

Community Insight: Ecoworks

Ecoworks is a thriving and dynamic social enterprise supporting and inspiring sustainable food and health across the St. Ann's neighbourhood in Nottingham and throughout the city. It exists to promote the interests and personal development of people who are socially disadvantaged by delivering conservation, restoration and environment enhancing activities.

Ecoworks is community focused, developing food locally, working with local volunteers, getting involved in local community events, engaging with local businesses and local authorities to insure change, and putting local people and the local environment first in all it does.

The organisation encourages local people from all backgrounds and interests to get involved in their work, focusing on people

and the planet, rather than profits and shareholders, and keeping the development of skills and interests at the heart of their work.

Based on three sites in St Ann's, Ecoworks offers a range of services include organic vegetable and fruit growing, healthy eating courses, accredited horticulture training, craft workshops, chemical-free veg boxes, a vegetarian and vegan catering service, volunteering opportunities and mental health support.

Ecoworks is located on the Hungermill Allotments, the largest area of detached town gardens in the world, the Community Gardens offer a relaxing space for volunteers to work together to garden. Based on the same site, the FRESH Market Gardens is a working garden and teaching centre, growing produce for healthy eating and to sell to local cafes and at a subsidised price to those in need.

In addition, to these two sites, made up of



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a total of 27 gardens, Ecoworks manages a large number of partner sites across Nottingham, including schools and other organisations. It has also founded the Nottingham Carbon Project, which aims to plant a large food producing forest around the city, already planting over 10 sites.

Ecoworks has built a successful track record training young people aged 16-19 through the E2E programme, long-term unemployed adults through the Future Job Fund, and accredited and non-accredited Family Learning. It is also an approved City & Guilds Centre offering Level 1 in Practical Horticulture. The organisation also works with schools, learning centres and FE colleges, and is registered with AIM Awards, offering Entry 3 or Level 1 OCN units in Gardening or Cooking.

At the beginning of 2011, Ecoworks developed a programme of workshops giving local residents the skills to live more sustainably. Workshops this year have covered organic gardening; renewable energy; organic pest and disease control; Western herbal medicine; local and seasonal cooking; outdoor oven building; drawing and printing techniques; preserving and foraging; woodcraft and hedge laying.

In addition, a series of family workshops took place during the summer holidays,

“We want to fundamentally change the way people think about, relate to and enjoy their food”.

including growing and storytelling, bread making, and arts and crafts. Ecoworks also holds two annual open days for visitors to learn more about their work.

Alongside gardening, the production and sale of fruit and vegetables, and training and workshops, Ecoworks is also committed to helping people have a healthier diet and lifestyle through the preparation and consumption of fruit and vegetables. A big part of this is the Ecoworks Kitchen, a vegetarian catering service, which aims to use local and seasonal fresh produce wherever possible.

For the last 18 months, the social enterprise has also delivered seasonal veg boxes, containing a mixture of healthy and affordable fruit and vegetables grown by sustainable growers in and around Nottinghamshire, from an organic bio-dynamic farm in Sutton Bonnington to allotment holders selling their surplus.

For further information on Ecoworks visit www.ecoworks.org.uk.