

CASE STUDY: Green Tides (Adur and Worthing Green Spaces Partnership)

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1) How and when did you come together and form an area forum?

Our forum, the Adur and Worthing Green Spaces Partnership, now known as Green Tides, was initially started and supported by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). It was started in the summer of 2015 and constituted in August 2017. We work collaboratively, sharing ideas, knowledge and resources to develop and improve local green-spaces (includes coastal areas) to benefit wildlife and local communities.

2) How many groups or members in the forum, and how many have attended in the last 12 months?

Green Tides represents approximately 40 community green-space volunteer groups across Adur and Worthing. We regularly see 10-15 groups attend our bi-monthly meetings and have ongoing correspondence with several others via email. Our mailing list reaches about 150 people, including related community groups or Community Interest Companies (CICs) and statutory organisations.

TCV continue to support us, by booking and paying for meeting rooms. The council Park's team normally attend our meetings. We've had presentations for different organisations about their work and how we can fit into it, for example the Shoreham Harbour Regeneration plans around green infrastructure and biodiversity improvements.

3) Has anything been difficult or challenging?

Putting time and effort into funding bids, which are unsuccessful, is hard but to be expected as part of project work. We also have a very small committee, although we hope this can strengthen in time. However, life can impact on the ability to volunteer. Our small group of people, supported still by TCV, have rallied to make sure that our work continues, and we remain working together.

Other challenges include, working relationships with the local authority, especially in the face of changing support due to austerity. A dwindling ranger service, who previously worked regularly across all groups, now has limited time. This has also impacted on group's insurance, who previously were covered by council insurance when rangers were with them. Green Tides was able to move and use our secured funding to organise insurance, ensuring that groups could continue their work.

4) What successes have you achieved?

By working together, we have created a strong relationship between groups allowing us to share resources, including tools and volunteer help. Members now have access to a mobile wood-chipper, via one of our groups, and have helped others with volunteer support.

We have achieved funding to raise the profile of all our groups, deliver their training needs and develop a website. Our first (successful) funding bid enabled the purchase of a good-quality gazebo, which is also available to our members as a shared resource, and some banners. It also helped with the cost of our Celebration AGM, which has now become a bit of an annual fixture and really provides a great social event for members to network.

Another successful funding bid, via Awards for All – super easy to apply for and flexible for small groups – is really providing a platform to support our members. We have delivered a raft of training events, all of which were requested by the groups. These included certified power-tool training. The support of TCV, which continue to develop new groups and projects in two locally deprived areas, has meant our members have continued to access their training opportunities too, all for free. Luckily, this meant that when the issue of insurance cropped up, we were able to redeploy the lottery funding to purchase immediate cover for several member groups.

The lottery funding has also allowed us to start developing our own website and ‘brand’. We’ve agreed our new logo and name, the website content is being written and we’re looking to properly launch at the AGM in autumn. Over summer, we will be attending lots of events, raising awareness about our different member groups, their passions and projects, again with the benefit of a small budget. As much as possible, we are using local providers to deliver these different projects, further supporting our communities.

5) Why do you think you were successful?

The council and TCV have worked together to embed the idea of community engagement within their processes, particularly in the initial stages of the Forum’s development, prior to our constitution as an independent group. Increasingly, our council is looking towards growing community involvement across the range of services provided, not just parks, so this is a general trend. Green Tides relationship now with the council, continues to evolve. We have raised issues directly with the council of behalf of members, whilst recognising their own limited capacity.

Despite our tiny committee size, consisting Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, we are lucky to be knowledgeable and dedicated. Our member groups also, have been running successful events and projects before the forum existed, and have welcomed the local networking offered by the Forum. TCV deserve credit for constantly being at the end of the phone or email, and the council are welcoming of our existence.

6) What’s happening now with your Forum?

We have still got the major part of our lottery funding yet to spend and are working on projects and events over summer. Our committee has also started sitting on different boards, for example local health and wellbeing groups, and ensuring that our groups are being represented and have access to new ideas.

This year, many of our groups are having a push on improving local biodiversity – we are all very worried about our insects. Collectively, we are sharing ideas and supporting group projects to engage the public in this issue.

7) What is planned for the future?

Keep responding to our groups' needs! Our council has a new parks manager and we're looking forward to working better with them.

Photos from Green Tides, the Adur and Worthing Green Space Partnership



Celebration AGM 2018 – just before the food arrives!