

FREE FAMILY DAYS AT BLAYDON RESERVE TO HELP LOCAL PEOPLE GET BACK TO NATURE

Families in Gateshead are being given the chance to get closer to nature and help improve their local environment thanks to a new initiative being funded by a four-figure grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

Durham Wildlife Trust is holding a series of free family days at the Shibdon Pond Nature Reserve in Blaydon which are designed to get different generations across the local community involved with looking after and learning more about the pond, reed beds and woodland meadows that make up the Reserve.

The two-hour Green Connections sessions will run through the year and will cover a variety of different activities, including woodland coppicing, footpath work and scything the meadows.

Nature events including birdwatching and butterfly spotting will also take place through the year, with the Trust providing all the equipment needed for families to take part.

A £3,000 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, which offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network, is being used to fund the project.

Durham Wildlife Trust owns and manages 50 nature reserves across County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, and works to provide special places for people, wildlife and future generations.

It runs a range of regular events and activities across all its locations, including Wildlife Watch sessions for 5-11 year-olds, a Beach Rangers group for teenagers and even outdoor Wild Yoga classes.

Mandy Bell, Conservation Project Officer at Durham Wildlife Trust, says: “Shibdon Pond Nature Reserve is a real green haven in a predominantly urban area which we know is well used and highly valued by the local community.

“We ran a test event which was very successful and we’re now looking to get as many local families coming down to the Reserve as we can to enjoy what it offers and to help us keep it in the best possible condition.

“By taking part, families will get the chance to spend more time being active together, can make new friends and will see how the work they’re doing is helping to improve the natural space in their community.

“We’ll provide all the equipment and tools that people need to take part, as well as the expertise to guide them in the different tasks that they’ll be completing.

“We saw the need and opportunity to bring this project idea to life, but without Newcastle Building Society’s help, we simply wouldn’t have been able to make it happen, so we’re extremely grateful for their support.”

Paul Edwards, Head of Enterprise Risk at Newcastle Building Society, who recently visited the charity, adds: “The importance of getting out into nature and the value of our green spaces has never been clearer than it has been over the last couple of years.

“The work of the Durham Wildlife Trust team and the many volunteers that support them makes a massive difference to the green spaces across our region, and we’re very pleased to be able to support a grassroots environmental project that will benefit local people in lots of different ways.”

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society’s Community Fund at the Community Foundation has also contributed over £2.3m in grants and partnerships to a wide variety of charities and projects across the region, including the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and the Prince’s Trust.

The grants are so far estimated to have had a positive impact on more than 151,000 people.

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About Newcastle Building Society

Newcastle Building Society* is the biggest building society in the North East, with a network of 31 branches and assets of more than £4.9bn. We've been here for our members for over 150 years.

As a leading local employer, we're committed to growing our region's talent and being a great place to work where people can realise their potential. We hold Platinum IIP and won the Excellence and Positive Impact Award at the 2022 CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards. We were named Company of the Year in the Northumberland and Tyneside category of the North East Business Awards 2022.

We help people to own their home, to save and to plan their finances through our range of products and services. We believe in the role of the high street at the heart of our communities and are proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our region.

Our Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited division**.

We're dedicated to helping our North East communities make positive changes; since 2016 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to benefit local causes has surpassed £2.3m

*Newcastle Building Society Principal Office: 1 Cobalt Park Way, Cobalt Business Park, NE28 9EJ. Newcastle Building Society is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Newcastle Building Society is entered in the Financial Services Register under number 156058. You can check this on the Financial Services Register or by contacting the Financial Conduct Authority on 0800 111 6768. Call 0845 734 4345 or visit us online at <https://www.newcastle.co.uk/>

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