

Woolsington Parish Council: Biodiversity Project



Restoration of Bluebell Dene

Woolsington Parish Council is undertaking conservation work in 3 areas of natural beauty in the Parish:

- Bluebell Dene in Newbiggin Hall
- Callerton Ponds on the Upper Ouseburn
- Abbotswood in Woolsington

Bluebell Dene is a local beauty spot in Newbiggin Hall, containing mature woodland and grassland. Running through it is the main footpath that connects the housing estates to Bank Foot Metro Station and the neighbouring areas of Etal Park and Kingston Park.

In recent years it has fallen into decline; many of the original bluebells and other spring flowers have died away and the Dene has become untidy with litter and subject to increased anti-social behaviour.

The 'Restoration of Bluebell Dene Project' aims to gradually restore the area to its former glory.

The objective of this initiative is to introduce a range of spring bulbs over the next few years, including daffodil, crocus and native bluebells, in a variety of locations and in a carefully managed plan.

The benefits will be multiple; not only will this planting enhance the attractive grassed areas and woodland but will also make a significant contribution to restoring wildlife corridors, encouraging nature to thrive.

In these challenging times developing and preserving our local beauty spots will offer better opportunities for recreation and leisure, and make a significant contribution to improving the mental health and physical well-being of the local community.

In **Phase 1** Costain Jacobs, the civil engineering company who are currently upgrading the A1 in our region, supplied over 5000 spring bulbs, the mini daffodil Tête-à-Tête. They also supplied a volunteer task force from their staff, who turned up in numbers in October 2021 to help plant the bulbs at the eastern entrance to the Dene.

Phase 1 results, photographed April 2022



Bluebell Dene Restoration Phase 2

Now, in Phase 2, Costain Jacobs have repeated the exercise, generously supplying thousands of large daffodils for planting on the grassy slopes at the west end of the Dene, near the entrance at Hedgehope Road.

A major planting event on 4 October 2022 saw a group of volunteers from Costain Jacobs and the Highways Agency team up with Members of the Parish Council and other Ward Councillors to get busy with their spades.

They were ably assisted by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Karen Robinson, the Leader of the City Council, Councillor Nick Kemp, and the MP for Newcastle North, Catherine McKinnell. (see below). The Parish Council is also very grateful to the City Council's Grounds Maintenance team for their support.

We are all looking forward to spring 2023 to see the results of everyone's labours.



The City Council's Grounds Maintenance staff begin the marking off as the Costain Jacobs team join forces with some Members of Woolsington Parish Council





The first bulbs begin to get put in the ground with careful, systematic, planning

Leader of Newcastle City Council Councillor Nick Kemp (below) and Newcastle North MP Catherine McKinnell (below right) soon join forces





Lord Mayor Councillor Karen Robinson working hard (left) before being pictured taking a breather with Councillor Linda Wright (above)



Some hours later, as the job nears completion, the turf gets replaced