

# Mobilising communities

Annual review 2009/10



Inspiring people, improving places

[www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)

## **BTCV: Changing lives and strengthening communities for more than 50 years**

Established in 1959, we are one of the largest social enterprise groups in the UK. We enable people to make a difference in their lives and improve the places around them. We support over 600,000 people to think and act differently to improve their environment. Our volunteers work on over 29,000 environmental projects each year, in the UK and abroad.

Our mission is to invest in a more sustainable future by inspiring people and improving places.

### **Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Natural Environment, says:**

*"I congratulate BTCV on its hard work over the last year to protect our environment and improve lives. I have been impressed with the action BTCV has taken to create and maintain green spaces, making our towns and cities better places to live and improving the habitats of many species of plants and animals. I hope BTCV continues this good and essential work."*









## BTCV: Empowering people and communities

Creating hedgerows. Clearing rubbish from housing estates. Planting fruit and vegetables. Across the UK, BTCV supports more than 600,000 people to improve green spaces. As part of projects commissioned by local and national government, we work at the heart of communities.

But regenerating green spaces in our cities and upgrading rural landscapes are far from the only reasons commissioners come to BTCV to meet their outcomes.

The practical element of our conservation work has countless positive knock-on effects. It improves health, both mental and physical. It builds confidence and teaches skills so unemployed people can get back into work. It contributes to the battle against climate change. And it empowers communities to come together. It helps people and communities help themselves.

Commissioners recognise how powerful our work is. That's why they invest with us. Despite these troubled economic times, BTCV is in good financial shape because so many commissioners choose us. Thousands of organisations invest in us to run projects, from local landowners paying for small bits of conservation work on their land to large government contracts to help the long-term unemployed back into work and society. We even work internationally – this year we plan to expand our pan-African community network and strengthen our links with community groups across Europe.

**But we want to achieve more.**

# How BTCV changes lives

When people come to BTCV to volunteer, they're often at a low ebb. They may have been out of work for a long time, with little confidence and few skills. They could have a disability that limits their opportunities, or a health problem which getting outside and doing some physical work could help relieve.

Volunteering for BTCV turns their life around. We give people the tools they need to improve their health and job prospects, and contribute more to society.

We enriched 628,104 lives last year by improving health, giving people the skills and confidence they need for employment and bringing people together to take part in community projects.

## BTCV...

### ● Makes people healthier

BTCV improved the health of 138,724 people in 2009-10. Our Green Gyms, which give people a chance to get outside and exercise while doing vital conservation work, have played a big part in this. If 24% of the UK adult population took part in a Green Gym session once a week the NHS could save over £2 billion a year in treating heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

### ● Gets people into jobs

We helped almost 20,000 people into jobs last year – in the midst of Britain's worst recession. That's 20,000 people who have regained their independence, confidence and hope through BTCV.

### ● Involves a huge variety of people

We are well known for our ability to involve a diverse range of people in volunteering. One in ten BTCV volunteers is black or from an ethnic minority – well above the national average – while 8.7% have a disability. A third of BTCV's volunteers are under 25, and we worked with 21,000 school children last year.









## A new outlook

**In a matter of weeks, Rob Griffin went from organising posh parties at footballers' mansions to being homeless and living in hostels.**

"My life was glamorous; I travelled to places like Japan and Australia, but when I lost my job in the entertainment industry because of the recession, I hit rock bottom," says Rob, 39. "I was drinking too much and lost my house, ending up on the streets. I felt useless. In fact, I stopped feeling. I was at my lowest point."

### Homeless

Homeless for four months, Rob eventually managed to get a flat. But he didn't know what to do with his days. "I used to stay at home watching TV or go to the library," he says. "I was depressed."

That was six months ago, before Rob started volunteering at BTCV's Hollybush Conservation Centre in Leeds five days a week. It's turned his life around. He's transformed an area used as a junkyard into a vegetable patch. He also coordinates other volunteers' work.

### A better future

Rob's learned about plants as well as how to lead a group of people. He's now looking for work in horticulture.

"BTCV helped me totally change my outlook," says Rob. "I'm doing something worthwhile. I'm achieving and I've got people's respect. I'm not at the bottom of the pile anymore."

"I'm in control of my drinking and I'm really focused on where I want to be and how I'm going to get there."

# Closer communities

A sense of community is born when volunteers come together on BTCV projects. Different types of people, ranging from children to pensioners, from hugely diverse backgrounds, work side by side to improve their surroundings.

We make community cohesion happen. When commissioners in local and national government contact us to run conservation projects, they're rewarded not only with improved green spaces but with a sense of community spirit, resilience and pride among volunteers.

Little by little, our work is turning places into spaces we'd all like to live in.

## BTCV...

### ● Brings communities together

We supported 3,500 community groups to do conservation work last year, bringing communities together all across the UK.

### ● Fights climate change

Creating green spaces greatly helps the battle against climate change. Our green spaces provide habitats for endangered species. The trees we plant absorb carbon dioxide and the areas we create to grow food locally cut down on emissions from food transport. As an organisation we cut our own carbon emissions by 14.6% last year. Our Doncaster head office, Sedum House, is an eco-building, built sustainably from foundations to rooftop.

### ● Creates lasting green spaces

BTCV volunteers improved over 29,000 places in 2009-10, making rural areas, villages, towns and cities all better places to live.



# Growing together

**Visit BTCV's Trafford Mill Kitchen Garden near the village of Mickle Trafford in Cheshire and you'll see a fascinating mix of people.**

Teenagers excluded from school. Young mums and their children. Retired professionals. Unemployed people. People with learning difficulties. And everyone in between. You'll see them tending plots of vegetables, building a polytunnel to protect their crops and working towards qualifications like food hygiene.

"I don't think we'd meet any other way, but we all have the garden in common," says volunteer Amy Edwards. "There's always someone to talk to. It's a great atmosphere."

## Local food

Just two years ago the plot was pasture land, home only to a few cows. Today volunteers are growing potatoes, Swiss chard, beans and peas. Set up by BTCV, the garden is a partnership between us, the Trafford Mill Trust and local land owners.

"Before, there wasn't anywhere to bring together the people who live in the village. But now the garden has become a focal point for people of all ages and abilities," says BTCV project manager Pete Attwood.

"When people first come here we ask them: 'What would you like to grow?' Everyone contributes and takes home vegetables at the end of the day."

## You can make a difference

BTCV Carbon Army is our volunteers' hands-on response to climate change. Join the Carbon Army today. Go to **[www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)** for more information.





# Helping local authorities

Do you want to create community spirit in your area while engaging disadvantaged groups and boosting health and wellbeing? Do you need an organisation to manage environmental projects or support local groups' conservation work?

BTCV can help you meet your outcomes. With 900 staff all over the UK, we can be flexible to meet your needs, and work with you to make your project happen.

Whether BTCV is commissioned to mobilise people to clear up derelict land or to educate children about nature, the benefits of working with us are huge. BTCV works in deprived communities and has the experience and authority to deliver innovative solutions.

Not only will you see improved green spaces, but we will also help you bring communities together. Not to mention improving health, getting people into work and slowing climate change.

## BTCV...

### ● **Helps communities grow food locally**

We helped Bath and North East Somerset Council turn a derelict space into allotments. In record time we mobilised volunteers to design and create 11 abundant new plots and a relaxing communal garden.

### ● **Sets up Green Gyms**

In partnership with Camden Council and funded by NHS Camden, we set up a Green Gym in the borough. More than 400 volunteers attended in 2009. Of those, 15 went on to join our leadership programme, which gives training on how to lead other volunteers, and five are now in full-time employment in the environmental sector.

### ● **Provides training**

We provided 26,679 training days in 2009-10, commissioned by organisations including local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council. We run 500 accredited courses, and we are a major provider of environmental conservation NVQs.





# Deprived communities and the environment

**Getting people in deprived areas interested in nature is no easy task. That's why Scottish local authority commissioners have turned to BTCV.**

Local authorities in Glasgow, Ayrshire and Inverclyde have commissioned us to run the Wildlife Counts in Your Community project. The project increases awareness of nature in deprived communities. We've been getting people involved in nature walks where they can identify species and collect insects, and holding events to get the whole community interested in biodiversity.

## Education

Our work with local authorities to educate people about nature and the environment goes much further throughout Scotland.

We work closely with education leaders to help teachers get children outside and meet their objectives. We provide training on how to teach children about the environment and help schools build wildlife gardens and vegetable plots, plant trees, bulbs and wild flowers and run environmental events.

BTCV has worked with South Ayrshire Council, for example, to help its schools implement the Curriculum for Excellence.

## Healthier children

"Increasingly we want young people to learn in an outdoor setting and gain a better understanding of their environment," says Bruce Harris from South Ayrshire Council. "Participating in BTCV's school projects has had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

"South Ayrshire Council's long-term aim is to go on inspiring outdoor learning and we hope to continue to work in partnership with BTCV in doing this."





### **Improving health**

BTCV Green Gym is our health offer, giving people a chance to improve their health and wellbeing through environmental action. Go to **[www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)** to find out more.

# Excellent partnerships with national government

From the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Communities and Local Government to the NHS and the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we work with a host of national government bodies, handling both small and large contracts worth up to £8 million.

Commissioners trust us to get people into work, bring communities together and combat climate change. They've seen us improve the health of more than 138,000 people in the past year and improve green spaces in more than 29,000 places.

We can help you meet these challenges too.

## **BTCV...**

### ● **Holds major government contracts**

Last year our contracts included: New Deal, as a prime and subcontractor, Flexible New Deal as a subcontractor, Community Task Force as a subcontractor, leading a significant partnership to deliver the DWP volunteering brokerage initiatives, Skills for Life, Work Preparation, E2E, OLASS Support for offenders in the community and Response to Redundancy.

### ● **Promotes high quality green spaces**

BTCV delivers the Green Flag Award scheme, funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government, with partners Keep Britain Tidy and GreenSpace. The scheme gives awards to high quality green spaces. In 2009, we awarded 917 green flags.

### ● **Works with health trusts**

In Northern Ireland we partnered with the Belfast Health Trust to set up a Green Gym. The Trust wanted to use environmental volunteering to tackle health inequalities and promote social inclusion. Over 200 people being treated by mental health services in Belfast have benefited, showing a range of improvements, from increased self-esteem to better eating habits.



# Meeting commissioner outcomes

**Communities First, the Welsh Assembly's flagship programme to improve disadvantaged areas, aims to empower communities to help themselves out of poverty. Partnering with BTCV to achieve this was a natural fit.**

We've run the Family Employment Initiative (FEI) on behalf of Communities First since April 2009. FEI matches families in disadvantaged communities to environmental projects to get them back into work and participating in their community.

"FEI has made a major difference," says Chris Palmer, Communities First area coordinator. "It's attracted people that we had been unable to make contact with previously, in particular young men."

## Difficult-to-reach groups

Tyrone, 35, is one man whose life has changed thanks to the initiative. Having lost his job, Tyrone was depressed and agoraphobic. Referred by the job centre to his local FEI project, he has built up his confidence, by working in the community garden, making new friends and completing training courses in things like first aid.

"Life's a lot better now," says Tyrone. "I'm working, maintaining grounds for the council, but still volunteering with BTCV."

Tyrone is one of 2,083 participants who have benefited from the initiative, including going on to employment and volunteer placements. Exactly the kind of outcomes commissioners were looking for.

Jane Davidson, Welsh Minister for the Environment, has seen the difference we make. She says: "Few environmental projects deliver as broad a range of benefits as FEI. Bringing communities together through environmental projects helps create the cohesion that has been lost over recent decades."





### Getting people into work

BTCV employment services recruit, train and assist people to move back into employment. Go to **[www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)** to find out more.

# Lasting assets

The benefits of working on a project with BTCV can far outlast the length of the project itself. Our work often creates permanent assets for communities.

## Orchards in Camden

We've worked in partnership with Camden Council to create inner-city orchards which residents of the London borough will be able to enjoy for years to come.

Since January 2010, we have mobilised volunteers to plant 10 orchards in some of the most deprived housing estates and sheltered housing complexes in Camden. Local people can come and pick fruit and work on maintaining the sites.

"The orchards have become a focal point for the local community," explains Chris Speirs, BTCV project officer. "They've really helped bring people together – and will continue to do so in the future."

Mike Cooke, Director of Housing and Adult Social Care at Camden Council, says: "The orchard planting project has made a real difference to the lives of residents who live on the estates. This was a great example of partnership working, as everyone from tenant and resident associations to local students got involved to make the orchards happen."



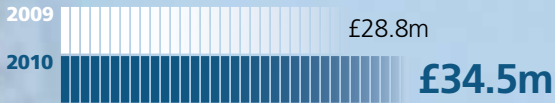




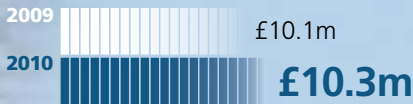
# Financially strong

Over the past 50 years, BTCV has built up a very strong business. We've continued to grow this year, with increased turnover. We have also increased our reserves, creating a solid backbone to support our social enterprise group.

## Growth in turnover



## Reserves



## Cash reserves



# Inspiring people, improving places

## We encourage people to take an interest in the environment

Last year we supported 628,104 people to think and act differently to improve their environment.

Our investment in environmental volunteers contributed a social value to society of £117.2m last year, reducing costs of problems including unemployment, poor health and crime.

## We improve places

Last year we improved over 29,000 places.

## We improve health

Last year we made 138,724 people healthier.

## We get people into employment

Last year we helped 19,753 people into employment.

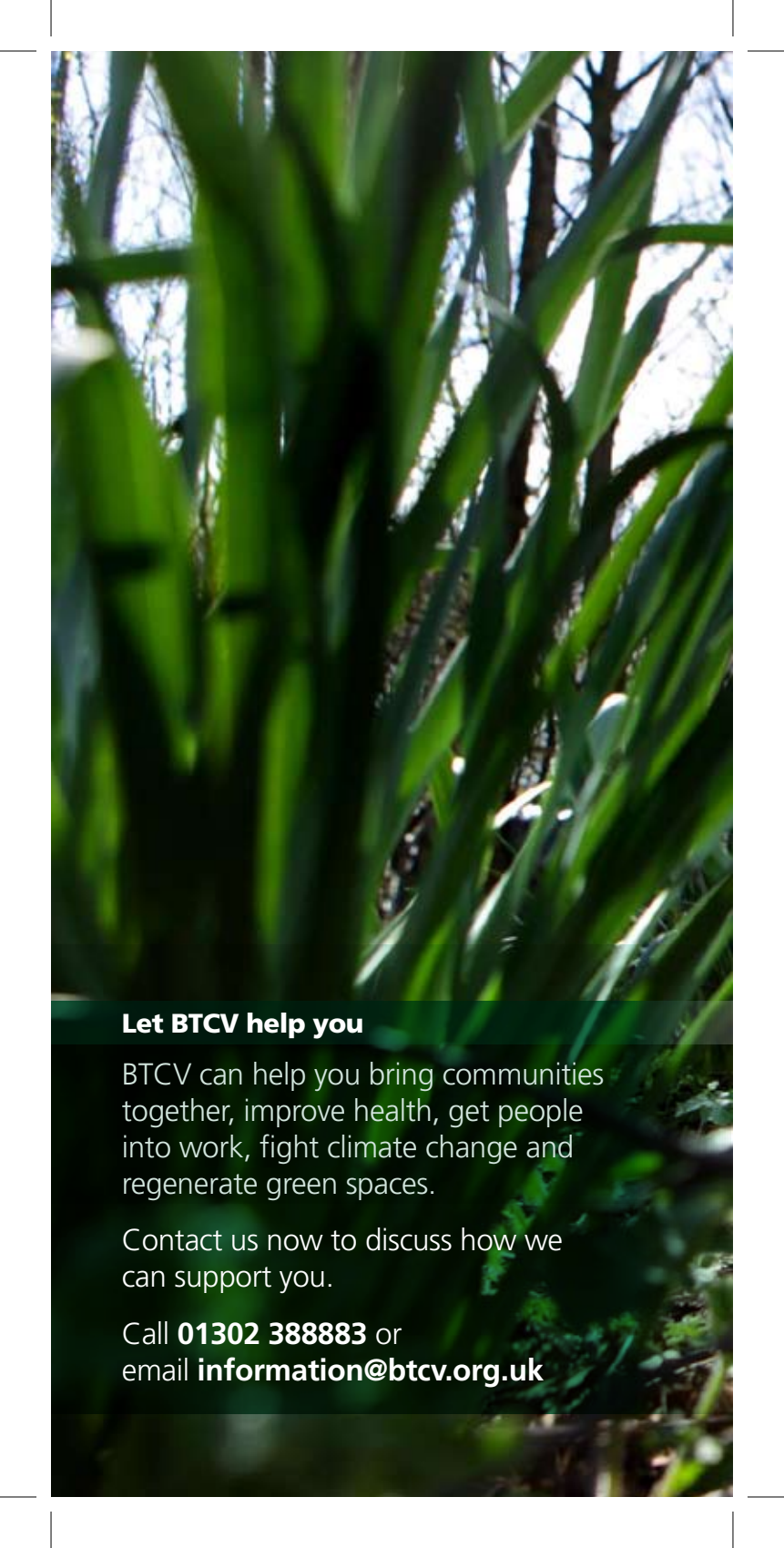
## We invest in our employees

Last year we received the prestigious Investors in People bronze award. The award acknowledges BTCV's commitment to excellent people management practices.

## We win awards

The Charity Awards recognise and celebrate excellence in the leadership and management of charities. BTCV won the Charity Award for the environment in 2009 to mark our dedication to conservation volunteering over five decades.





## Let BTCV help you

BTCV can help you bring communities together, improve health, get people into work, fight climate change and regenerate green spaces.

Contact us now to discuss how we can support you.

Call **01302 388883** or  
email **[information@btcv.org.uk](mailto:information@btcv.org.uk)**









## Good to work with

Building good, effective partnerships with the organisations and communities we work with is at the heart of everything we do. Unusually for an environmental charity, we don't own any land. We depend on partnerships to achieve our mission of inspiring people and improving places. That's why we have become experts at working together with different organisations.

## Trusted track record

Commissioners trust us to deliver their outcomes – and with 50 years' experience, we've got the figures to prove we do. Our business is substantial, and we're achieving our targets, despite the economic crisis. We have a strong balance sheet.

We have 900 staff in all corners of the United Kingdom and pride ourselves on being able to connect with many of the individuals and communities who are hardest to reach.

**Winner of the *Charity Times*  
Charity of the Year award 2010**



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE | Bronze



FundRaising  
Standards Board

BTCV, Sedum House, Mallard Way,  
Doncaster DN4 8DB

Telephone: 01302 388883

Email: [information@btcv.org.uk](mailto:information@btcv.org.uk)

[www.btcv.org](http://www.btcv.org)

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Inspiring people, improving places

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