

# Groundwork News



The newsletter of Groundwork Kent & Medway

Issue 5 · Summer 2009



**Natural Play a Success at Hillyfields**

# All wrapped up at Bluewater

At Christmas last year 20 previously unemployed local people wrapped thousands of presents at Bluewater - Europe's top retail and leisure destination. In partnership with the Community Forum at Bluewater, Employ Kent Thameside and John Lewis Partnership, Groundwork trained them in gift wrapping, till operation and chip and pin use, health and safety and customer service.

The service ran for 47 days leading up to Christmas and successfully delivered a quality service to Bluewater's usual high standards. Over 5,000 gifts were wrapped and two miles of ribbon used in the programme. On completion, CV training was provided to the participating staff at the Spark IT centre in Swanscombe and three have since gone on to full-time employment in the local area.

The programme was run as a not for profit enterprise and at the end a surplus of £700 was made which was given to the Community Forum at Bluewater to provide funding for local community projects. Following this success,



Groundwork has now run the programme for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day and is already gearing up for a successful second Christmas.

## Dartford Heath Restoration Progress



Groundwork, in partnership with Dartford Borough Council, is undertaking a valuable heathland restoration project on Dartford Heath that will bring back heather to the site, and improve the area for wildlife and the local community.

The project, funded by SITA Trust under its Enriching Nature funding scheme, is now in its second year and work is progressing well. Over the autumn months of last year, visitors to the heath will have seen lots of activity. During September and October, top soil was removed from the four restoration areas to make a suitable base, followed by the heather seeding during November.

Seed was sourced from Hankley Common in Surrey, with the help of Rob McGibbon, the Project Manager for the Surrey Heathlands project and was supplied by Poulson Plant Hire. The heather had been cut as part of management activities on Hankley Common but has now been put to good use on Dartford Heath. Heather seed needs frost to germinate, so the cold snap earlier in the year provided ideal conditions for this to happen and the areas will now be monitored to check for signs of heather growth. Any areas where the heather does not establish will be seeded again during this autumn.

# Revealing Secrets: Unearthing the Past



Jenny Glanfield, Education Officer, has been working on this new and exciting project with Brett Aggregates at their Faversham and Lydd quarries to deliver a five week programme with two local secondary and four local Primary schools and enabling Groundwork to operate in new parts of Kent. The project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will run until the end of this year.

Quarries can be fascinating but at the same time potentially very dangerous places. This project gives the opportunity for supervised visits led by the Brett staff, helping pupils and staff explore and learn more in a safe and controlled environment.

This Spring, pupils at Lydd Primary School and the Marsh Academy in New Romney have been discovering more about their local geography and geology by finding out the secrets that Lydd quarry holds. This included looking closely at the rocks and soils revealed, how they are processed and how they are restored. The Primary pupils got a special treat and met with Archaeologist Greg Priestley-Bell who showed them some of the things unearthed on the site, including whale bones, a Bronze age spear head and Medieval and Roman pottery.



Following their quarry visit the Secondary pupils worked with Community Artist Jane Pitt to create their own 3D model of the site based on their own interpretations of what they had seen and learnt during the visit.

As part of the project Brett will also be opening their doors to the public this summer during two specially arranged open days. These events will give the local community the chance to see inside the quarry site, view the pupils' work and find out more about the operational quarry on their doorstep.



**Groundwork moves East** In February this year, Rachael Noxon joined the Groundwork team as our Kent Coast Development Officer focusing on Thanet and Dover. Rachael is forming local partnerships with the aim of creating programmes that will tackle local issues of worklessness and community regeneration. An early success has been supporting the Whitehall Rec Project Working Group's Family Fun Day in Ramsgate this spring. The Group is aiming for improvements to the Rec including new play facilities. You can contact Rachael at [Rachael.Noxon@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:Rachael.Noxon@groundwork.org.uk).

# Hillyfields Play Park

***"These improvements to Hillyfields Play Park have been a long time coming and have been needed for many years. I'm delighted with the results and this project shows a good collaboration between Groundwork, Medway Council and the Friends of Hillyfields."***

Mayor of Medway, Cllr David Carr



In April 2007 Groundwork's Landscape Team were contracted by Medway Council to undertake a series of community consultation workshops and to design and oversee the improvements to the Hillyfields Play Park in Gillingham.

The project engaged the local community in the planning and design stages of the process and saw strong community links forged between Medway Council, Groundwork, The Friends of Hillyfields, local residents, nearby schools and the local police force.

The improvements to the park reflect a growing trend in play design whereby natural elements are introduced into the play park, using and creating landforms combined with vegetation, wood, stone, mud, sand and bark. The consultation approach asked children to think about how they play, asking them not what they want but rather what they would like to do.

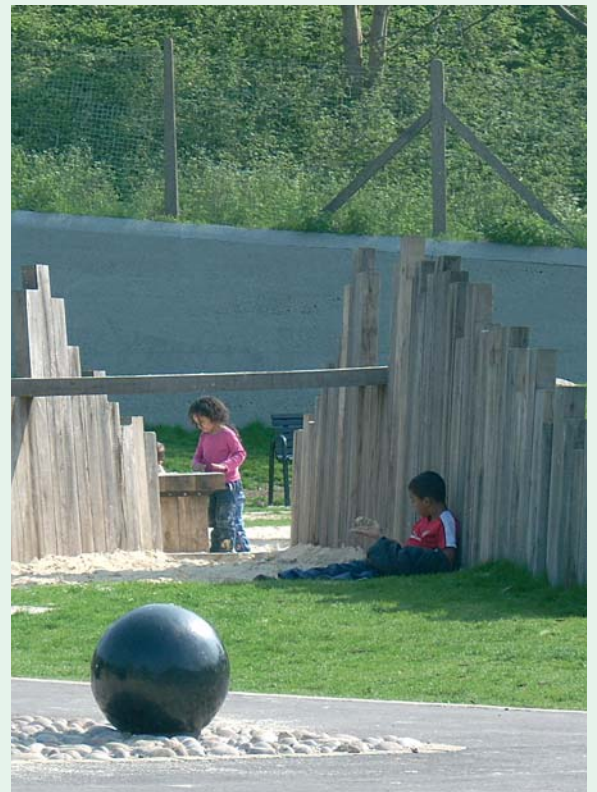


Hillyfields Play Park's topography played a large part in determining the layout of the design whilst also providing the opportunity for an exciting variety of equipment and semi-natural features to be included in the final design. The park is now a mix of natural and traditional play areas, with mounds, tunnels and loose fill surfaces, combined with swings, roundabouts, climbing nets and slides. The design reflects the need for more inclusive and challenging play, providing elements of risk and

***"Friends of Hillyfields are thrilled with the marvellous improvements to Hillyfields Community Park. A big thank you to all concerned for the work that has helped this to become the fantastic greenspace and play area it is now."***

Pat Cooper,  
Chair of the Friends of Hillyfields

# Opens to Applause



opportunities for creativity for all ages and abilities. The choice of equipment and surfacing materials provides a deliberately limited colour palette, using natural materials wherever possible.

The improvements to the park were completed in December 2008 and an official ceremony was held inviting all partners and local groups that played an active part in the parks refurbishment. Medway Council's Community Service Portfolio Holder Howard Doe explained, 'Medway Council is pleased to be working with Groundwork in this cutting edge example of play park design. This is the future direction of play provision involving community participation at all stages.'

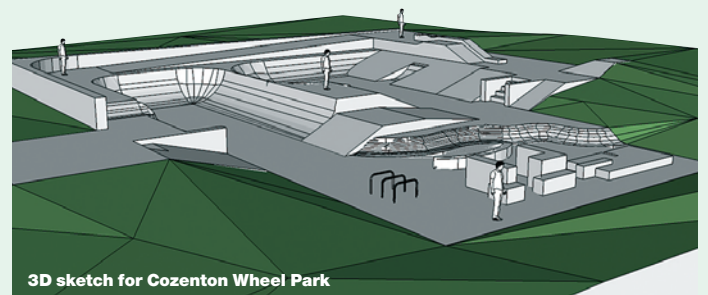
Funding for the improvements was secured from Berkeley Homes' contribution from the Victory Pier development and from Biffaward.

***"This is a fantastic achievement brought about by the hard work of the Friends of Hillyfields, Medway Council and Groundwork. This play facility is a great provision for local youth and the local police are keen to work with partners and with young people so they can have a safe place to play and socialise. We hope to replicate this project across Medway as it will be an advantage to all young people in Medway."***

Inspector Simon Alland, Neighbourhood Police Inspector for Medway and Gillingham

***"I welcome today's event at Hillyfields Play Park and it brings to conclusion the collaboration between the local community, Friends of Hillyfields, Medway Council, Councillors, Groundwork and the private sector. Groundwork has been working closely with the local community and today we can see the children enjoying the new facilities."***

Paul Clark MP



Other landscape work in Medway is also progressing - Groundwork has been appointed by Medway Council to help with consultation, design and contract management to drive forward improvements to the play park at Jackson's Recreation Ground and the creation of Cozenton Wheel Park. At Cozenton, Groundwork worked alongside the local user group to create the designs for a completely new facility for BMXers, skateboarders, inliners and trials bikers. The wheel park is now going out to tender for the building phase, and work on site should begin early 2010.

# Communities for the Future



In 2008, Groundwork South East was chosen by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) to lead a programme aimed at engaging young people aged 11 to 13 years to help prevent them falling into the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) category when they turn 16.

In October, 2008 ten Year 8 pupils from the Sittingbourne Community College were chosen to take part in one of three projects during which they would research, design and construct a wildlife friendly green space on the Rectory Park Playing Fields not far from their school. Swale Borough Council provided the park which before the project commenced was a large open space with little more than large expanses of open grassland with some individual trees.

To start the project the pupils were taken on field trips to Church Marshes Country Park and Oare Gunpowder Works to see what elements could be incorporated into their design to encourage wildlife into an urban setting. The pupils have been directly responsible for designing and constructing the improvements, carrying out site surveys, undertaking community consultations as well as purchasing and installing the plants and materials to be installed in the park.

Paul Koch, Groundwork's Education Officer who led the project explained, 'The pupils are covering key elements of the National Curriculum whilst also gaining valuable job skills to aid in their future employability. The pride that they have in their own work and the park has changed the way they feel about themselves and how they interact with their local community'.



## Natural Play for Swale

Swale Borough Council commissioned Groundwork to prepare a report into improving play spaces across the Borough, with the long-term aim of creating more challenging play environments with opportunities for learning, set in a natural landscape.

Swale Borough Council is committed to improving play provision across the Borough, in line with their own play strategy and government policy.

A survey was distributed to the general public to gauge in what direction people wanted to see play spaces in Swale go, the results of which will be available later in the year.

# New trees for North Deal Playing Field

A group of local residents set up a community group called the North Deal Community Partnership to regenerate pockets of open green space within the seaside town of Deal. The town has been experiencing problems of vandalism and petty crime from bored youths who have nowhere to meet and play.

The Partnership identified three recreational sites, owned by Dover District Council, that were bleak, run down and under used. One of these sites, the North Deal Playing Field, was highlighted as being most in need and the Partnership asked Groundwork's Landscape Team to come up with a proposal to improve the space.

The overall proposal is to improve the amenity of the site and create a small local park with the introduction of two new play areas catering for two age groups of children; a toddlers play area and an older children's adventure play area. Areas for dog walking, picnics, sports - including a ball court and a kick-about area - have also been discussed, as well as a central area with new planting, a grass amphitheatre for informal gatherings and a paved seating area.



In the short term it was decided to implement a tree planting scheme with the aim to get 33 trees established on a barren open space along with 500 native shrubs planted at the perimeter to help screen the unsightly boundary.

Groundwork's Team Green staff along with members of the Partnership and local volunteers worked together to do the planting. The new trees and shrubs are the first phase of work that will continue to improve the character of the site over the next few years.

## Greenfeet Holiday Fun in Gravesham



Our 'Greenfeet' Environmental Play Scheme is continuing to run in partnership with Gravesham Borough Council, with funding from the BIG Lottery Fund. Children aged between 5 and 12 years have had the opportunity to try out a wide variety of activities with an environmental theme, in community centres and outdoor spaces across the borough.

Sessions run so far have included mini-beast hunts and pond-dipping to discover which fascinating but tiny creatures lurk in our ponds and meadows, making musical instruments from junk, and exploring how our ancestors created 'Cave Art', with children grinding up chalk and charcoal to make pigments and painting with sticks, feathers and natural sponges.

Comments from families have been very positive: children said that they liked the variety of activities provided and a chance to try out new things, and one parent said that her girls loved being able to 'play free'.

# Enterprising Groundwork - Team Green

A new Groundwork initiative, Team Green, will provide training and employment opportunities for local people, including young people and the long-term unemployed as well as enhancing the environment across Kent.

Team Green can do:

- grounds maintenance and landscape work including strimming, pruning, weeding and planting
- pressure cleaning to remove graffiti, gum and grime
- hard landscaping - new paths, walls, bollards, pergolas and planters
- rubbish removal - dealing with fly tipping and litter
- painting and repairs - fixing and painting seats, fences, gates and doors
- deep cleans - intensive tidy ups of local areas, working with local community members
- and lots more!



The team can work in any area, from housing estates to business premises, open space to woodland. By working alongside local volunteers and residents, the improvements are more sustainable and local ownership is enhanced.

If you have a project for Team Green, or for more information, please contact Jennie Mills, 01634 855166 or [jennie.mills@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:jennie.mills@groundwork.org.uk)

**Team Green**

## Spark IT Success

Spark IT - Groundwork Kent & Medway's Training Centre - operates from a local community building in Swanscombe, offering

a range of IT related courses and back to work programmes including CV workshops and job search. The centre has been running for four years, and to date has seen around 270 accredited passes on courses it runs.

One course Spark IT delivers is the Certiport IC3 qualification, a basic computer skills course (level one). Centre staff were delighted to discover that in 2008-09

they achieved more passes than any other Certiport centre in the UK.

The Centre has also recently secured funding from Employ Kent Thameside to continue delivering a range of IT courses to 200 residents in the Kent Thameside area over the next two years. To complement this, Spark IT has also secured Awards for All funding for 12 new computers - six to enable class sizes to be larger on site, and six laptops to improve outreach, so Spark IT can take IT training to people at locations all around Kent.

## WIN! Help the environment and yourself at the same time!

Help us save paper and postage and get the chance to win a free £50 Marks and Spencer Gift Card.

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