

Volunteering - Hands on help for our communities



U&C's first corporate volunteering month saw over 50 employees getting out into our communities, supporting local projects and learning new skills whilst also giving employees the chance to work with team members from across our sites and business functions.

The Communities, Communications and Partnerships team organised the volunteering days at three of our sites; Manydown in Basingstoke, Wintringham in Cambridgeshire and Middlebeck in Newark. Each day was co-ordinated with the help of one of our local partners, further strengthening relationships and improving our understanding of the issues important to those communities.

At Manydown the focus was on removing a plant called dogwood which had been so successful that it was pushing out some of the rare arable flora crucial to the bio-diversity success of the land at Old Down. Old Down is very close to and similar to the land which will form the 250-acre countryside park at Manydown, and the volunteers day here also gave us the chance to work with the Rangers from Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

In Wintringham the team was set to work preparing the crucial community hub that is St Neot's Town Football Club for the start of the new season. The club offers a lot to the community alongside football, including a space for community events and a home for the 1st St Neots Scouts group, so this was a great day spent supporting the community.

The team in Newark endured the least favourable weather but showed great team spirit working with the charity SUSTRANS, regardless of the pouring rain, to maintain the beautiful local cycle way, clearing vegetation, picking up litter and even installing bird and bat boxes along the route. To top the day off volunteers were treated to an educational talk from SUSTRANS national lead ecologist Jim Whiteford as well as some much needed hot soup from our on site café Gannets.

Every member of the Urban&Civic team are able to take three paid days to take part in volunteering activities. This year's organised volunteering days were such a success that September is now set to become our annual corporate volunteering month with the aim of increasing employee volunteering participation and finding creative ways to give more back to our communities.

Kathryn Milward, Head of HR said "I've enjoyed learning new skills during my volunteering experience. I've never used a saw before but colleagues helped me with an on-the-spot lesson. The day made a huge difference to the landscape as we took away excess vegetation and bags of rubbish. I also loved showing my children what I had been helping to do."

