



# Press Release

23 November 2009

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## **Mike Foster, MP, visits Community Payback scheme**

Mike Foster, MP, visited a group of offenders on a Community Payback scheme at the Worcester Wood Country Park today. The offenders were carrying out unpaid work to pay back for the crimes they have committed.

The scheme was set up in partnership between West Mercia Probation Trust and Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service. The Countryside Service provides unpaid work opportunities for offenders and in return probation is able to offer labour for projects that might not otherwise get done.

Cllr Derek Prodger MBE, Worcestershire County Council's cabinet member for transport and safe environment, said: *"Our Countryside Service delivers many projects that benefit the community, but for which no funding currently exists. The Community Payback scheme offers offenders the opportunity to learn new skills and give something back to the community. This is a win-win situation for everyone involved"*.

Through this scheme the offenders help maintain Worcestershire's green areas. They carry out supervised work on public rights of way and countryside sites which includes clearing paths and ditches, trimming hedges, painting benches and fences and looking after signage.

Sara Atkins, Community Payback Manager at Worcester probation office said, *“The project provides interesting and challenging work for the offenders. As well as making reparation to the community, they have the opportunity to learn new skills which can help lead to improved employment opportunities”*.

In West Mercia offenders on Community Payback schemes provide over 170,000 hours of free labour each year to local communities to pay back for the crimes they have committed. In Worcester this figure is over 42,000 hours.

## **ENDS**

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