

Groundwork Solent expansion to Southampton

Frequently Asked Questions

- **WHO IS GROUNDWORK?**

Groundwork is a national Federation of Trusts which bring together public, private and voluntary sector interests to improve the environment, realise the full potential of under-used land, convert waste ground to productive use and improve access to the countryside. They have been operating and growing in this country since the early 1980's.

- **WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Groundwork's purpose is to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. They do this by undertaking practical projects organised into local, regional or national programmes around six themes;

- *Communities*
- *Land*
- *Employment*
- *Education*
- *Business*
- *Youth*

- **WHO DO THEY WORK WITH?**

Groundwork Trusts work in partnership with a range of private, public and community partners at local, regional and national levels.

Each Trust can deliver projects in their area using a mix of their own staff, contractors and volunteers in ways that achieves the best outcome for each project and area.

- **HOW DO THEY OPERATE?**

Groundwork is a national federation of Trusts. Each is established as a registered charity covering an identified geographical area. Southampton is covered by Groundwork Solent, which covers the South Hampshire area.

Each Trust has a Board of Trustees who manage the overall direction of the local Trust and ensure that it meets its financial and Trust aims in accordance with Groundwork national federation and Charity Commissioners guidelines.

- **WHY ARE THEY COMING TO SOUTHAMPTON?**

It was identified by the City Council in 2003 that the city's capacity to support and achieve environmental regeneration was limited, and it

was agreed to explore the possibility of bringing other organisations into the city to add to this capacity.

The City Council then began discussions with Groundwork Solent to explore the possibility of a similar operation being developed in Southampton.

- **HOW WILL THE CITY'S ENVIRONMENT BENEFIT?**

As Groundwork's aims state, their whole remit is about improving the environment, so the operation in Southampton should see improved green spaces, new facilities and activities that local groups and partners have identified as important.

This is because Groundwork can add capacity to local services and groups in delivering the improvements sought, have expertise in attracting extra funding towards improvements, and increase the leverage for individual projects to enable more to be delivered than through existing resources.

The initial programmes within the Development Plan take place across the city, but will have a particular focus on the city's identified Priority Neighbourhoods.

- **HOW HAVE WE ARRIVED AT THIS POINT?**

An initial feasibility study was undertaken in 2004 by Groundwork Solent and Southampton City Council. This included discussions with other partners working in the environmental sector locally. The study identified that there was a need and opportunity for Groundwork to expand their operation into Southampton.

It was then agreed to take the work forward and prepare a Development Plan, which formed the basis of a formal proposal for them to expand to Southampton.

- **WHO DECIDED WHETHER THE EXPANSION WOULD HAPPEN?**

In May 2006, the Groundwork National Federation decided to support the expansion of the Groundwork Solent operation into Southampton. This was dependent upon Southampton City Council agreeing to enter into a partnership agreement with Groundwork Solent for up to six years. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) also had to ratify the expansion.

In July 2006, Southampton City Council agreed to enter into the Partnership Agreement, subject to ratification of the Development Plan by the DCLG. Ratification by the DCLG was then received in October 2006.

- **WHAT COMMITMENTS WILL BE MADE TO SUPPORT THIS?**

The City Council, in agreeing to the expansion, entered into a Partnership Agreement with the Groundwork Solent Trust for six years, renewable annually. It agreed, in principle, to make a contribution of £50,000 per year towards the programme and development funding of Groundwork's operation in Southampton. This will be matched by a contribution from the Government of approximately £90,000 each year. Other local partners may also add to this core local support.

- **HOW WILL THE GROUNDWORK EXPANSION INTO SOUTHAMPTON BE MANAGED?**

An operational board will be established in early 2007 to oversee the work that Groundwork delivers in Southampton. The core funding support achieved to deliver projects through Groundwork Solent in Southampton will be 'ring-fenced' for Southampton. Southampton City Councillors, senior officers and other local partners will join this board to ensure that Groundwork Trust programme is being delivered. Overall, a Board of Trustees will remain in charge of Groundwork Solent, ensuring it is meeting its aims and responsibilities across the Trust's portfolio of activities in the Solent area.

- **WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT FOR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS IN SOUTHAMPTON?**

The expectation is that the work of Groundwork Solent will support the work and actions of the many existing environmental groups across the city. One of Groundwork's aims is to work in partnership and ensure sustainable communities. One of the key principles behind considering Groundwork coming into the city is that their expertise and experience in environmental regeneration will add to the city's capacity.

- **HOW CAN I GET IN TOUCH WITH GROUNDWORK?**

Groundwork Solent has just moved into new offices in Wheatsheaf House, Bernard Street and Southampton. They can be contacted on 023 8033 8550 or 023 9261 7020, or by e-mailing them at solent@groundwork.org.uk

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