

Ten Reasons for calling Trafford Hall a ‘Hidden Gem’.

1. The Centre

Trafford Hall is a two hundred and fifty year old Grade II listed Georgian Manor House, set at the end of a long tree lined drive. The hall sits in 14 acres of organically managed gardens, native woodland and Cheshire farmland near Chester. The Centre has 53 en-suite bedrooms, and can accommodate up to 112 at any one time.

2. Our Mission

In 1995 the National Communities Resource Centre opened at the Hall to provide short residential and day training to communities wanting to take positive action in local areas up and down the country. Problem-solving, self-help, can-do and co-operation are the hallmarks of our work and the building blocks of a “Big Society”. Our core aim is to give community leaders from low-income areas the know-how and confidence to tackle problems and make a difference.

3. Centre users come from all walks of life and our friendly staff work hard to integrate residents from low-income areas, young, old and everyone in between. Our many users from charities, environmental organisations, local government, housing associations, youth, faith and sporting bodies help cover our core costs so we can support groups from pressured areas with few resources.

4. We organise events around how to protect the environment, save energy, help young people, tackle crime, run community cafés, set up community gardens and other social enterprises. We bring families away to grow and learn together; we host workshops, fun events, away days, weddings and parties; we run workshops around burning issues of today.

5. We keep our rates as reasonable as possible, offer special discounts to regular supporters and help those who would otherwise be excluded. We are keen to reach new people and offer groups the chance to expand horizons, share and develop action plans to deliver local projects.

6. Our Green Environment

The Centre is a peaceful, therapeutic, environmental haven, helping groups tackle some of the hardest, harshest problems in their communities, building skills, spreading success stories, encouraging the “doers” and supporting the vulnerable.

7. All training rooms have large windows, overlooking our gardens, lawns, woods and fields. Wildlife abounds; we have bats, badgers, frogs, barn owls, woodpeckers and many protected ‘micro-animals’ in our ponds, ditches and native hedgerows. Our fruit trees hang low with apples and plums in late summer.

8. We grow organic vegetables, salads, herbs and fruits in the grounds for our own use in our kitchen every day. We serve healthy, fresh food; we recycle waste and buy as much local produce as we can; we only offer sustainably sourced fish, free range eggs and chicken. With our new allotments, we grow much more in the future and show our visitors what can be done. We also sell cheap plants to our visitors to spread “growing fever”.

9. Our Carbon Neutral Commitment

Our 42 Segal, timber-frame bedrooms surrounding the Victorian sunken garden are highly insulated with Warm Cel (recycled newspaper and grass roots); we are adding thermal linings to all our curtains and draught proofing all doors and windows. The rebuilt timber clad Stable is carbon neutral and our aim is to make the whole Centre as near zero carbon as we can get by 2012. Its eleven four-bed bunkrooms are ideal for families and youth groups. Its two large training rooms, long passive solar conservatory, bar and reception areas provide large eco-friendly spaces for groups up to 100. It has underfloor heating from our bio-mass boiler and solar thermal heaters on the roof. It looks out on trees and fields.

10. The Centre has committed to becoming carbon-neutral by 2012, and we are set to achieve ISO14001:2004 in 2011, the international environmental standard.