

Manchester Festival of Nature

“It is about getting people to recognise and appreciate the wildlife we have in and around Manchester. Getting out into wild places (and there are many in and around the city) is a great way to learn about the nature on our doorstep and benefit our health and well-being” – Alan Wright (The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and Northern Merseyside)

Background

2019 marked Manchester's first ever Festival of Nature (MFoN); a month-long celebration of all things wild in Manchester ending with a huge Festival of Nature, set in the beautiful Heaton Park. Bringing together over 20 different partners, MFoN and the associated Manchester Nature Consortium creates a united approach to the conservation of nature in Manchester and offers local residents the opportunity to explore, discover, protect and fall in love with the wildlife and wild places right on their doorstep. Plans are already underway for MFoN 2020 as this incredible celebration continues to evolve and grow.



Heaton Park, Manchester

KEY BENEFITS



Health & Wellbeing



Environmental Education



Biodiversity



Tourism

Project

The aim of Manchester Festival of Nature was to create a united approach to the conservation of nature and to inspire the people of Manchester to fight to save the cities wildlife.

The types of activities that people got involved in through #MFoN are:

- Bat outing
- Butterfly and bird watching
- Surveys
- Volunteering opportunities
- The Lost Words Production

COST



TIMESCALE



Rose Hill Wood Eco-improvements

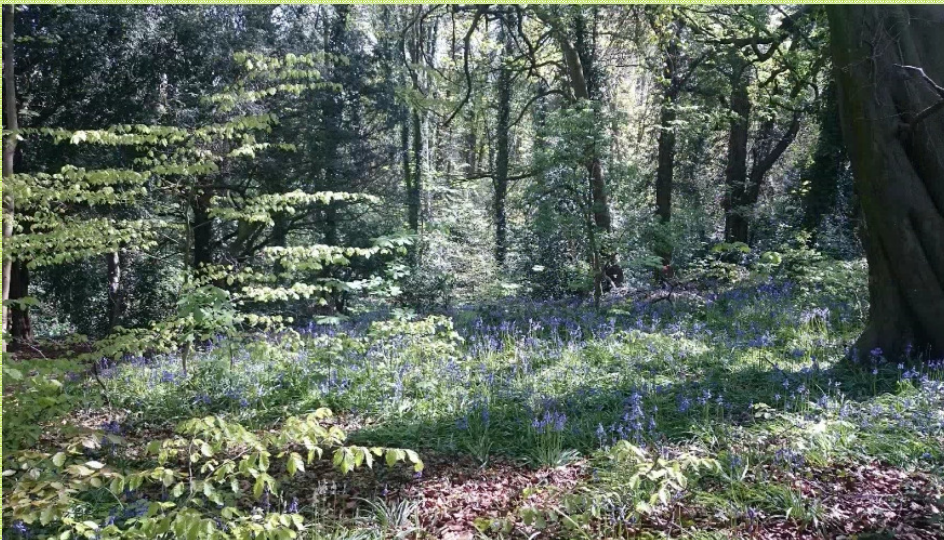
“The grants from the Lottery Fund and the Council have been a great boost for us as local volunteers. Increased visits by children and adults show that a lost ‘jewel’ is being recognised and enjoyed by the community as a real local asset”. Geoff Scargill, Chair of Friends of Rose Hill

Background

Rose Hill Wood in Northenden is situated by Rose Hill, a grade II* listed building with a fascinating history: The building was a former family mansion that was later developed into a convalescent home for wounded soldiers before the Manchester Corporation bought it and used it as an orphanage. After 1992 it was left disused, until being fully restored to its former glory in 2006. Today, it houses nine luxury apartments.

The mature woods, a site of biological importance owned by Manchester City Council, had become underused, neglected and inaccessible in parts.

In 2015, Friends of Rose Hill came together to organise clean ups in the wood and host local history talks about Rose Hill House and the Watkin family who lived there.



Project

The Friends successfully applied for council funding grants and a Heritage Lottery bid of £27,000 which helped them realise their aims to improve the wood and make it safer and more accessible for public use and to promote the history of the Watkins family who were pioneers in the development of Manchester in the 19th century.

Sharston,
Manchester

BENEFITS



Land &
Biodiversity



Health &
Wellbeing



Recreation
& Leisure

COST



TIMESCALE



Outcomes

The Friends of Rose Hill is a group that formed in July 2015 to help preserve the habitat. When they formed their main aims were:

1. To publicise the fascinating history of the Watkins Family who were the former residents of Rose Hill House;
2. To ensure that Rose Hill Wood survives for public use.

The Friends organized a 'Bioblitz', an ecological survey, that led to the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit considering upgrading the site's status as a Site of Biological Importance. The community were invited to help identify species, trained to give guided walks and joined a Bat Walk. With the help of volunteers, they enthusiastically carry out 'Balsam Bashing' twice a year to remove the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant which, once widespread within the woods, is now vastly reduced.

The group give educational talks across the city and lead projects with local schools to produce reports, drawings and poetry, covering a range of curriculum subjects. School visits to the woods have resulted in children returning to show family members around, and funding was made available for new paths and information lecterns. The 'Watkin Walk' leaflet guide was produced, and the unique Watkin Memorial within the woods is now visible and accessible for visitors. Today, the woods are on a maintenance schedule, which includes regular community clean-up events, that will ensure sustainable and sensitive environmental management in future years. The Friends group are also supporting a bid by 'Life for a Life' Memorial Forests who would like to manage the wood.



Learning

The Friends of Rose Hill have been instrumental in transforming this community asset, working in partnership with a range of council services, schools and community groups to bring the project to life.

Future

Further improvements to the woodland are planned, and bird and bat boxes will be installed. Incidentally, Edward Watkins established the first public parks in Manchester which will now be recognized, thanks to the Friends' enthusiasm and continuous work. Wider public engagement in the project is planned along with events in Manchester parks and libraries.

For further information

Visit: <http://friendsofrosehill.org/>

Outcomes

Over 7,000 people joined Manchester Festival of Nature on the day with the help of more than 120 officers and volunteers which included:

The first #MFoN was a partnership between The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, City of Trees, the National Trust, Manchester City Council, Manchester Metropolitan University, The Conservation Volunteers, Action for Conservation, RHS Bridgewater, Chester Zoo, Moors for the Future Partnership, Manchester Museum, the University of Manchester, Friends of the Earth, The Carbon Landscape, Myplace, The Tree Station, Friends of Chat Moss, British Cycling, Heaton Park Beekeepers, Treetop Trek and the Canal and River Trust. It was supported by Nectar Creative, the Casey Companies, VokkerStevin and Niche Event Hire.

All these partners made sure there were plenty of interesting activities in the main Market of Nature. There were performances by author and musician Margit van der Zwan, environmental discussions involving young people and performances based on the children's book, the Lost Words. The MFoN team were thrilled with how the event went and can't wait for Manchester Festival of Nature to become a summer highlight for Manchester's residents for many years to come.



Learning

The residents of Manchester that took part the activities during the month long event or that of the main festival on the 29th of June, discovered the rich array of wildlife living right alongside them. The festival engaged people, both young and old, in the fight to save our wildlife, resulting in more people being educated about wildlife in the city.

Future

The hope is that the Manchester's Festival of Nature (MFoN) can become a yearly event that people can look forward to annually. The aim is to start to involve other charities and organizations to spread the word of nature further afield and create an even bigger turnout in next years festival.

For further information

See the website at <https://www.lancswt.org.uk/events/manchester-festival-of-nature>

or email Alan Wright on awright@lancswt.org.uk or visit the Twitter page @MancNature