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Serving the whole of the North West, including the historic County Palatine of Lancashire, Cheshire, the Lakes, Cumbria and the cities of Manchester and Liverpool.



Countess of Chester Country Park



A Really Useful Charity

Andrew Harris describes a national organisation based in our region

The Land Trust is unique. Created in the public sector 10 years ago it became a financially-independent charity 5 years later. It operates nationwide from a base in Warrington with 60% of the projects undertaken so far being in the three regions of Northern England - yet you have probably never heard of the Land Trust or the work it does.

We all need open space for our health and happiness and to avoid a sort of collective claustrophobia. Providing this is becoming more challenging due to the need for more housing and the higher densities that result. The methods developed by the Land Trust offer new and more sustainable ways of achieving this. Its vision is to 'improve the quality of people's lives by creating and maintaining sustainable, high quality green spaces that deliver environmental, social and economic benefits'.

The Land Trust Chairman Peter Smith explains 'For the first six years we worked exclusively with the Government's Homes and Communities Agency acquiring and managing restored coalfield sites and other surplus land. Since then we have, as an independent charity, worked across a range of sectors with more sites, eight corporate members, many local partners and 3,000 volunteers. We have acquired over 50 sites and 2,000 hectares of land in that time. We look forward to

the next 10 years so that even more people can benefit from the work we do'.

Chief Executive Euan Hall adds 'the Land Trust has doubled the number and total size of sites acquired in the last 3 years. It had also increased endowment funds from about £40 million to over £100 million enabling the Trust to maintain more open spaces in perpetuity.' That means for ever!

The Land Trust already owns and maintains 9 major projects in the North West alone - see the panel. From Whitehaven to Chester it has created and now safeguards attractive open spaces which are essential for vibrant communities. Part of the attractive Countess of Chester Country Park is pictured and this park also accommodates one of the 'Life for a Life' memorial forests which were featured in our July edition.

As well as providing much-needed open spaces The Land Trust offers the 'Green Angels' project but currently only in our region. Based at Liverpool Festival Gardens, it is designed to improve the quality of Life for surrounding communities by providing training opportunities in the environmental field.



Festival Gardens Liverpool

Funded by the Big Lottery the vision is to unite communities around the Gardens by enabling local people to develop skills such as Countryside Management and Parks Maintenance, Business Skills Environmental Education and Horticulture. By these means Green Angels engages local residents in activities that benefit their physical and mental health as

well as creating a sense of ownership of this unique community space.

A strategic role of the Land Trust is to ensure that sustainably-funded green space is incorporated into developments – especially housing. Local authorities are required to calculate housing need and allocate land to accommodate this. The



result is often increased pressure for the development of brownfield (previously developed) sites and greenfield land. The former can produce high density urban development while the latter can see the loss of much-loved and attractive sites to new building. At Aldershot in Hampshire the Land Trust has worked in partnership to achieve new standards of attractive development which could inspire better development in our region.

Wellesley is a new development of 3,850 homes and two new primary schools delivered by the housebuilder Grainger plc on part of the former Aldershot Army Garrison site. Wellesley Woodlands forms an important part of this development which is accessible to both the new and existing communities of Aldershot. The Woodlands are managed by the Land Trust working with the local

Black Water Countryside Partnership. Wellesley Woodlands – named after Wellington before he met his Waterloo – spans 110 hectares (260 acres) which is equivalent to 150 football pitches. It features rich greenery, interlinked woods, an abundance of wildlife, canal-side walks and lakes as pictured. This stunning facility enables both existing and new residents to enjoy a special haven of green open space.

When it is proposed that attractive greenfield – or even brownfield – land be changed by development from open space to what is often seen as a ‘concrete jungle’, many people resist this and mourn the outcome. Wellesley Woodlands demonstrate that new development and attractive permanent open space can co-exist. The result can be the provision of open space which is better and more accessible than before and can benefit existing as well as new

residents. Let us hope that we can see the likes of Wellesley Woodlands achieved in our region too. What of the future? The Land Trust want to see a future where everyone has access to green open space close to where they live and work. They want to see fewer places where green space is non-existent or where unmanaged land is causing social problems. People owning their own homes will be supported in places that have good-quality, well-managed and biodiversity-rich green space as an intricate part of the design. Above all the Land Trust wants to see a country where long-term funding and management of green spaces are planned as part of the development process. To learn more, the Land Trust invite you to visit www.thelandtrust.org.uk or contact them via enquiries@thelandtrust.org.uk or 01925 852005.



ABOVE: Whittle Hall Warrington



ABOVE: Wellesley Woodlands, ground shot.
 RIGHT: The Land Trust's senior leadership team. L-R chief executive Euan Hall, head of portfolio management Alan Carter, director of finance Julie Etherington and director of business development Iain Taylor.
 BELOW: The Land Trust Map.



What the Land Trust is against is regeneration without funding for the creation and long-term maintenance of beautiful open spaces. It isn't planning utopia but meeting a basic human need that is too often ignored.

Your columnist hopes that the lessons learned by the Land Trust and the 40 or so exemplar developments they have achieved nationwide through partnership will be repeated wherever residential areas are developed or improved. We need green spaces. We need the Land Trust.

Andrew Harris FRICS FCIM (aeharris@live.co.uk) is a chartered surveyor who has chaired development charities in the UK and Africa. ■

the Land Trust

North West Projects

1. Ashton Field, Salford
 2. Countess of Chester Country Park
 3. Cronton, Knowsley, Merseyside
 4. Festival Gardens, Liverpool
 5. Haig, Whitehaven, Cumbria
 6. Hassall Green Nature Reserve Sandbach, Cheshire
 7. Port Sunlight River Park Bromborough
 8. Everton Park, Liverpool
 9. Warrington, Cheshire
- + Several new projects are being explored across the North West

