



SMITHILLS NATURE TRAIL **VOLUNTEER PROJECT**

2024–2025: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

This document provides a comprehensive overview of volunteer activities carried out between 2024 and 2025, highlighting environmental restoration efforts, maintenance projects, and community engagement initiatives. Volunteers, including regular groups, corporate teams, and the weekly trailblazers, contributed to tasks such as non-native invasive species removal, deadwood hedge construction, litter picking, and walkway improvements, resulting in meaningful site enhancements and stronger community involvement. Funding for materials was generously provided by Bolton Council, Bolton Green Umbrella the Growing the Good Work Councillors Fund.

Event Types and Activities

1. Environmental Restoration & Maintenance

- Rhododendron and Balsam Removal: Regular sessions focused on removing invasive species to restore native habitats.
- Deadwood Hedge Building: Constructed to support wildlife and manage woodland boundaries.
- Litter Picking: Ongoing effort to keep woodland and pathways clean.
- Pathway and Walkway Construction: Volunteers built and repaired wooden walkways, steps, and handrails to improve site access and safety.
- Brambles and Saplings Management: Clearing overgrown areas and managing young trees for woodland health.

2. Community and Corporate Engagement

- Corporate Events: Teams from local organisations participated in large-scale clean-ups, pathway maintenance, woodland management and planting bulbs.
- School Events: Involved children and supporters in balsam removal and hedge building.
- Monthly and Ad Hoc Events: Provided regular opportunities for community members to contribute.

3. Special Projects and Meetings

- Site Surveys and Planning: Included biodiversity assessments, planning for replanting, and meetings with local authorities and environmental groups.
- Training and Admin: Volunteers attended training sessions (woodland management, first aid and managing volunteering) and worked on funding/bids (Bolton Council Corporate Services, Growing the Good Work Councillors Fund, Bolton Green Umbrella, GM Green Spaces Fund) and developed health & safety guidance.

Volunteer Involvement

- Volunteer Numbers: Events ranged from small teams (1–4 people) for specific tasks to large groups (up to 35 for school events and 21 for corporate events).
- Hours Contributed: Many events involved significant time commitments, with some sessions totalling over 80 volunteer hours.
- Trailblazers Team: Frequently led major projects, especially in pathway/step and bridge construction, Rho dendron removal, and invasive species management.

Key Outcomes

- Habitat Improvement: Removal of invasive species and construction of deadwood hedges have enhanced biodiversity and site safety.
- Access and Safety: New and refurbished walkways, steps, and handrails have improved accessibility for all visitors.
- Community Impact: Regular events fostered community spirit, environmental awareness, and partnerships with local organisations.
- Recognition and Celebration: Participation in events like the Bolton Green Umbrella Celebration and successful funding bids highlight the group's achievements.

Notable Challenges

- Weather Disruptions: Some events were cancelled due to adverse weather conditions and the risk to health and safety.
- Volunteer Availability: Only a few events were scaled back due to low volunteer turnout.

Totals Volunteer Hours

WOODLAND PROJECT =2,369HRS

SMITHILLS GARDENS = 800 HRS

Please contact: smithillstrailvolunteers@gmail.com if you require further information and one of our volunteer leadership team will contact you (Jane, Susan, Wendy or Paul)