

# Madeley Court Pit Mounds

Raising the Profile of a Potential Woodland Local Nature Reserve



## Introduction

Madeley Court pit mounds are wooded pit mounds in South Telford. The site is a County Wildlife Site. Measures have been taken to raise the profile of the area in the hope that it may be declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Access has been improved, and a sculpture trail created. The site has been put forward in the latest Local Development Framework, as a proposed LNR.

## Project partners

Shropshire Wildlife Trust • The Borough of Telford & Wrekin  
South Telford Rights of Way Partnership • Walkabout Wrekin  
Madeley Parish Council • The Greenwood Centre • Madeley Court School  
Severn Gorge Countryside Trust • Forestry Commission

## Raising the profile of a potential woodland Local Nature Reserve Madeley Court Pit Mounds (SJ696050)

## Objectives

The main aim of this project has been to have Madeley Court pit mounds declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The objectives have been to raise the profile of the area, to improve access and to increase the number of visitors to the site, and to improve its quality as an education resource.

## Site description

Madeley Court pit mounds are abandoned pit mounds that contain a regenerated oak/birch community together with areas of planted sweet chestnut that is now mature. The Silkin Way footpath runs through one of the pit mounds and a network of smaller paths also crosses them. The area is adjacent to a secondary school and a sports centre, and is surrounded by housing.

## Project design

The project was designed to investigate the potential of Madeley Court for LNR declaration. In doing so, the profile of the area was also raised. This was done by improving accessibility and educational use of the site, encouraging visitors and increasing awareness of the wildlife value of the site.



## Implementation

In 2002 Leeds Metropolitan University used Woodside in South Telford as a case study for a NeighbourWoods Study. Telford was chosen because of its status as a 'Forest City'. Woodside, in the parish of Madeley, has a variety of woodlands in close proximity, but the study identified Madeley Court as one of the most visited by local people. Shropshire Wildlife Trust had English Nature funding through the Wildspace! scheme to increase community involvement and awareness of Local Nature Reserves. Influenced by the NeighbourWoods survey, Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) suggested Madeley Court as a possible site. Madeley Court is already a County Wildlife Site and fits the English Nature criteria for LNR declaration. SWT joined with other partners to raise the profile of the area in a variety of ways.

## Events

A 'Green Spaces Officer' was employed by SWT in July 2003 to engage people from Madeley Parish with their local environment. The post was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Onyx Environmental. The Green Spaces Officer began running small events at the Madeley Court site. These included guided walks, children's and family wildlife events (such as treasure hunts and bug safaris), and volunteer tasks for adults. Other organisations such as Madeley Parish Council and South Telford Rights of Way Partnership (STROWP) also ran activities on site.

## Sculpture trail

In an endeavour to involve the secondary school more with the site, SWT invited pupils at Madeley Court School to design an environmental project for the Madeley Court pitmounds. A group of pupils decided to create an environmental sculpture trail.

Part of the 'Green Spaces' funding was used to employ two artists to work with the children to make and place the sculptures. The pupils now hope to hold a family fun day with an environmental theme on the Madeley Court pit mounds.

## Woodlands for Health

A group of partner organisations, (SWT, Borough of Telford and Wrekin, STROWP, Walkabout Wrekin, Madeley Parish Council, the Greenwood Centre, and Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) put in a successful bid to the Forestry Commission for a 'Woodlands for Health' grant. £10,000 was awarded to improve access on existing 'Healthy Walk' routes in the area, and to create a new woodland walk around Madeley Court Pit mounds. Shropshire Wildlife Trust contributed funding from the Green Spaces Project for marker posts and interpretation boards to be placed around the routes, for updates to the Telford 'Woodlands for Health' website, and for route booklets to be produced and placed in health centres and other outlets.



## Achievements/outputs

Regular events, guided walks and walk booklets have raised the profile of the site. Groundwork improvements and signage have improved access. The education links have been strengthened with the school children's creation of the sculpture trail, and by the schools plans to run a family day on the site. The site has now been put forward in the latest Local Development Framework, as a proposed LNR.

## Future Management and Sustainability

Madeley Court pit mounds are owned by the Borough of Telford and Wrekin council. They have a Woodland Grant Scheme to manage the woodland. Madeley Court School has pledged to maintain the sculptures, and Shropshire Wildlife Trust hopes to continue working with them. In addition Severn Gorge Countryside Trust and The Greenwood Centre have each recently received funding to employ a community officer in the Woodside area.



## Wider applications

Partnership working between different organisations has been key to the success of work at Madeley Court & would be recommended in similar situations.

LNR designation gives a site increased protection from development pressures, and also raises the profile of an area.

Improvements to the physical appearance and accessibility of a site will increase visitor numbers and will also have other benefits, such as to local businesses. For example, sales managers at the Madeley Court Hotel, adjacent to the pitmounds, use the proximity to the woodland when promoting the hotel. They believe that LNR status would attract further visitors.

### This project delivers against the following themes of the West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework:

Woodland Cover	✓
The Woodland & Forestry industry	
Wood Energy	
Recycling	
Recreation & Tourism	✓
Health & Wellbeing	✓
Education, Learning & Skills	✓
Fostering Social Inclusion	✓
Enhancing Biodiversity	✓
Natural & Cultural Environmental benefits	✓
Supporting the Regeneration of the West Midlands	✓

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## Further reading

Box J, Cossons V, and McKelvey J (2001) **Sustainability, Biodiversity and Land Use Planning.** *Town and Country Planning* 70, 7/8 pp.210-212

English Nature (1999) **Local Nature Reserves in England** – A Guide to their Selection and Declaration. *English Nature Publicity and Marketing.*

NeighbourWoods case study reports  
[www.sl.kvl.dk/euforic/nbw](http://www.sl.kvl.dk/euforic/nbw)

Telford woodland health walks  
[www.woodlandshealth.org.uk](http://www.woodlandshealth.org.uk)

