places; Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, Knowsley Housing Trust, the Big Tree Plant, Woodland Trust and the Forest Education Initiative.

More information:

www.merseyforest.org.uk/news/northwood-forest-hills-is-launched

The Urban Forestry award was sponsored by



Forestry Commission

Judges were Trefor Thompson, formerly Principal Countryside Officer for Denbighshire County Council, and Les Starling former Woodland Officer with Forestry Commission Wales