

## Successful environmental volunteering project helping Nottingham's unemployed wins new funding to keep running in 2012

A project facing closure due to lack of funding has been given a lifeline by Nottingham City Council and One Nottingham.

The Green Power Team project is run by the Partnership Council charity with the aim of supporting Nottingham City residents through unemployment and back into work.

The project started as a pilot project in spring 2010 as part of One Nottingham's Community Programme.

When the pilot project ended in spring 2011 the Partnership Council kept the Green Power Team going through various funding sources, as it had proved so successful at helping people back into work.

Now, Nottingham City Council is funding the Green Power Team project until August 2012.

The project works by offering unemployed people exciting environmental volunteering placements at green spaces around Nottingham, such as community gardens and allotments. As well as benefiting volunteers, the project also helps to develop, improve and maintain green spaces around Nottingham, by giving them much-needed volunteer support.

Volunteers help with tasks such as preparing the soil, composting, weeding, clearing areas, creating wooden planters and raised beds, seed sowing, planting, pruning and harvesting.

Volunteers are asked to volunteer for two days a week for two months in return for a comprehensive package of benefits, including the chance to learn new skills; gain work experience; attend a range of free training courses and workshops in useful 'back to work' skills such as careers advice and confidence building and study free qualifications in various subjects including OCN courses in horticulture/gardening skills and short courses in First Aid and Food Safety.

This year, the package of benefits on offer to the Green Power Team volunteers will also include fortnightly one-to-one coaching sessions for the first time!

A light healthy lunch and travel expenses are also provided.

Partnership Council • Unit C • Tennyson • Forest Road West • Radford • Nottingham • NG7 4EP  
Telephone 0115 970 8200 • Fax: 0115 970 8200 • Email [mail@partnershipcouncil.co.uk](mailto:mail@partnershipcouncil.co.uk)

Over the past 18 months the project has supported more than 50 unemployed Nottingham City residents. Of those, 14 have gone back into work to date, whilst 25 have achieved one or more accredited qualifications. Dori Kirchmair who runs the project believes that every Green Power Team volunteer has gained in some way.

## **She explains:**

*“Combining the therapeutic effects of working with nature and as a team with training and support to rebuild people’s self-confidence has proven very effective.*

*I’m delighted that the project can continue to help more unemployed people this year.*

*We provide a really exciting package of volunteering, training and support which gives people dealing with unemployment a real boost. Not only in terms of giving them practical new skills, qualifications and experience, but also in terms of giving people back their self-esteem, a chance to meet others in a similar situation and a sense of being involved in the community. It’s this combination of benefits that has helped the project to make a genuine difference to people’s lives.*

*We’re also delighted to be able to offer individual coaching sessions to our unemployed volunteers in 2012, which is a new and exciting development for the project.*

*The idea of the coaching sessions is to help people tap into their own unique potential.”*

The project supports Nottingham City residents of all ages – from 18 years to older people who haven’t yet retired. Councillor Jon Collins, Leader of Nottingham City Council and Portfolio Holder for Training, Employment and Human Resources, says:

*“Nottingham City Council is pleased to be supporting and funding the Green Power Team project which provides support to unemployed people, including young unemployed people. We recognise that the project provides important support and coaching, skills and training opportunities and qualifications to help young people to find work and get back into work, which are top priorities for the Council over the next four years.*

*In a difficult economic climate, the young and inexperienced find it particularly difficult to find work. The Green Power Team project focuses on developing skills and qualifications which can significantly increase the employability of their young volunteers.”*

## **Elaine McElveen, who volunteered with the Green Power Team last year, says:**

*“Being part of the Green Power Team was a great contrast in my week and empowered me to be more focused on the other days when job searching and looking for work. It was great meeting new people and working together as a team. We all had different skills and learnt from one another. It was also great learning something practical outdoors that brightened my outlook and was beneficial to the community.”*

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Volunteers have helped to maintain, develop and start-up a wide range of green spaces around Nottingham including Summerwood Lane Community Garden, the Nottingham Royal Society for the Blind, the Nottingham Arimathea Trust, St. Ann's Allotment Association and Tennyson Play Centre, as well as supporting Ecoworks and other environmental organisations with various projects.

**Antony Dumskyj from Ecoworks says:**

*"The Green Power Team has been a great help to me in assisting with various positive environmental projects around Nottingham. To have a team of people come lend a hand that have already been through some basic training and studying, which has given them an understanding of this type of project, has been fantastic, meaning that they are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.*

*All in all I think the Green Power Team is a fantastic project both for the people who clearly benefit from being involved and also for the wider community and environmental initiatives across the city."*

**Anyone interested in the project should call Dori Kirchmair on 0115 970 8200 or email [dori@partnershipcouncil.co.uk](mailto:dori@partnershipcouncil.co.uk). Volunteers should be over 18 but not retired, live in Nottingham City and be unemployed or at risk of redundancy.**

**You don't need any qualifications or previous experience to get involved.**

Any community or environmental organisations wishing to enquire about getting help from the Green Power Team are also welcome to get in touch with Dori.

**For media enquiries please call Stephanie on 0115 924 4304 or Dori on 0115 970 8200.**