



ENVIRONMENTAL charity Groundwork North East has bought a tree nursery to extend its training services to ex-offenders. The social enterprise, which improves the lives of people living across the region, has acquired Butterwick Tree Nursery Community Interest Company, near Sedgefield, County Durham.

The nursery, which sells locally grown and sourced trees, provides training for ex-offenders on behalf of Durham and Tees Valley Probation Service and has been delivering this in conjunction with East Durham College and A4E.

Kate Culverhouse, Groundwork North East managing director, said: "Taking Butterwick Tree Nursery in to the Groundwork North East portfolio complements what we do as a socially responsible business. Two of our core aims are to develop sustainable business ventures and offer training opportunities to people from a wide range of backgrounds to help them take a step into the world of work.

"By linking up with colleges and training agencies, the nursery is able to help people achieve more with their lives and this will continue under Groundwork North East's stewardship."

Butterwick Tree Nursery allows its trainees to gain practical experience alongside studying for their level one City and Guilds in horticulture.

Training at the nursery involves people undertaking community service with the probation service and includes tree and shrub production.

The aim is to help ex-offenders progress to further education and employment.

Butterwick Tree Nursery benefits from work carried out by ex-offenders completing their unpaid work orders as well as providing training for them.

School groups also visit the nursery to help teachers and pupils enhance their appreciation of all aspects of trees and the environment.

Butterwick Tree Nursery was formerly owned by Peter Facey and he will continue to work within the business. The nursery grows a range of young trees from locally collected seed, which make ideal planting stock for native woods and farm hedges.

Groundwork North East received a £115,000 Forest Commission grant in June that will support 16 projects across the North East and Cumbria, planting a total of 33,000 trees over three years. Projects include schemes at Berwick, Sunderland, Crook, and around Barnard Castle.