



Communities and Nature

Evaluation Report March 2016

Improving the health and wellbeing
of people through nature activities

Big Lottery Fund - Project No. RCP/5/010422433



Protecting Wildlife for the Future

Executive summary

Avon Wildlife Trust's vision is to:

- **Create ecological networks across the West of England and improve connectivity throughout Bristol for wildlife**
- **Inspire people and communities to take action and care for nature**
- **Champion the value of nature.**

In 2013 we launched our Communities and Nature project (CAN) thanks to funding from Big Lottery (BLF) - Reaching Communities Fund. This three year project worked with over 15,000 people from socially disadvantaged communities across Bristol. The project aimed to improve their health and wellbeing as a result of opportunities to experience local nature and spend time outdoors.

The Communities and Nature project invited hard-to-reach, marginalised people from 95 different community groups from Hartcliffe to Weston Super Mare, Dundry to Easton, to get outside, get to know their local environment and take a role in shaping their local green spaces.

Activities included working on community allotments, cleaning up local parks and planting trees. The breadth of activity enabled people to reconnect (or for some participants, connect for the first time) with nature and to experience associated benefits for their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Nature offers a free and effective 'Natural Health Service' and participants consistently reported improvements to their own health and wellbeing as a result of joining the project.

The CAN project also increased participants' understanding of why we need to protect nature, and how and why we need to enhance existing urban green space. The many community events held as part of the project as well as the regular PR which celebrated their achievements, helped to demonstrate how spending time in nature is fun and vital so we can live healthier and happier lives. Project participants report they are keen to continue taking action for nature and many have gone on to undertake additional activities to improve their local natural environments.

In numbers

In total, the Communities and Nature project engaged with **15,282** individuals from **95** different groups to enhance **42** green spaces across Avon.

A total of **20,011** engagement opportunities were delivered with **85%** of participants reporting an increase in their health and wellbeing.



Approach

Our approach was to provide practical, structured, nature-based activities within communities that responded to local needs and had a lasting impact.

In addition we wanted participants to improve their health and wellbeing as a result of the nature-based activity. We structured the delivery of the project using the Five Ways to Wellbeing: - a set of evidence-based actions which, when carried out regularly, promote people's wellbeing. As well as providing a structure, we created activities that promoted these as actions so individuals could continue to undertake these on their own or with friends and family outside of the CAN project.

Avon Wildlife Trust's Five Ways to Wellbeing in Nature

Connect – with other people by working as a team and connect with nature.

Be Active – go walking, explore, carry out practical conservation and gardening.

Take Notice – of the weather, seasons, plants and wildlife around us.

Keep Learning – practical skills, wildlife facts, about opportunities to spend time outdoors, learn from each other.

Give – through voluntary work, helping others, through team work and support and by taking something home to share with friends and family.

Outcomes

723 nature activities were provided for **95** groups.

Nature activities varied between groups and sites and ranged from practical conservation tasks, horticulture and creating structures and habitats, to sensory activities and guided walks.

Knowledge and skills were developed through connecting to nature: from wildlife identification to cooking on an outdoor fire, participants learned new skills and increased their confidence. Many of the young people undertook the John Muir Award and this was for many the first time that they had been rewarded for any activity – while their achievements for nature as part of the Award were also valuable for wildlife.

The project enhanced over **40** green spaces across Avon, creating new habitats for wildlife to thrive and people to connect to nature. The tables below highlight the huge amount of work accomplished over the three years.

Activities	Outcomes
723 Nature activities	637 Bird boxes or bug home habitats
393 Practical sessions	173 Bird feeders
39 Events	5 Insect hotels
93 Walks	1745 Trees and whips planted
114 Exploration, bush craft, workshops	1550 Wildflower bulbs
54 Wildlife identification sessions	2345 Wildflower plugs
	2 Ponds
	300m² Meadow created
	1290m² Vegetation management



“The experiences I had at Folly Farm will last a lifetime. It was the greatest and most educational thing I’ve done and would recommend it to everyone”

Apple picking at Folly Farm with Bristol Refugee Rights

Impact on beneficiaries and communities

- **85%** people indicated they had improved health and wellbeing as a direct result of the CAN programme.
- **75%** vulnerable people reported feeling greater inclusion/involvement in the wider community.
- **85%** young people went on to undertake training or employment
- **75%** families and elders indicate greater use of their environment

An external evaluation was conducted by The Care Forum. Conclusions from the report stated ‘the analysis of data has given a clear indication that CAN achieved its purposes in increasing wellbeing and community cohesion’ and ‘evidence of outdoor activity being an excellent conduit for such work, and Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) can consider its work in CAN as now being part of that evidence’ – ‘intended outcomes were achieved or surpassed almost across the board, with many voices and stories as a testament to the effect CAN had on people’s lives.’ The report is available on our website: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/who-we-are/publications.

Avon Wildlife Trust’s Five Ways to Wellbeing in Nature: Beneficiary feedback

Connect – ‘Just being with such a great bunch of people was so good’

Be Active – ‘I like it that we’re exercising without really noticing, we’re just outside talking to each other in the fresh air enjoying ourselves’

Take Notice – ‘It was lovely to get out of the City and see the butterflies and listen to the bird song’

Keep Learning – ‘I didn’t think I would be any good at wood carving, but I gave it a go and I enjoyed it’

Give – ‘I got a real buzz knowing that people would come in and use our benches’

The project has provided new opportunities for partnership working. Good partnerships are key to providing stronger, coherent projects, quality of activities with resources shared to deliver more in the area. Partnership working with the health sector has increased efficiency of approach.

Community leader feedback

Our new Park has provided a **focal point** for people to come together, increasing their confidence in being able to change things, and developing a sense of pride in our local community. - *Bedminster*

This project has helped to **raise awareness** of Dundry Slopes and its wildlife value for people in the local area, Bristol and beyond. - *Dundry View*

Not only have we attracted more wildlife into to our everyday lives, but the activities have **brought our community closer together**, giving people a sense of pride and achievement. - *Easton*

It has brought healthy food, fresh ideas, positivity, **increased use of our outdoor space** and has inspired our members. - *Southmead*

Participants have come away with a **deeper understanding of open space and nature** around where they live. - *Twerton*

“Coming gardening makes me feel like I have done something positive with my day”



“When I am here I can forget all my worries and just concentrate on gardening, it gives me peace of mind”

Avon Wildlife Trust have experience of delivering a variety of activities in this locality and therefore do understand **local connections**. CAN supported the development of the growing sites when they most needed it and enabled us to apply for funding. Our application was based on the strong existing partnership that had developed over the time of the project. The feedback I have had from local families has been **very positive about the changes** - *Weston-super-Mare*

Over the course of the programme **4632** people indicated their interest in being more involved in local community projects after working with us or attending our events.



Lessons Learnt

The CAN project has been hugely successful and has enabled the Avon Wildlife Trust to build and consolidate our expertise in connecting hard-to-reach communities with nature and wellbeing. Significant lessons learnt on this project include:

Working where groups were visibly contributing to the local community had positive outcomes for both participants and local people; enhancing social interactions and community cohesion.

Finding sites with suitable facilities plus designing activities for people with learning and physical disabilities was challenging and time consuming when limited to the standard CAN nature sites. Utilising AWT's wellbeing receptor sites at Folly Farm, Feed Bristol and Bennett's Patch & White's Paddock increased effective participation for these groups.

Agreeing objectives and outcomes between organisations in advance of undertaking nature activities ensured the activities could be delivered efficiently and made the impacts and the evaluation processes more effective.

Attending larger community events encouraged new relationships and activities. It enabled a larger proportion of local people to engage with the project, resulting in effective communication about the benefits that nature has on wellbeing.

Recommendations

Through the Communities and Nature project, and the People and Wildlife Project before that¹, the Avon Wildlife Trust has developed a sound body of expertise and practical experience of delivering impactful projects which result in long lasting, transformational benefits for people and nature.

The Trust's **Five Ways to Wellbeing in Nature** framework provides a guide for delivering this work. Connecting people to nature and providing them with the skills and confidence to take action to enhance their local green spaces has significant benefits for mental and physical health, as well as for the environment. Nature must be understood as a 'Natural Health Service' which has the potential to provide sustainable opportunities for wellness across society.

The benefits reported by CAN participants demonstrate the power nature has to enable people to mediate complex needs by providing tangible steps to improve their wellbeing. The Avon Wildlife Trust is taking a leading role in developing a nature-based approach to Health and Wellbeing. We urge Health and Wellbeing practitioners across the board to integrate nature more fully into the framework.

¹ People and Wildlife project 2009 – 2012 worked with 43,751 people across Avon. For more info see bit.ly/PeopleAndWildlife2012

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1. Introduction

“The happiest people in life are the people who spend their days outside doing work instead of sat in the house doing nothing”

- Young person with mild learning disabilities

1.1 Avon Wildlife Trust

Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) is the largest local charity working to protect wildlife in the West of England area. With the support of over 17,500 members and 1500 volunteers, we protect wildlife and inspire people. We care for 36 nature reserves, from ancient bluebell woods to Iron Age forts, nationally important wetlands and wildflower meadows. We run award-winning educational and community programmes and we work with landowners in the wider countryside to reduce the decline in wildlife by creating a Living Landscape.

We believe passionately that wildlife and natural processes need to have space to thrive, beyond designated nature reserves and protected sites. Society needs this as much as our wildlife. A healthy natural environment is the foundation for everything that is of value to people – food, water, shelter, flood prevention, health, happiness and creative inspiration. It's the source of our prosperity and our wellbeing.

We want to inspire people about the natural world so that they value it, understand their relationship with it and take action to protect and restore it. This is why Avon Wildlife Trust individually, and collectively as part of the Wildlife Trusts movement, is stepping up our activity and adopting new ways of working to increase our impact.

Avon Wildlife Trust works with partners to champion the value of nature and improve environmental awareness at public and policy levels. As part of the wider Wildlife Trusts movement, AWT supports the call for a new Nature and Wellbeing Bill, which would set targets for the Government 'to restore nature in a generation'.

Avon Wildlife Trust
Vision:

**To enable nature
to recover on
grand scale**

Our goals:

- 1. Create ecological networks through landscape-scale habitat management and enhancement.**
- 2. Inspire people and communities to care for nature.**
- 3. Champion the value of nature.**

1.2 Background to the project

Funded by the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, the 3 year Communities and Nature (CAN) Programme aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of people in socially disadvantaged communities by offering opportunities to experience nature and the outdoors.

The CAN programme was developed from the experience of Avon Wildlife Trust's People and Wildlife (PAW) Programme (2009 to 2012), which delivered opportunities for new audiences to engage with nature.

The PAW programme successfully worked with marginalised communities across Avon, engaging 43,751 people in a range of nature based activities over 4 years.

PAW - Key lessons learnt:

- Programmes should provide a **variety of opportunities** to cater for different audiences and individual interests. Activities need to be enjoyable and keep people's attention, so flexibility in delivery is needed.

- Projects that **focus on small geographical areas over many years** build stronger relationships with that community and improve the success and sustainability of projects.
- Feedback highlighted the success of the project in reaching and inspiring communities, but did not **gather quantifiable data**, which is required to allow us to analyse improved health and wellbeing.
- In order to see improvements in people's health and wellbeing, it is essential to work with that community over a sustained period of time and ensure they have good access to a safe natural environment on their doorstep.

These points were taken forward in the design of the Communities And Nature programme.



1.3 Project Need - Evidenced based research and local priorities

The need for the project was evident from our People and Wildlife Programme and demonstrated through both national and local priorities.

A study by Natural England (Stone, Hillsdon & Coombes 'Green space access, green space use, physical activity and overweight' 2011) demonstrated the significant benefits of green spaces for health and wellbeing, e.g. young people who use local green spaces are more resilient to psychological and emotional stress than those who spend their time in dense urban environments. The research underlined that access to and engagement with green spaces are an important factor in public health efforts to promote physical activity and reduce obesity.

Issues affecting the West of England's socially deprived or marginalised communities include lack of cohesion and a poor quality environment. Members of these communities are often isolated with low self-confidence, with below average health and wellbeing and reduced life chances.

Bristol's Community Cohesion Strategy 2010-13 highlighted the need to "break[ing] down the barriers that create tension between people" and indicated the need for "promoting democracy and citizenship through local involvement in neighbourhoods, communities and through the voluntary sector." To achieve this, the city's Strategic Needs Assessment prioritises "increasing healthy lifestyles" and the need to "design a healthy city with green space".

Regional policy is therefore increasingly taking account of the benefits that engagement with nature can bring to individuals and communities. CAN delivered aspects of the 'North Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2026', and Bristol's 'Sustainable City Strategy - 20:20 Plan' (particularly themes relating to health & wellbeing, stronger cohesive communities and environmental sustainability), focusing on marginalised and/or socially deprived communities in Bristol, North Somerset and Bath & NE Somerset where there is the greatest need.

2. Aims, Outcomes and Approach

2.1 Aims

The Communities and Nature Programme provided opportunities for people from marginalised communities to take part in practical outdoor activities in their local neighbourhood. We worked with young people, those with mental health issues or learning disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, families and elders. Through engaging people in nature we aimed to

- improve their health and wellbeing;
- increase their self confidence and social skills and;
- reduce social isolation.

2.2 Project Outcomes

Four outcomes were used to shape the programme to meet the needs of specific groups and report on our activities to BLF.

Outcome 1: People from vulnerable groups (refugees, learning disabilities and mental health) will be less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing.

Outcome 3: Low income families and elders in socially deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life.

Outcome 2: Young people not in employment or training will have improved self confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing.

Outcome 4: Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment.



2.3 Approach

Our approach was to provide structured and practical nature based activities within communities, that responded to local needs resulting in a lasting impact.

Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing were developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) from evidence gathered in the UK government's Foresight Project. This Project, published in 2008, drew on state-of-the-art research about mental capital and mental wellbeing through life. This resulted in a set of evidence-based action: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give, which when carried out regularly promote people's wellbeing. Each action can be achieved outdoors in nature. Avon Wildlife Trust used the actions to structure the delivery and encouraged participants to use the actions outside of the programme, on their own or with friends and family. Each action was typically included in each session - see the examples below.

“ I like it that we are exercising but without really noticing, we're just outside talking to each other in the fresh air enjoying ourselves ”

- Roots Project



Five Ways to Wellbeing through Nature

Connect – with other people by working as a team and connect with nature

Be Active – go walking, explore, carry out practical conservation and gardening.

Take Notice – of the weather, seasons, plants and wildlife around us.

Keep Learning – practical skills, wildlife facts, about opportunities to spend time outdoors, learn from each other

Give – through voluntary work, helping others, through team work and support and by taking something home to share with friends and family.

Community-led approach

The Programme was responsive to the needs of the community. Ongoing consultation with Neighbourhood Partnerships, Housing Associations and Park Groups, enabled the CAN team to develop meaningful projects to meet the needs of the community. Through encouraging ownership of local spaces, linking target audiences with community projects increased social interactions and community cohesion.

Continuous feedback from beneficiaries and group leaders ensured activities were appropriate for a specific group or individual's needs and abilities. Offering a wide range of activities; both urban and rural sites; practical conservation skills and food growing; walking, explorative tasks and reflection helped support individuals to develop and nurture their skills in areas that best suited their aspirations and needs. This improved confidence and encouraged further volunteering, training and employment.

Environmental approach

AWT's vision is to create ecological networks across the West of England and improve connectivity through Bristol for wildlife. Engaging participants to improve local parks and green spaces as part of this project helps to meet this aim.

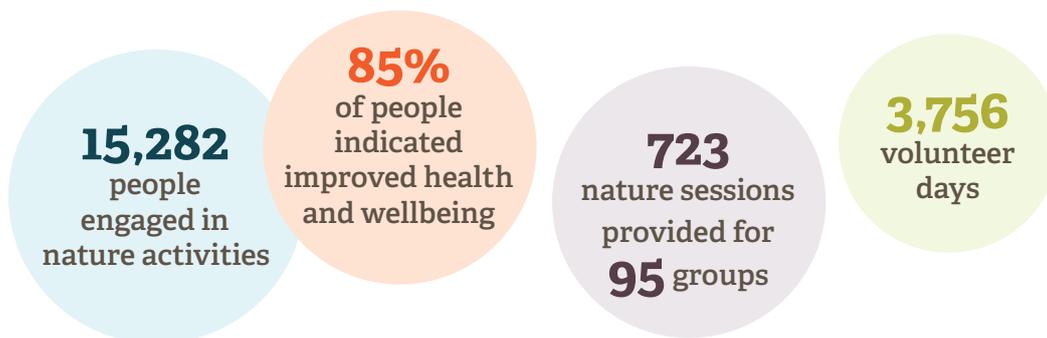
Avon Wildlife Trust is stepping up our response and adopting new ways of working to increase our impact. The CAN project provides a platform for people to reconnect with nature, demonstrating the value of the 'Natural Health Service'. Providing positive experiences that improves knowledge, skills, health and wellbeing will lead to a greater number of people caring for their environment.

The project will increase understanding of the need to protect and enhance existing urban green spaces that inspires people to continue to take action for nature. The publicity and community events generated by the project highlights the importance of the natural environment and the ecosystem services it provides for society.

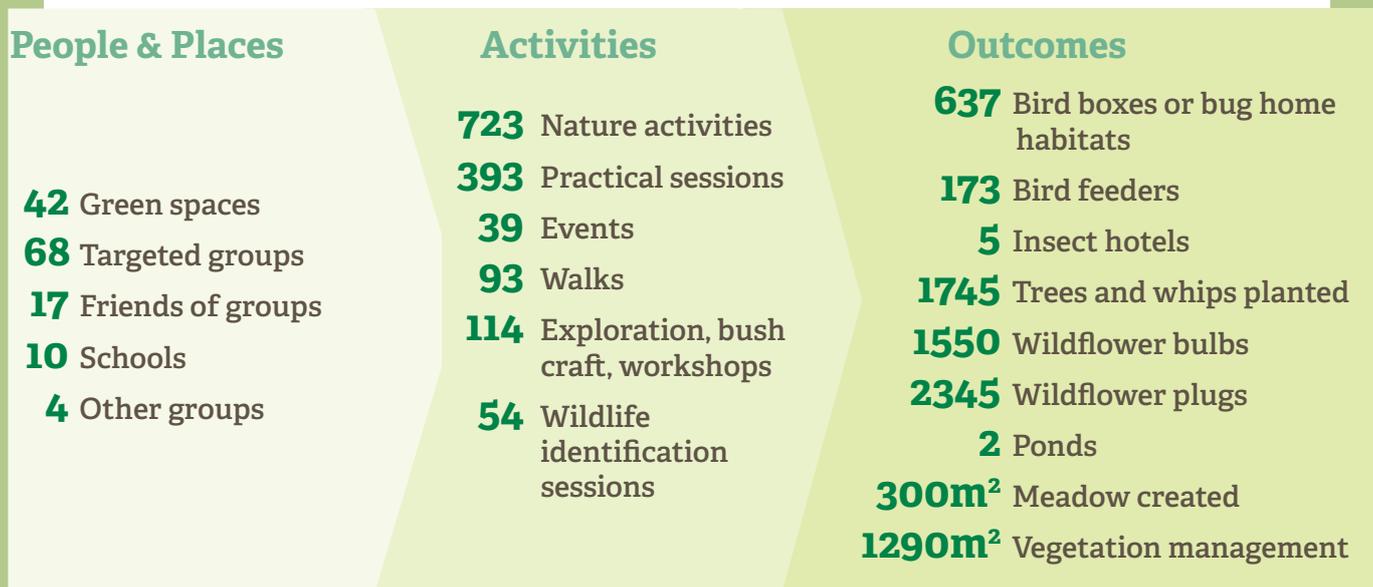
3. Project Delivery

“It was incredible the amount of impact this programme had on young people – enjoying the surroundings and taking pride in their areas.”
 - Tomorrow's People Co-ordinator

The CAN programme had an overwhelming impact on both participants and the wider community. This chapter highlights the variety of approaches and activities; with case studies to illustrate the unique interactions between people, their community and natural green spaces.



Activities varied between groups and sites and ranged from practical conservation tasks, horticulture, creating structures and habitats to sensory activities and guided walks. The following infographic highlights the huge amount of work accomplished over the lifetime of the project.



“We cannot thank and praise the CAN team and Horizons/Young Bristol teams enough. They have not only helped us to physically transform our Park, but have been instrumental in bringing together the local community to work together.”
 - Friends of South Street Park

3.1 Vulnerable groups

People from vulnerable groups will be less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing



'Headway' group with their insect homes, Dundry View

“ It was very touching for me to see members of our group who didn't know each other beforehand, working, sharing and enjoying the experience together. I could visibly see how much they got out of the visit ”

Organiser at Refugee Rights

Vulnerable groups included:

- adults with learning disabilities;
- people recovering from mental health issues;
- refugees and asylum seekers;
- people on low income, including long term unemployed, persistent low mood or long term health issues.

The project worked with groups supporting people with learning disabilities, including Brandon Trust, Milestones, Sirona and St Georges Day Centre. Engagement ranged from taster days to regular volunteering activities depending on individual abilities within the group. By connecting these groups to community projects we provided opportunities to meet new people. This enhanced the participants' enjoyment of outdoor activities and increased their feelings of inclusion and pride in their work.

“ People gave us ice lollies because we were doing a good job ”

Refugee and asylum seekers embraced visits to AWT nature reserves. We worked with Borderlands and Bristol Refugee Rights offering taster days encompassing a healthy walk and a shared lunch cooked on a fire. Getting away from the city and connecting

with nature had a profound and positive effect on participants' mood. The experience evoked a bond between people and helped them reflect about their struggles, in a supportive and calming setting. Individuals did not know each other, but by the end of a session new friends were made.

People recovering from mental health problems were engaged through Riverside Adolescent Unit, Callington Road Mental Health Hospital and Wild Wellbeing Walking group. The CAN Project provided monthly activities for Headway who support people recovering from head injuries at the Witherwood Centre. Individuals, along with low income participants were engaged through local practical projects such as conservation tasks at Dundry Slopes in Hartcliffe and horticulture at the Great Rhyne Community Allotment in Weston-super-Mare (WSM).

In numbers

The project engaged with **4598** people, supporting **29** groups and providing **463** activity sessions.

From feedback gathered from 302 people, **91%** indicated improved health and wellbeing and **75%** reported greater involvement in the wider community.



“ I like being outdoors and looking at nature, it makes me feel good ”

Walk on the Downs

Case Study: Roots Project

For Black and Minority Ethnic communities, people with learning disabilities, those with long term health issues and elders

From August 2014 to October 2015

Aim

To improve physical health, increase wellbeing and reduce social isolation through a programme of nature walks for people from the inner city and Easton areas to visit and learn about green spaces in and around Bristol.

“ It was such a wonderful way to spend the day; we covered so much-physical activity, we learnt about wild plants, social interaction and all in a lovely setting ”

Approach

The Roots Project was a joint venture between CAN, Avon Gorge and Downs Project and Bristol City Council’s Health

Improvement Team who support local people to find suitable activities that contribute to improved health and wellbeing. Initially a one-year programme, the Roots Project was extended to run through the lifetime of the CAN project.

“ I’ve been having a bad time at work recently and have felt very tense, I just feel like it has all fallen away, I feel so relaxed ”



Healthy walk at Willsbridge Mill



Walk on the Downs



Peregrine Falcon watch on the Downs

Activities

Walks and activities were seasonal, themed, spaced throughout the year and based around the Five Ways to Wellbeing. The Health Improvement Team identified and recruited people and supported the walkers at each event. Minibus transport was organised by the CAN team who also attended the Avon Gorge walks to provide continuity. Sessions were held at Avon Gorge and Downs, Folly Farm, Feed Bristol, Bennett's Patch & White's Paddock, Willsbridge Mill, Bristol Zoo and in Easton.

Outcomes

18 sessions took place with 153 people providing 273 people engagements.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing proved to be an ideal tool for collecting health

and wellbeing data and was used by the CAN project for all their activities going forward.

The Health Improvement Team were crucial in ensuring attendance, and encouraged participants to reflect after a session providing a wealth of comments that indicated the success of the project.

Taking groups out of the city had profound effects on people's wellbeing through access to a nature-rich landscape outside their normal experience, offering deeper relaxation and reflection.

The Health Improvement Team continue to organise outdoor nature walks with other organisations.

Apple Picking at Folly Farm

The day started as wet and grey, but the sun came out to greet the group as we arrived at Folly Farm. After a brief introduction to Folly Farm, we headed to the orchard. During the walk (**Active**) we spotted two pheasants, a glittering winged damselfly (**Notice**) and everyone asked questions about the different berries along the hedgerow, from rosehips to haw and sloe berries (**Learn**).

The orchard was brimming with apples, everyone smiled, grabbed a bag and started picking. There was one tree with bright red apples, which everyone gravitated to, but most apples were out of reach. However, an innovative family used a participant's crutch as an extendable apple picker and this ensured that there were enough apples for everyone (**Connected**). Even the minibus driver joined in and helped carry the heavy apple bags to transport them back to the Folly Farm Centre.

After lunch, the group helped the chef make apple chutney, apple cake and crumble. Many questions were asked, and tasting sessions were enjoyed. The apples picked and the food made all contributed (**Give**) to Folly's Farms Apple Day.



“ It's nice to come out and do this, when I saw the poster I thought... I would never normally go for that sort of thing.. lets go for it and try something new, I'm really happy I came ”

Case Study: Hartcliffe Horticulture Therapy Group

For young people with mild learning disabilities

From 24 September 2015 to 5 November 2015

Aim

To support individuals with mild learning disabilities to achieve therapeutic benefits such as increased social inclusion, physical exercise, self-esteem and mood through engaging with their local natural environment.

Approach

Contact with the Bristol City Council's Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT) highlighted a need for nature activities for individuals with mild learning disabilities within their local community. Through discussions with CLDT, a pilot project was set up in Hartcliffe to assist with practical work at Dundry slopes. The CLDT team agreed to provide an occupational therapist to identify potential clients and support the sessions alongside CAN staff.

Activities

The project ran two hours a week for seven weeks and worked from the Scout Hut on Bishport Avenue. The Therapist phoned each client prior to the weekly

sessions to encourage attendance and activities were tailored to the specific cognitive and physical needs of individual participants. Clients attended on their own or with support staff.

Activities included weeding, planting, clearing vegetation, making bug homes, litter-picking and nature walks. Two participants were on crutches so sessions were adapted so they could take part and this encouraged team working. Lighting the Kelly Kettle and making tea became an important component of each session, providing a break between activities and encouraging group discussion.

The CAN team invited individuals from the Dundry Slopes friends group to take part and local residents also stopped to chat, providing opportunities for participants to interact with the wider community. A visit to nearby Bouchier Garden Allotments to see the construction of a roundhouse by Volunteering Matters introduced them to other local residents. They were a little apprehensive of this as it involved a large group of 'new' people, as a result they stuck together and made closer bonds with each other.



“Coming gardening makes me feel like I have done something positive with my day”



Making Bread twists

Outcomes

The group was asked how they felt at the beginning and end of each session. Participants often reported feeling 'tired', 'not fussed' and 'alright' at the start, but by the end of the sessions the feedback forms had comments such as 'happy, glad I did it', 'great' and 'tired!' One client commented that 'coming gardening makes me feel like I have done something positive with my day' and that 'the happiest people in life are the people who spend their days outside doing work instead of sat in the house doing nothing'.

“ [Participant] has not been out the house for a year, encouraging him to come to this group, was a challenge in itself. It has been so beneficial; he attended all sessions and has recently even been into town! ”

Hartcliffe Horticultural group support worker

The horticulture therapy group proved to be a success for a number of reasons:

- The client group consistently attended sessions and appeared to enjoy activities.
- Group members appeared to develop in confidence over the seven week period and widened their social networks.
- Clients consistently identified the benefits of getting out of the house and engaging in the horticulture sessions
- Many of the participants engaged with the local community and three of the participants wished to continue this type of work. Arrangements were made for them to join Volunteering Matters, who offer volunteering activities in the area.

Asking how people felt at the beginning and end of a session worked well, and along with some additional questions and recording observations this became our preferred method for collecting health and wellbeing data.

Repeated, simple activities worked well for participants as it gave them the confidence to perform tasks on their own.

Joint working and continued support from health professionals increases the success of projects, with the Occupational Therapy team helping to facilitate good levels of attendance.

A new partnership with the CLDT was forged and they have indicated that more joint working would be welcomed.

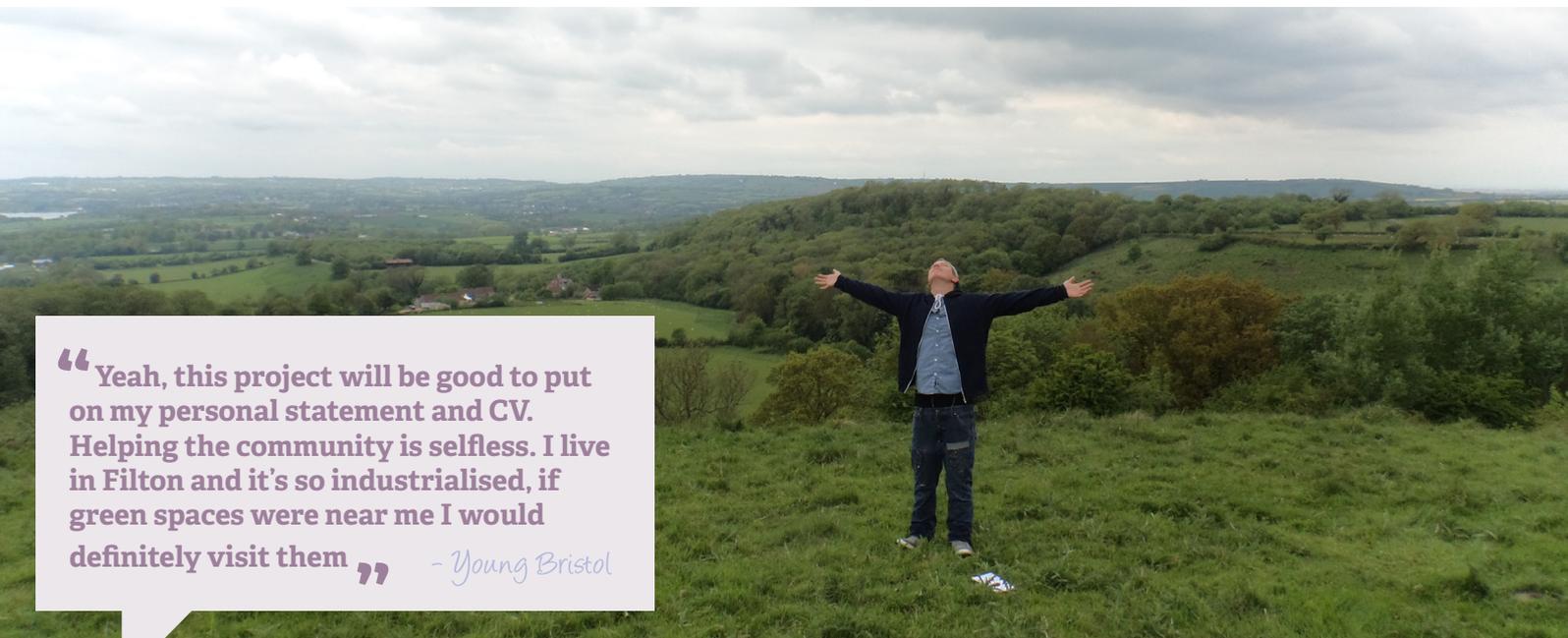


Wildflower plug planting

“ I like picking up litter, I don't like it when people drop litter, it is bad ”

3.2 Young people

Young people not in employment or training will have improved self confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing



“ Yeah, this project will be good to put on my personal statement and CV. Helping the community is selfless. I live in Filton and it's so industrialised, if green spaces were near me I would definitely visit them ” - Young Bristol

Young people were grouped as:

- 10-15 year olds
- 16-25 year olds

The project approached this audience through organisations such as Tomorrow's People, Young Bristol and local colleges. Taster days led to regular contact with various groups throughout the course of the CAN programme.

All groups engaged and worked hard, and although some individuals were not enthusiastic about 'getting muddy', it was clear that most were more relaxed in an outdoor environment. To resolve issues with disengaged individuals, CAN involved them in other types of tasks such as documenting a session through photography or filming.

The John Muir Award is an environmental award that encourages people of all backgrounds to connect, enjoy and care for wild places through a structured yet adaptable scheme. It is an ideal way to empower young people to gain confidence and skills and whilst not competitive it should challenge each participant. CAN facilitated 14 groups to attain this award.

Many young people who showed enthusiasm were encouraged to take on leadership roles within a group or community project.

For four weeks in August 2014 CAN worked with Young Bristol National Citizen Service scheme. The young people were given a project brief including budget management to provide improvements at South Street Park. They met with local residents, devised a plan and presented their ideas back to the community. One young person then used his initiative to get free plants from the local garden centre. Practical improvements were made by the group, including repainting a fence and sourcing benches for the Bark Park. As well as gardening they learnt skills such as willow weaving and bug hunting which they used to engage families at a community event in Hartcliffe.

In numbers

The project engaged with **1370** people, supporting **28** groups and providing **149** activity sessions.

From feedback gathered from 155 people, **77%** indicated improved health and wellbeing, **85%** went onto further training and employment and **119** demonstrated leadership skills.

Case Study: Tomorrow's People (TP)

For disadvantaged young people

From March 2013 to December 2015



Tomorrow's People at Folly Farm

Aim

To support young people to increase self-confidence, life-skills and improve health and wellbeing through opportunities to explore, learn and be inspired by wildlife and green spaces in Bristol and rural environments.

Approach

Tomorrow's People (TP) offers a free ten week 'working it out' programme for disadvantaged young people to gain confidence and skills through training and life experiences to increase their chances of employment. After initial taster days a partnership quickly formed and a structure of activities were developed encompassing the John Muir Award to recognise the achievements that the young people undertook through the CAN programme.

Activities

Five to seven sessions were provided per group and CAN staff would meet each group in their central office for an informal introduction to the CAN project,

“I can do anything if I put my mind to it!”

Tomorrow's People

the John Muir award and highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits.

Sessions were delivered on multiple sites across Avon, to reflect the abilities and interests of the group as well as their keenness to explore new places. These included community sites in Southmead, Easton, and Hartcliffe, three nature reserves and two AWT community hub sites.

“The experiences I had at Folly Farm will last a lifetime. It was the greatest and most educational thing I've done and I would recommend it to everyone” - *Tomorrow's People*

Activities included:

- Outdoor cooking using vegetables picked from the Folly Farm wellbeing garden
- Informal wildlife walks around nature reserves
- Small scale community building projects – making benches, a disabled access gate and planters
- Conservation tasks such as bramble clearing and coppicing
- Wildlife photography, with the best images made into greetings cards; which the group sold at Christmas market in central Bristol along with rustic pencils and bird feeders that they had made.



Trip to Exmoor National Park

- An overnight trip to Exmoor National Park was organised by the CAN team with additional activities run by local rangers. For many it was the first time they had explored outside of Bristol so the experience of the wide open spaces, remoteness and striking winter colours of Exmoor will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Outcomes

CAN project provided 58 sessions, engaging with 98 young people across 11 groups, with 77 completing their John Muir Award.

We worked with groups of young people to enable them to achieve The John Muir award, which provided a clear focus for our sessions and provided recognition for their work. Tomorrow's People staff recognised the positive impact this had on young people and informed their colleagues, resulting in the award being delivered nationwide by other Tomorrow's People projects.

The majority of individuals really engaged with activities, improving their skills and connecting and caring for their environment.

After the initial Exmoor visit, TP staff returned with groups independently.

The young people enjoyed the wildlife walks in the countryside, cooking on a fire and taking part in practical activities. In particular they liked activities that were tangible and semi-permanent, using a variety of hand tools. In contrast, wildlife ID and sensory sessions did not work as well.

“ I am glad I got an opportunity to work with Avon Wildlife Trust, the tasks we did made me feel like I had done a good deed and I will go back and see how [the benches we built] are holding up ”

- Tomorrow's People

Case Study: Happy Horizons Project

For young people with mild learning disabilities

From September 2014 to June 2015

Aim

To offer opportunities for the Horizons Work Skills group to improve their skills, confidence and independence in the wider community through engaging in local conservation and nature activities in their local community.

Approach

Horizons is a three-year course, run through the City of Bristol College, offering opportunities and challenges to help teenagers with mild learning difficulties to develop and become more independent. A good partnership existed with Horizons and suitable sites were quickly identified in Bedminster and Dundry Slopes with sessions developed to incorporate the John Muir Award.

Activities

Practical improvement activities included vegetation clearance, tree planting and wildflower meadow creation. The young people were encouraged take turns to explain the activity and to present a tools safety talk to the rest of the group, helping to develop their confidence and feelings of responsibility.

Some students found several tasks hard, whether physically demanding or more dexterous activities. This often led to frustration and disengagement. Extra support and additional simple tasks such as litter picking were used to address this. At the end of each session staff encouraged the group to look at and acknowledge their achievements. When local residents stopped to chat, students were encouraged to explain their work.

The Horizon group on Dundry slopes



“ It was interesting, seeing and talking to other people. Sticky buds are sticky. Don't lick them! ”

- Horizons

Other activities concentrated on using their senses such as, stopping to notice their surroundings and closing eyes to listen to the sounds around them. Collecting materials to create colour palettes and finding items with different textures worked well and helped them to learn the names of plants and trees.

The group carried out activities that would challenge them, for example walking to the top of Dundry Slopes. This was very hard for some of the students and some did struggle and complain but when they reached the top and could look over Bristol they became very proud of their achievement.

Outcomes

The CAN project provided 35 sessions, engaging with 21 young people including 6 support workers across three groups, 14 gained their John Muir award. Students enjoyed the outdoor activities which can be seen through their comments found in appendix 4. A highlight was the visit to Folly Farm, exploring, making a fire and den building. None of the group had tried toasted marshmallows on a fire before, with one student saying 'I can't wait to tell my mum what I have done today' and another 'This is the best day of my life!'

“I've learnt sawing and cutting. I feel more confident and I enjoy it. I have met new people ”

- Horizons

Each group developed a storyboard of their work to present at their graduation, and share their experience with family and friends.

Students from Bristol University filmed the students making an insect hotel at Hebron burial ground.

'All of the young people will transfer the learning experiences of the project, to individual supported work placements. The work skills such as punctuality, safe use of tools, following instructions, learning from experience, solving problems, asking for help and working with others are all essential for their progression into training and employment.'

“The students really look forward to their conservation days at Hebron Burial Ground. They seem happier and more engaged when they are outside working in the community ”

- Horizons Support worker

Below are outcomes from some of the young people; One student:

- was very proud of her work and showed her parents the sites she had been working on
- did so well her work placement was extended,
- worked with a friend on a gardening project and got paid.
- reduced her fear of dogs
- was able to work more closely with others in a team
- got a part-time job

Contacts have been passed onto Volunteer Matters who can provide one-off volunteering opportunities in the local area in Hartcliffe.

Colour Palette, wildflower planting and marshmallow toasting activities



3.3 Families and elders

Low income families and elders in socially deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life.



SIMON JOHNSON



The most effective way to engage with families was through community events, which tapped into the community directly, especially during school holidays.

“As a local resident I have been encouraged to go up the fields with the events organised by AWT and I have enjoyed being in a group. Also to see different groups and schools using this area and helping to brighten it up makes you feel hope for the future”

- Elder resident in Hartcliffe

The CAN team attended large community events to introduce the project to a wide audience. These provided opportunities to highlight the importance of wildlife and raise awareness of the benefits that nature has

Insect hotel building



on wellbeing. These led to smaller, targeted local events where we could work more closely with individuals. Popular activities included bug hunts, making bug homes, bird boxes and feeders and nature crafts.

Individual elders were reached through community garden projects or healthy walks. The project worked with Link Age, Age UK, the Health Improvement Team and Southmead Walking Group.

“This is just brilliant! There is not much for children in the summer, especially those that can't get away on holidays and it's so good to see the park being used. I like the outdoor stuff, it's really shown me things I can do with my girls for nothing and they love it all, thanks”

- Parent, Out in nature

In numbers

The project engaged with **6996** people, supporting **10** groups and **13** Friends of Park groups, and providing **111** nature sessions.

From feedback gathered from 183 people, **75%** indicated a greater use of the natural environment and **88%** indicated their quality of life was improved.

Case Study: Out in Nature Pennyquick Park, Twerton

For families and young people

From July to August 2014



Aim

To increase social interactions and connections between families and young people through experiencing time outdoors at Pennyquick Park.

Approach

Timebank Plus is a local charity providing opportunities for people to become involved and volunteer in their local community of Twerton. Feedback from families indicated a need for more nature based activities for children and young people at Pennyquick Park. To answer this, CAN developed a joint project with Timebank called Out-in-Nature, where CAN provided a series of nature activities and Timebank developed the publicity and contacts within the community.

Making rustic pencils



Activities

One pilot session in the local youth club was followed by seven weekly sessions, and a weekend community event, including

- nature exploration using I.D. guides, leaf and bark rubbing
- making rustic pencils, bird boxes and insect homes
- outdoor cooking, pancakes, calzones, lemonade and elderflower cordial
- planting 30 native wildflower plug plants

Outcomes

200 people attended the community event and 74 people engaged with the weekly sessions.

Offering after school sessions free of charge proved very beneficial for families and all feedback was positive. This showed the need for more regular activities in the park, especially as families said they struggle to find things to do locally.

'There was one occasion where a young group of children tried to take some of the tools. The local Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) stopped by on the following session to talk to the young people. Developing connections with the local PCSO's helped both them and the young people to build stronger communications and relationships.'

Case Study: Lifecycle

For over 55's, Bike Minded (people experiencing mental health problems) and Two's Company (tandem rides for visually impaired riders)

From June 2014 – October 2015

Aim

To provide opportunities to learn about wildlife and green spaces in Avon through cycle rides to AWT nature reserves, including practical conservation work to encourage participants to feel more included with improved mental health and wellbeing.

Approach

CAN staff delivered several popular nature themed rides for Lifecycle in 2014. Feedback highlighted the popularity of these rides and based on this success, Lifecycle applied for Bristol Green Capital (BGC) Funding to support a series rides in 2015. A film was produced by BGC illustrating the benefits of the project.

Activities

- Tree planting at Bennett's Patch and White's Paddock Nature Reserve
- Barn owls and bats at Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve
- Bluebells at Priors Wood Nature Reserve

Tree planting at Bennet's Patch and White's Paddock

- Visit to Feed Bristol for harvesting and cooking
- CAN community project sites in north and south Bristol.
- Folly Farm with lunch in wellbeing garden

Outcomes

The CAN project supported 9 Lifecycle rides, engaging 128 riders.

- Working in partnership with Lifecycle increased participation and social interaction with the wider community
- Participants developed awareness of nature, the importance of wildlife and through a greater understanding of AWT's work feel inspired to visit more AWT nature reserves and take action for wildlife
- The CAN team provided continuity and therefore developed relationships with individual participants.

Lifecycle will be able to continue nature cycle rides, by sourcing other naturalists.

“ It was so interesting to be on a ride where we were more in touch with the wildlife around us. Staff were full of interesting information, a lot of new info for me. Lovely to do this as part of a group too ”



3.4 Community Cohesion

Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment



Sweeping for insects at the Family Fun day - Jubilee Park, Weston-super-Mare

The CAN Programme focused on six areas, which had high levels of deprivation, or where communities were particularly marginalised and communities had indicated a need to improve their local green spaces for people and wildlife. These areas were:

Bristol: Bedminster;
Easton/Lawrence Hill;
Hartcliffe and Withywood;
Southmead

North Somerset: Weston-super-Mare

BANES: Twerton and Whiteway

We worked at a number of sites within each area, including the grounds of Community Centres, parks, community allotments and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). CAN supported people to take practical action to improve their neighbourhood and offered them opportunities to learn and experience nature through exploration and guided walks.

Project work was identified through community consultation and offered people practical solutions that they could help to deliver. This ensured local people's involvement in the projects, leading to more social interactions and sustainability for the management of those sites.

Learning new skills, from gardening to wood working and species identification increased people's confidence and helped them to engage with other local projects.

Local residents and community leaders in

all of the CAN areas indicated the need for schools to get involved in their projects. This was not one of our BLF targets, but was added as additional engagement so that we could respond to this request.

Bristol Green Capital 2015 provided funding for AWT's 'My Wild City' project. CAN supported this project by developing four wildlife friendly demonstration sites, enabling us to deliver more practical improvements to the CAN community sites.

Over the course of the programme, **4632** people indicated their interest in being more involved in local community projects after working with us or attending our events. A number of community leader feedback forms have been collected illustrating the impact of CAN on community involvement, *see Section 4.2*.

An end of project celebration event took place at our Folly Farm Centre in December 2015. Based around the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', it included nature craft activities, guided wildlife walks, talks and storyboards produced by groups we had worked with. The event was well attended and people enjoyed sharing their experiences.

A '**Five ways to nature wellbeing**' leaflet is being produced as a final outcome of the CAN project. It will be a resource for individuals and groups we have worked with, to encourage them to continue to engage with nature. The leaflet will be used by AWT at Feed Bristol and Folly Farm and on future nature and wellbeing projects, to encourage us all to take positive actions in nature.

Bedminster

Background

Bedminster consists of very dense housing with little green space compared to other Bristol wards. Initial engagement was made via the Greater Bedminster Community Partnership where community leaders identified the main priorities, which included

increasing biodiversity in their local parks and people's gardens. We then worked with Way-Out-West (WOW), the neighbourhood action group for West St BS3, to build momentum for community involvement at Hebron Burial Ground and South Street Park.

Case Study: South Street Park and Hebron Burial Ground



South Street Park - WOW secured funding to make major improvements to the park including a new park boundary, children's play equipment and native planting to increase the wildlife resource. They also established a Friends of Group to input into future developments and activities. CAN provided advice and support to this process from October 2013 to December 2015.

Hebron Burial Ground was an overgrown site that local residents wished to enhance to establish a peaceful garden and wildlife haven for older people. They also recognised the need for more people to help with the garden improvements.

CAN connected these site-based projects with Horizons, Milestones and Young Bristol who had worked with in the area for two years. Work included clearing vegetation and rubble, removing ivy from gravestones, tree and wildflower planting and the creation of an insect hotel. Local residents and gardener worked with the group when available, and other residents would comment on their good work.

Bringing the Horizons group to the site gave it a new lease of life, both through practical works on the ground and engagement by neighbours. A local business allowed use of their facilities and bins. One resident often came out to praise the group and give them biscuits, and over time allowed them to fill his

bird feeders on the site.

In Autumn 2014 activities were re-directed to South Street Park and the new meadows and hedgerows created. It was evident that residents appreciated the work carried out by the groups and this had a positive effect on the community, increasing social interactions and encouraging more people to engage with the park.

CAN attended community events which developed new relationships and led to additional activities. Displays illustrating Horizons involvement resulted in practical sessions at Holy Cross School. Building an insect hotel, bug homes and bird boxes with the wider community for the park and to take home, reinforced community aspiration to increase biodiversity in people's back gardens and green spaces.

“Our new Park has provided a focal point for people to come together, increasing their confidence in being able to change things, and developing a sense of pride in our local community” - Community Leader, South Street Park

Overall the activities encouraged community cohesion and supported an increase in participation through the Friends of South Street Park. Vulnerable and young people learnt new skills and saw their work appreciated, which helped to improve their confidence and social skills.

Bedminster Project activities

- Bramble clearing and sowing wildflower seeds at Holy Cross School with parents and Horizons.
- Making bug homes and bird feeders at Victoria Park School.
- Attending the Best of Bedminster Show at North Street Green.

Activities and improvements

- 4** Groups
- 3** Friends of Park Groups
- 4** Schools
- 4** Sites
- 30** Practical sessions
- 10** Exploration and walks
- 5** Community events
- 45** Nature activity sessions
- 63** Bird boxes or bug home habitats
- 72** Bird feeders
- 2** Insect hotels
- 328** Trees and whips planted
- 550** Wildflower bulbs planted
- 550** Wildflower plugs planted
- 42m²** Meadow created
- 40m²** Vegetation management
- 3** Wildlife identification sessions

Wildflower seed sowing at South Street Park



Learning about bugs at Hebron Burial Ground

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with **1534** people; of these **170** took part in practical action to transform local green spaces, giving **474** volunteer days of their time.

423 people indicated an interest to be involved in more community projects.

Overall **45** nature activity sessions took place in Bedminster

11 groups took part, engaging **1534** individuals

'Bee Bristol' added two new bee-friendly flowerbeds to South Street Park in 2015, and their involvement is likely to continue through local residents.

AWT's My Wild City Project will continue to work in Bedminster, providing advice and support to local people to improve their green spaces and gardens for wildlife.

All the improvements in the area encouraged ACTA, the local community theatre company, to open a **community cafe** for park users next to the South Street Park. This has provided a much needed community space for everyone using the park.

“They have already made an amazing difference. It has been pleasure for the community - as well as us - to watch them enjoy and take pride in what they have achieved ”

- Caraboo Neighbourhood BS3 (Hebron)

Dundry View (Hartcliffe and Withywood)

Background

Dundry View comprises, Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Whitchurch Park and is situated south of Bristol bordering North Somerset at Dundry. The CAN team attended Pride of Place meetings and CAN launched its programme at The Big Play event in Wilmott Park in March

2013. Sessions and events took place at various sites throughout the life of the project. Dundry Slopes was highlighted as a key area for our involvement, as it offered a great natural resource, which could be of enormous community benefit.

Case Study: Dundry Slopes

Dundry Slopes is 22 hectares of calcareous grassland and woodland, criss-crossed by public rights of way. The area is owned by Bristol City Council and has had a low level of management over the past 30 years. Volunteering Matters (VM) a local volunteer group carry out regular management, but additional input was needed for the site to reach its full potential both for wildlife and for people to enjoy.

In February 2013 a Dundry Slopes Group formed, comprising local residents, Bristol Council, Volunteering Matters, Malago Valley Conservation Group and AWT. The community wished to see better management of the Slopes so that people could access and enjoy the area and to provide a safer environment for outdoor nature engagement activities. The area was subject to anti-social behaviour including fly tipping, illegal hunting and motorbikes and it was hoped that increased footfall in the area would help to minimise this. Wet weather also caused serious erosion, making access difficult.

The priority was a management plan for the site, which would include improvements for

- a) **People** - access and path maintenance, interpretation, benches and bins and measures to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- b) **Wildlife** – increased habitat management, particularly to improve the quality of the meadows.

AWT Consultancy developed the Ecological Management Plan, working closely with key local residents. The plan was launched in March 2014 with a guided walk. Additional wildlife walks and training days were also delivered by AWT consultancy during 2014.

Practical activities took place from June 2013 to December 2015, with the CAN team working with young people on the site due to the steep terrain. Wildlife identification walks were also provided for local people and a yearly family event 'Dundry Slopes Discovery Day' established.

On such a large site, it was important to have regular work days and work in partnership with VM. Through sourcing additional funding more practical action was able to take place and in September 2014, we set up a weekly group to help maintain the site.

2015 provided momentum, as Volunteering Matters secured Bristol Green Capital Funding for work on the Slopes and art project funding engaged young people, through Room 13. The CAN project developed a plan for improvements at the bottom of the Slopes to engage with new groups. In this very visible location people would stop to chat about the Slopes and were able to show the community the work that was being carried out in the area.

Step building with Volunteering Matters



Dundry View Project Activities

- Three sessions delivered with Learning Partnership West at Hartcliffe Community Farm for Young females with low self-esteem.
- Monthly sessions with Headway at the Withywood Centre, April 2013 to Aug 2014.
- Engagement activities at Millennium Green and The Groves with Knightstone Housing Association.
- Enhancing an area for wildlife on an amenity space by the Scout Hut, Bishport Avenue. This allowed engagement for physically less-able people to engage in the Dundry Slopes Project.
- Attending various family events throughout the area.
- A week-long event planting 1,000 trees with Bristol Council's 'One Tree per Child' project.

Activities and improvements

- 99** Practical sessions
- 49** Exploration and walks
- 6** Community events
- 154** Nature activity sessions
- 5** Sites
- 14** Groups
- 4** Friends of groups
- 3** Schools
- 91** Bird boxes or bug home habitats
- 48** Bird feeders
- 1006** Trees and whips planted
- 710** Wildflower plugs
- 1** Pond created
- 175m²** Meadow created
- 862m²** Vegetation management
- 19** Wildlife identification sessions

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with 1679 people; of these 283 took part in practical action to transform local green spaces giving 872 volunteer days of their time.

“Guided wildlife walks brought people out who otherwise wouldn't visit the slopes, and maybe they will visit on their own. Path clearing allowed people to visit area/site in their own time who could not use the space previously. This project has helped to raise awareness for people in the local area, Bristol and beyond of Dundry Slopes of the site's wildlife value” - Friend of Dundry Slopes

- Attending events in local parks was more beneficial for local residents than work days, but disagreements between creating wild areas versus amenity grassland continues.
- Local residents support the improvements to Dundry Slopes, but were unable to get practically involved - mainly due to work hours and ability.
- Walks and events were well attended by local residents
- There are still barriers to formalising a Dundry Slopes Group.
- Anti-social behaviour and soil erosion is still a problem on the Slopes

Volunteering Matters continues management to March 2016 and keen residents continue to find opportunities for engagement on the Slopes.

Key local residents continue to watch the area for anti-social behaviour and attend Neighbourhood Partnership meetings.

Continued management is necessary to rescue the site for its wildlife value. The Ecological Management Plan is an essential resource to guide the community to access funding and continue improvement to Dundry Slopes.

Overall
154 nature
activity sessions
took place at Dundry
View, working
with **21** groups,
engaging **1679**
individuals

985 people
indicated an
interest to be
involved in more
community
projects



Lawrence Hill and Easton

Background

Lawrence Hill, which includes Easton, is one of the most deprived wards in Bristol. The vibrant and multi-cultural area is densely housed and has limited green space. In 2013, engagement activities and small practical projects were delivered in a number of pocket parks in the area, with feedback highlighting that green space was valued by the community.

There was a great need for engagement in the area and CAN delivered

- food growing sessions at the Asylum Seekers Allotment Project in conjunction with Refugee

Rights, from November 2013 to July 2015

- improvements to the St Georges Day Centre garden with participants with learning disabilities, from March and October 2014.

CAN focused much of its work at the Easton Community Centre, located in the heart of Easton, it adjoins Owen Square Park, the Bristol to Bath Railway path and a community garden. The centre hosts multiple community organisations and has good facilities including disabled access, parking, toilets and a café.

Case study: Easton Community Centre courtyard renovation

The Centre courtyard was unused and in much need of renovation, which would benefit all centre users and allow it to become a focal point.

Initial clearing work was carried out by young people undertaking their community payback, who worked hard clearing the area for other groups to get involved. New planters were made by Brandon Trust's wood working group and planted up by their horticulture group who supplied many of the flowers. The horticulture group enjoyed the sessions so much that they continued to visit once a month to maintain the planters and other green spaces at the centre throughout 2015.

Tomorrow's People also made an extra planter and the Centre based Milestones art group added their creative input by making nature inspired wall hangings. The courtyard came to life, with the added colour and vibrancy encouraging many people and café customers to use the space.

Groups were often provided tea and biscuits as a thank you, and elders from the Asian Day Centre would come out for a chat and to admire the new space. Participants enjoyed interacting with other centre users and took pride in sharing their work.

Tomorrow's People making a bench in Easton



“We helped to create a cultivated area and to maintain the courtyard of the centre and this gave my group a feeling of belonging and connection with the centre which they very much enjoyed”
- Brandon Trust group leader

Easton Project Activities

- Bristol Health Improvement Team “On Track” walking for health group and ‘Roots Project’.
- Pocket Park engagements at Belle Vue, Marsh Lane, Albion Road and Chelsea Park.
- Nature activities at Barton Hill walled garden for low income families through Single Parent Action Network (SPAN).
- Community events at Owen Square Park including building bird boxes, insect homes and willow bird feeders, many of which were installed in the park.

Activities and improvements

- 78** Practical sessions
- 67** Exploration and walks
- 5** Community Events
- 150** Nature activity sessions
- 13** Sites
- 14** Groups
- 5** Friends of groups
- 2** Schools
- 116** Bird boxes or bug home habitats
- 27** Bird feeders
- 1** Insect hotels
- 200** Wildflower bulbs
- 50** Wildflower plugs
- 8m²** Meadow created
- 102m²** Vegetation management
- 5** Wildlife Identification sessions

1156
 people indicated an interest to be involved in more community projects.

Overall **150**
 nature activity sessions took place in Easton, working with **21** groups, engaging **2118** individuals

- Moth trapping, bird and bat walks at nearby Eastville Park.

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with **2118** people; of these **167** took part in practical action to transform local green spaces giving **517** volunteer days of their time.

The Easton Community Centre (ECC) provided the ideal hub for engagement to a wide range for groups and also had a tool storage area which was very useful.

CAN Events were valuable for family and community engagement

Unfortunately, the locality around ECC has high rates of anti-social behaviour along with litter, dog poo and sex/drugs litter, which are difficult to address.

CAN developed good relationships with ECC staff and groups and more people in Easton became aware of AWT’s work. This provided good links for other AWT initiatives, such as “My Wild Street” and “My Wild Child”

CAN developed a self-guided Easton wildlife walking map with Bristol City Council and Sustrans.

“Working with Avon Wildlife Trust has transformed the green spaces around Easton Community Centre. Not only have we attracted more wildlife into to our everyday lives, but the activities have brought our community closer together, giving people a sense of pride and achievement. You can really see the impact”

- Patsy Newton, CEO of Easton Community Centre





Tomorrow's People making benches in Southmead

Southmead

Background

Although one of the most deprived Bristol wards, Southmead has relatively large expanses of green space and we supported several Southmead projects over the three years of CAN. The largest project engaged with

a number of groups to develop an area of the grounds of the Greenway Centre (GC). The site offered plenty of opportunity for improvement work and several groups based at the centre were keen to work with us.

Case study: Greenway Centre project

Community feedback and GC staff highlighted an overgrown corner of the centre grounds in need of improvement. It had the potential to be enhanced for wildlife and developed in to a useable space for the public.

CAN worked with young people from KTS Training, who provide young people with vocational support. Six weekly sessions were provided between December 2014 and January 2015. Initial clearance of brambles uncovered established apples trees and a moped! The group disposed of the brambles on a bonfire, with well received marshmallows toasted on the fire. The group really enjoyed the sessions, which gave them a welcome change from normal lessons, enabling opportunities to learn about plants and how to use hand tools. KTS Training moved locations in

February 2015, meaning they were not able carry on with the sessions.

Silvacare run an outreach day centre for adults with learning difficulties from the GC and their more able bodied service users continued the work with CAN staff to improve the open space and encourage others to make use of the grounds. Weekly sessions were provided between February and October 2015, with additional involvement from Tomorrow's People.

The work included building benches for the community to use, creating wild flower strips, an insect hotel and planting trees. Nature walks and outdoor cooking, including nettle soup and blackberry pancakes added to the enjoyment. The variety of activities meant sessions were well attended and brought the curiosity of the public to find out what was happening.



After several months the site was transformed, well used by the community and the GC raised funds to install an additional bench on the site. Being next to a public footpath to Badock's Wood, allowed members of the public and centre staff to see the improvements. Facilities ensured the involvement by Silvacare and meant they could use the area outside of our weekly sessions.

Southmead Project Activities

- Bulb planting and shed construction took place at Southmead Community Fruit Garden with local residents.
- Bird themed activities were delivered to two primary schools.
- Wildlife walks were provided for local people including elders.
- CAN staff attended family events at Badock's Wood, highlighting local project involvement.

Activities and improvements

- 27** Practical Sessions
- 17** Exploration and walks
- 4** Community events
- 48** Nature activity sessions
- 5** Sites
- 5** Groups
- 3** Friends of Park Groups
- 2** Schools
- 157** Bird boxes or bug home habitats
- 6** Bird feeders
- 1** Insect hotels
- 15** Trees and whips planted
- 300** Wildflower bulbs
- 35** Wildflower plugs
- 22m²** Meadow created
- 66m²** Vegetation management
- 1** Wildlife identification session
- 3** Building projects

341 people indicated an interest to be involved in more community projects

Overall **48** nature activities took place in Southmead, working with **10** groups, and engaging **2833** individuals

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with 2833 people; of these 39 took part in practical action to transform local green spaces giving 180 volunteer days of their time.

Good relationships were developed with Greenway Centre and Southmead Development Trust staff, which will be followed up through future projects. Avon Wildlife Trust's new 5 year 'Natural Estates' project will build on these links, as part of our work with social housing providers in Bristol.

Friends of Badock's Wood are a very active group and will continue to run events and activities.

Silvacare moved locations in November 2015.

More funding and partnership working is needed in the area, to increase community involvement.

Sawing for an insect hotel with Silvacare group



Twerton

Background

Twerton is the only Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) ward to have a higher level of unemployment than the England & Wales average, it has high levels of social housing and good coverage of green space, local nature reserves and also Bath City Farm. CAN ran a series of nature walks at Bath City Farm, these free sessions were within the farm's grounds and led by enthusiastic experts from Bath Natural History Society between May and July 2013. The CAN project then teamed up with Timebank Plus, a local charity

“I hope to make outdoor sessions more productive for children, I hope to gain knowledge and skills to support children's learning”

- Parent, Out in nature

supporting opportunities for volunteering and involvement in their local community, by supporting local people in food growing on a communal allotment at Bath City Farm. Attendance was low, and with the City Farm already supporting disadvantaged groups in the area, the CAN project sourced new areas for involvement within the community.

Case study: Timebank Community Sessions

The CAN team continued its partnership with Timebank and delivered after school and summer holiday activities called 'Out in Nature' between July and August 2014, see section 3.3

In summer 2015 feedback indicated a need for activities for people with mobility issues who were unable to engage in previous wildlife walks or the development of the community allotment.

With this in mind, in autumn 2015 a series of workshops were arranged and advertised in the community and run in Timebank's community space. The CAN Team provided indoor, creative, nature-based workshops such as bird box making and willow bird feeders for local residents. The sessions created lots of interest and

discussion about wildlife including an article in the local community paper.

Offering simple and inclusive services has enriched local people's knowledge and thus deepened their understanding of how much nature plays a part in their lives.



Twerton Project Activities

- CAN supported Age UK's Bath walking group with a guided wildlife walk from Bath City Centre along the river Avon to Twerton
- CAN attended a family event organised by social housing provider Curo to encourage local residents to increase use of Roseworn Park.

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with **1049** people; of these **56** took part in practical action to transform local green spaces giving **70** volunteer days of their time.

Bath City Farm also had BLF Reaching Communities Funding so the CAN project developed additional projects outside of their activities.

Activities and improvements

- 5** Groups
- 2** Friends of Park Groups
- 4** Sites
- 36** Nature activity sessions
- 15** Practical Sessions
- 18** Exploration and Walks
- 3** Community events
- 28** Bird boxes or bug home habitats
- 10** Bird feeders
- 80** Wildflower plugs
- 2** Wildlife identification sessions



Case study: Sirona

CAN supported Sirona's (a publicly funded NHS and social care service provider) **Rake Up and Grow** project, based at the organisation's Cleeve Court building. Rake up and grow is a project for adults with learning difficulties. They have the maintenance contract for the grounds and undertake mowing, leaf clearance and pruning but also learn valuable horticulture skills.

Rake Up and Grow participants had established a wildflower meadow and wildlife pond, so a variety of fantastic habitats were already on site. CAN worked with the group to restore these habitats and renew the wooden interpretation boards.

During other sessions the group made and installed bat boxes and took part in underwater photography to learn first-hand about wildlife in the pond. During the colder months CAN organised visits to Folly Farm and Feed Bristol. They really enjoyed the variety of opportunities the sites offered such as learning about badgers and growing wildflowers.

Less activities took place in Twerton than other areas as AWT had not previously worked in the area and it takes time to build new relationships.

The projects delivered in the local green parks were a great success, engaging with families and young people and spurring community interest in the Timebank allotment.

The community in Twerton requires ongoing support and a number of projects are in the pipeline. Bath & North East Somerset Council are developing a Landscape Partnership bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will bring resources to the area. Wessex Water are currently investigating a water quality monitoring project that would include a health and wellbeing programme.

Pennyquick Park event, April 14

308 people indicated an interest to be involved in more community projects

Overall **36** nature activity sessions took place in Twerton, working with **7** groups, and engaging **1049** individuals

“ As part of the ‘Out in Nature’ project and the wildlife home creation projects that Avon Wildlife Trust supported, Timebank was able to run a number of outdoor and indoor nature activities in Pennyquick Park and at our office. At these sessions we had a high number of local, disadvantaged families and their children taking part. These were activities that most of the participants had never done before and were very inclusive to all members of the local community, who may otherwise not have had the chance to participate due to low income issues ” - Organiser, Timebank



Weston-super-Mare

Background

Our work in Weston-super-Mare (WSM) concentrated on the Bournville Estate in Southward. Two areas in Bournville are amongst the 1% most deprived communities nationally. Compared to North Somerset as a whole Bournville has 50% more people living with a long term illness or disability, and unemployment levels are nearly three times greater. The local GP practice has the second highest prevalence of depression in the whole of the South West.

CAN approached North Somerset Council and Alliance Homes, the local housing association, who identified Jubilee Park as a priority for additional support, both for the Friends group and to provide maintenance and engagement activities. With strong community partnerships, the CAN team launched its programme at Jubilee Park in February 2013.



CAN and Alliance Homes worked closely with The Locality Health Centre (TLHC) - a GP surgery and community cafe, who dealt with all volunteering opportunities in the area. The CAN team provided food growing sessions and other nature activities to increase volunteer uptake and community ownership on three community sites on the Bournville Estate.

Case study: The Community Allotment

The Community Allotment is a site within the Great Rhyne Community Allotments. It provides an area for local residents to learn how to grow food and develop various horticultural skills in a supportive outdoor environment. RHS Level 1 courses were already being delivered on the site. From March 2013 to February 2015, the CAN project provided staff time one afternoon a week to support local volunteers.

The CAN project immediately began to build a recycled-bottle green-house. This kick started a greater interest among existing volunteers, allotment holders and other groups in the community. By summer 2013 the volunteer numbers had increased three fold. Regular meetings took place with volunteers to develop short, medium and long term plans for the site.

Building the new polytunnel at the Community Allotment





Digging a hole for the new pond at Coleridge Road Allotment

Volunteers included single parents, people in retirement, long term unemployed, and people with life limiting conditions, young people and those with mild learning disabilities - a genuine intergenerational and diverse group of people.

Individuals supported each other amazingly well and grew food for themselves and for the TLHC community cafe. This forged strong links within the community, connecting food growing and healthy eating. Activities also included constructing raised beds and paths along with celebration events.

The CAN team also worked with local residents on two other sites:

- **The Chocolate Garden** in the heart of the estate, a tranquil community space for individuals, especially older people to meet in a sheltered environment.
- **Coleridge Road Allotment** including a community area within a large field and an outdoor shelter. It provides a safe outdoor environment for local families, scouts and forest school groups to be in nature.

All three projects worked well, but separately; it became evident that joining the projects together to share resources would also bring the community closer together. This became the 'Growing Together' project.

The 'Growing Together' project really developed when reps from each site came together for their first steering group. Many were shy in a 'meeting' setting but it did not take long before individuals turned up to offer advice and support for each other's project.

In summer 2014, the Coleridge Road volunteers needed some extra help to clear parts of the site. Volunteers from all three projects worked together and this was celebrated with a BBQ including salad picked from the Community Allotment. Members from the community cafe and other community groups also attended. It was a great moment of community spirit, sharing time and skills and building stronger bonds within the community.

Bournville Project Activities

- The CAN Team worked with Brandon Trust fortnightly at Jubilee Park between April 2013 and July 2014 to enhance the meadow, maintain the hedgerows and explore nature in the area.
- Pond creation and family activities at Coleridge Road Allotment.
- Provision of sensory plants for volunteers at the Chocolate Garden.
- Events at the For All Healthy Living Centre.

“CAN supported the development of the growing sites when they most needed it and enabled us to apply for funding. Our application was based on the strong existing partnership that had developed over the time of this project”

*- Community Development Manager,
Alliance Homes*

Activities and improvements

6 Groups

1 Friends of Park Group

1 School

5 Sites

162 Nature activity sessions

148 Practical sessions

10 Exploration and walks

4 Community events

58 Bird boxes or bug home habitats

10 Bird feeders

1 Insect hotel

30 Trees and whips planted

500 Wildflower bulbs

667 Wildflower plugs

1 Pond created

57m² Meadow created

185m² Vegetation management

1 Wildlife identification session

Outcomes

Overall, we worked with **1410** people; of these **179** took part in practical action to transform local green spaces giving **1146** volunteer days of their time.

The Growing Together steering group helped with the development of the three sites, brought people together and resulted in new friendships being formed. Individuals were confident in what they could offer to the project and wanted to provide more activities. This highlighted the need for more staff to implement future plans and led to the Growing Together Project securing its own BLF Reaching Communities fund to support a full-time Project Worker and part-time Outreach Officer.

Sharing resources between sites definitely improved connections between people. They became more confident and felt valued as part of a larger community project.

383
people
indicated an
interest to be
involved in more
community
projects

Overall
162 nature
activity sessions
took place in Weston-
super-Mare, working
with **8** groups, and
engaging **1410**
individuals

Bat boxes at Colteridge Road Allotment



4. Impact of success and lessons learnt

4.1 Impact on beneficiaries

Reaching beneficiaries

The project used the following methods to ensure all beneficiaries had access to the project:

- Through developing strong partnerships with community development workers & health improvement teams we were able to make contact with our target groups.
- Attendance at community events, Neighbourhood and Wellbeing forums to promote local projects.
- Regular presence in local green spaces promoted activities to the local community and became a useful tool of engagement.
- Posters for events displayed in community centres, cafes, drop in centres and shops, worked well particularly in Hartcliffe and Weston-super-Mare.
- A CAN Facebook page with dates for project work days and project updates were shared/liked with other community groups, worked well in Bedminster and Easton.
- Coordinated publicity was made use of through the local media and community newsletters, with wider publicity through the Avon Wildlife Trust website and AWT members via the quarterly magazine and e-newsletters.

Assessment of project delivery methods and resources needed

In the first year of the project it became evident that to deliver effective health and wellbeing projects, we needed to engage with participants over a longer period of time than initially planned. Both CAN staff would also be required to provide sufficient supervision and time to establish new project groups for individuals with mental health issues and those with learning disabilities. The CAN team therefore reviewed its approach to achieve target numbers, including:

- Concentrating efforts by working with existing groups, ensuring attendance and supervision support from group leaders. However, participant numbers within existing groups and communities was usually lower than our target numbers.



- Attending more community events and providing a wider variety of interventions to increase number of engagements.
- Reducing our presence at neighbourhood meetings and wellbeing forums to accommodate the increase in delivery. This was not ideal for local continuity and reporting of project outcomes to the wider community.
- Providing additional transport, tools and equipment.

Engaging with participants for a longer period of time is needed for sustained health and wellbeing and to support increased resilience.

“ One day a local dad came in to The For All Healthy Living Centre and said to the receptionist there, “Is there anything that my sons can do to get them out of the house?” That was in the autumn of 2013. That local family now has an allotment opposite the community allotment (since August 2015). Those two young men have helped at the allotment and learnt to grow food, taken home fresh produce and learnt to cook it, helped to build a wildlife pond, a cob oven, a shelter and a polytunnel. One of them is undertaking a level 1 qualification in horticulture. It will be his first qualification. The other one volunteers with a local group who tidy up the hedgerows and do a litter pick every week. There are a lot of barriers for this family that have prevented them from taking a full and active role in the community, including ill health and learning difficulties. The changes that have happened in this one family are remarkable and although we have had “quicker wins” and more numerically impressive outcomes, the changes that our partnership and this project have brought to this family do stand out for me, and the changes will be lasting in my opinion.”

- Community Development Manager - Alliance Homes



Project evaluation methods

The Communities and Nature Programme was evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. These include:

- Five ways to wellbeing questionnaire
- Communities and Nature questionnaire - Pre and post evaluation forms
- Observation - CAN Staff
- Feedback from support workers / group leaders
- Feedback from community leaders
- Beneficiary verbal and written comments
- Video Clips - Stories

An external evaluation was carried out by The Care Forum Research Services. The Care Forum promotes health and wellbeing, challenges inequalities, and enables organisations and individuals to make choices in health and social care. The evaluation includes an analysis of beneficiary health and wellbeing data and recommendations for future projects.

The report is available on our website: avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/who-we-are/publications

The 'Five ways to wellbeing' questionnaire

A questionnaire was compiled implementing a Five Ways to Wellbeing scale, equal opportunity, and additional questions relating to project outcomes. Although it did not measure change over time, it was a useful tool that captured a participants feelings after a day's session, indicating that the activity contributed to their health and wellbeing. It also promoted participants' awareness of those activities undertaken, allowing reflection to consider continued engagement in nature after their involvement with the session or project.

Communities and Nature Evaluation Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed after communications with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust in 2013 who had developed their own health and wellbeing questionnaire. All questions were adapted in-line with project's needs, equal opportunity and BLF outcomes. Questions also incorporated the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). WEMWBS has been validated for the measurement of assessing a population's mental wellbeing in the UK and was developed in 2006.

Observations and feedback

Using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as an approach to our activities (*see section 2.3*), and observing those actions, proved a valuable method to assess improved health and wellbeing. Both CAN staff and group leaders noted observations and participant feedback. This method was used across all participant outcomes and was a particularly useful tool for evaluating those with learning disabilities. Over 150 comments by beneficiaries were recorded and a group leader questionnaire was produced to ascertain project impact on their beneficiaries. Completed questionnaires and table of quotes can be found in the appendices of The Care Forum Evaluation Report.

Qualitative Results

The following page includes comments taken from beneficiaries and the group leader questionnaires that measure the impact of the CAN project.

“I've been thinking about becoming a play ranger and these sessions with the outdoor cooking and nature skills have really given me some ideas ”

- Parent, Out in Nature

“I will care and appreciate my environment a lot more and maybe learn a few skills along the way ”

- Tomorrow's People

“It looks as though we've had a 50% increase in riders attending the nature rides since 2013. The average in 2013 was 7, 2014 it was 9 & 2015 the average was 11, so going in the right direction... The highest turnout of over 55s was 16 and that was in 2015 ”

- Lifecycle Co-ordinator

A number of the families who were involved came via the family play inclusion worker from Bath Area Play Project. These are very vulnerable families in the area who are supported in parenting skills and activities that they can do with their children. In one of these groups a mother came to thank us for helping to support her children in food preparation and safe fire lighting. She commented:

“My daughter had just started messing round making fire at home with my lighters. But after last week's session she gave me the lighter she had taken and told me to keep it out of the way of her younger brother and then told me she had learnt to light a good fire in a good way. Thanks for that ”

- Parent, Out in Nature



“ I have had some health problems and I had to leave my job and retire early. I was supposed to be in hospital for 2 weeks but ended up there for 3 months, it got me so down. I couldn't get on with anything, all rehabilitation sessions through the NHS had a 6 week waiting list. I heard about the Health Improvement Team who helped me get back on track, cooking for myself again and getting out doing gentle exercise. Now I attend as many events like this as I can ”

- Elder, Roots Project

“ We helped to create a cultivated area and to maintain the courtyard of the centre and this gave my group a feeling of belonging and connection with the centre which they very much enjoyed. This project took the group away from their usual surroundings and introduced them to new people and places ”

- Brandon Trust Co-ordinator, Easton project

“ This is the most fantastic opportunity for these young people, which they would not have in another context. The teenagers are mostly from chaotic backgrounds, and experience emotional, social and financial poverty, as well as having learning difficulties / disabilities. To gain the John Muir Award through this collaborative project is a wonderful achievement ”

- Horizons Co-ordinator

“ I love the added “purpose” to themed rides. Maybe we could do more community work in conjunction with AWT, such as planting trees or flowers, installing bird boxes and the like ”

- Lifecycle

“ It gives people the opportunity to get outside the city, enjoy nature and be part of it which they wouldn't otherwise be able to do. It nurtures an environment of friendship and comradeship which develops relations within the community. It brings people from different walks of life together which fosters better understandings of each other through team work. It benefits people's mental health by being within nature ”

- Borderlands Co-ordinator.

“ Every moment was a sharing, learning experience whether it was in a relaxed way at break talking about earlier activities or incidental learning when walking to or from activities. Activities were a completely new experience for some of our participants, with skills learnt, and provided conversation opportunity for others ”

- Sirona Co-ordinator

“ Service users have taken an interest in nature and want to do more. They looked forward to seeing the CAN team each week and made friends in the group. Mental health improved as they were focused on the job that needed doing ”

- Silvacare Co-ordinator

“ It was incredible the amount of impact this programme has had with the young people. Enjoying the surroundings and taking pride in their areas. Team work, allocation, communication and self-esteem increased as well as focus to complete the tasks. Getting the award has helped a lot as many young people have never been acknowledged for their work ”

- Tomorrow's People Co-ordinator

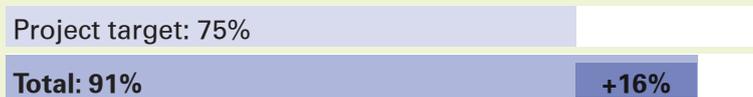


Assessment of evaluation methods

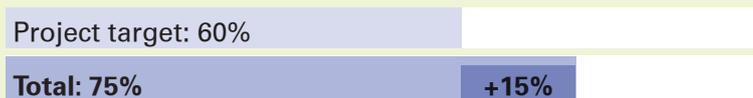
The CAN team trialled various health and wellbeing questionnaires at the beginning of the project, therefore useable data for analysis started from July 2013. A table of cumulative health and wellbeing data can be found in appendix 7. Data was collected from a sample of 640 people.

Percentage change from the results

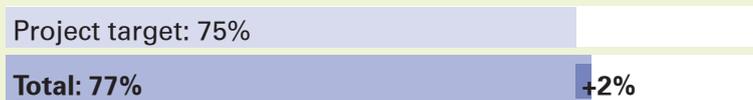
People from vulnerable groups indicate improved health and wellbeing



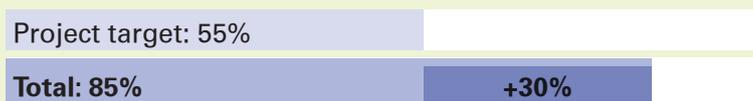
People from vulnerable groups report feeling greater inclusion/involvement in the wider community



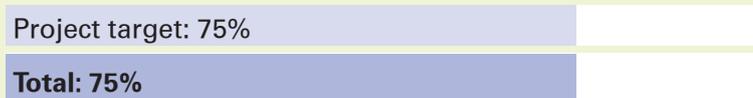
Young people involved with the project indicate improved health and wellbeing



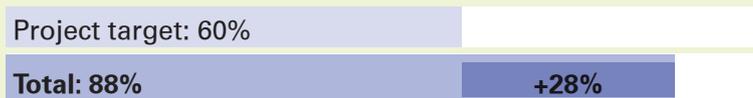
Young people who have been involved in the project in training or employment



Low income families and elders indicate greater use of natural environment



Low income families and elders indicate they feel their quality of life is improved



All target percentages were met or succeeded; illustrating the impact that engaging with nature has on people's lives.

Percentage of participants who indicated their quality of life had improved was higher than expected. Results came from health and wellbeing data and feedback from the community.

Percentage of young people who went onto further training and employment was higher than expected, the sample size was smaller and taken from strong partnership projects where support and effort by all partners ensured a greater success.

Five ways to wellbeing questionnaire

The project must take into account all factors that could contribute to high scoring results of improved health and wellbeing:

- People immensely enjoy the session
- It's a free opportunity
- People complete a questionnaire in a rush
- People want to please CAN staff

Communities and Nature Evaluation Questionnaire

Collecting data was difficult as staff capacity was limited meaning little time to support individuals to complete and understand the questionnaires. This led to:

- Individuals scoring the pre-questionnaire very high as they were happy to have the opportunity to engage in activities. This resulted in 'no room for manoeuvre' for improvement when they completed the post-questionnaire.
- The post questionnaire was often scored lower than the pre-questionnaire as participants gained a greater understanding of themselves and the project outcomes which led to more honest answers (pre-questionnaires were not always available to participants for comparison – staff constraints).
- There was often disparity with matching up pre/post forms due to inconsistency of written information, most commonly individuals left off their initials.

Observation and verbal feedback supported evidence of increased health and wellbeing, which was sometimes not interpreted through the results of the CAN evaluation questionnaire.

Lessons Learnt

Evaluation

- Observations and feedback from group leaders worked well, but unfortunately not all organisations/ support workers had the capacity to do this, and often support workers would change from week to week. At the development stage of a project all partners should understand what is expected from them.
- The Indicators detailed in the application could have been differently designed i.e. documenting whether an individual continues to engage with sessions could indicate improved confidence, reduced isolation and connection with others.
- Outcomes labelled by group can cause problems when reporting because community groups can consist of variety of people and outcomes – or an individual could be classed under various outcomes. Most notably, young people with mild learning disabilities.

Looking at Swifts - Bird walk around Southmead's Greenway Centre



- The CAN team researched and gained advice from organisations to understand and implement evaluation methods' at the start of the project, but it still took some trial and error to identify the correct tools. Collecting health and wellbeing data was new to the CAN team, it is essential when applying for funding that evaluation methods are considered when outlining project outcomes.
- It is recommended that a budget is set aside for external evaluation and that an organisation is secured to deliver the evaluation from the start of the programme.
- Projects were advertised to multiple organisations, who would relay the information, but partnership working is needed to get further commitment from organisations to ensure beneficiaries are reached. With this, recommendations include allocating more staff time to help further develop relationships and partnerships with health organisations.

Facilities

- Finding sites with suitable facilities and activities for people with learning and physical disabilities was challenging and time consuming when limited to CAN areas. Utilising AWT's wellbeing receptor sites at Folly Farm, Feed Bristol and Bennett's Patch & White's Paddock, increased efficacy.

Length of engagement

- One-off sessions were beneficial to many organisations that predominantly were run by volunteers, most notable were groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers such as Borderlands and Bristol Refugee Rights. It highlights that people will explore wild spaces if basic barriers like transport and providing a guide can be overcome.
- Engaging with participants for a longer period of time is necessary for sustained health and wellbeing and to support increased resilience. This should be considered and reflected with realistic target numbers when applying for funding.
- Building stronger links between environmental and food growing projects that encompasses a two-way signposting process, will increase participant choice, support a participant's transitional journey - ensuring continued engagement.

Meadow management at Dundry, Horizons



4.2 Impact on Communities

This section outlines the impact the project had on providing better access to natural green spaces, enhancing areas for wildlife, improving social interactions and strengthening communities.

A community leader questionnaire was produced to ascertain the impact the CAN project had on their community. Evidence overwhelmingly showed positive results.

The following pages include comments taken from the questionnaire that emphasise the success of the CAN project.

Bedminster

South Street Park has been **transformed** from a bleak barren littered space into a much-loved and very well-used public park used by all ages. This is due in no small part to the support of the CAN project and team of volunteers. We cannot thank and praise the CAN project and Horizons/Young Bristol teams enough. They have not only helped us to physically transform our Park, but have been instrumental in **bringing together the local community** to work together. It has been central to establishing our new Park, and getting local people involved and enthusiastic about what might be possible. They were particularly involved in **changing people's perception**.

The CAN team have been a productive and committed member of our new Friends of South St Park group. Their expertise and experience has been very welcome, and has been instrumental in getting the group to work together. Our new Park has provided a **focal point** for people to come together, increasing their confidence in being able to change things, and developing a sense of pride in our local community.



Dundry Slopes Discovery day



KTS Training -Oak tree planted

Dundry View

Guided wildlife walks brought people out who otherwise wouldn't visit the slopes, and maybe they will visit on their own. - Path clearing allowed people to visit area/site in their own time who could not use the space previously. This project has helped to **raise awareness** of Dundry Slopes and its wildlife value for people in the local area, Bristol and beyond.

CAN's involvement has been crucial to the Dundry Slopes project over the last 3 years, with regards to the wildlife and habitat aspects. With the CAN funding and access to the resources of AWT, their role has been essential to the **development of the wildflower meadows** and other habitat improvements, the organisation and promotion of the guided wildlife walks and discovery days, bringing experts in to survey and advise, and other groups to visit and work on Dundry Slopes.

Dundry Slopes is a massive area and The Friends of Dundry Slopes is an informal group without resources and or funding. We could not have carried out the work that has been done without CAN's involvement.

We have entered Dundry Slopes in the RHS Bristol in Bloom 'It's your neighbourhood' scheme for a number of years. In 2015 the area was classed as Level 4 **Thriving**.

Easton

Working with Avon Wildlife Trust has transformed the green spaces around Easton Community Centre. Not only have we attracted more wildlife into to our everyday lives, but the activities have brought our **community closer together**, giving people a sense of pride and achievement. You can really see the impact. Looking to the future we would certainly welcome the project continuing and for the Centre to remain a venue for the group. We would like to have further discussions with AWT around this particular initiative and how we can work in **partnership** around a user group.

Southmead

It has brought healthy food, fresh ideas, positivity, **increased use of our outdoor space** and has inspired some members of Southmead (especially NEETs and adults with learning difficulties) to use the outdoors and this space more. There are improved relationships and partnership working between the Greenway Centre and the community. We hope AWT & Southmead Development Trust will be able to work together on future projects. A number of groups were involved in the project and they all have increased **ownership** of the community space.

Access to the orchard or 'community fruit garden' as we call it, has improved with apples and veg available to residents and the local community cafe. Having a single point of contact at AWT was very beneficial for the project, he provided continuity, relationships and sourced saplings for the area as well as **inspiring the young people and adults with learning difficulties** about nature and this small plot.

Twerton

The programme has enabled us to meet and inform local communities through the activities within their local area. This has made it especially relevant to the younger participants who have come away with a **deeper understanding of open space and nature** around where they live.

Using the local park as an event space for sessions and community gatherings has linked us with a number of other agencies and forged the way for future outdoor gatherings in the local area. - Local PCSO's from the Twerton area have become more involved in informal meetings with Timebank since the project and a new relationship was developed with the Parks and Open spaces department of the council and Timebank.

Weston-super-Mare

Avon Wildlife Trust have experience of delivering a variety of activities in this locality and therefore do understand **local connections**. The partnership working with Alliance Homes and with The Healthy Living Centre have meant that more has been achieved and that targeted work has been possible to have the maximum impact within this community. It supported the development of the growing sites when they most needed it and enabled us to apply for funding. Our application was based on the strong existing partnership that had developed over the time of this project.

By linking up with the Communities and Nature project, much more use of the three sites has been established, especially within the locked sites which do require activities to encourage involvement. The feedback that I have had from local families has been **very positive about the changes** to the Coleridge Road site with reports of bat and owl sightings from this site.





Tomorrow's People with their finished bench at Easton Corner Garden

What aspects of the project didn't work so well and why?

Responses from community leader questionnaires

We did of course have a couple of incidents with weather, but this did not stop projects being completed. – *South Street Park*

It is really difficult to get people in Hartcliffe to take an active part in a project like this, even if they support it. We had a small number of people regularly involved, but not really a useful labour force due to age and disability. With this, I don't see that "low income families and elders become directly involved in improving their environment through community nature projects". We have not been able to start a formal group. In terms of delivery there is still a lot to do. – *Dundry Slopes*

I think it has been difficult to evidence the "healthy" link although we all know that this has worked and that people's health and wellbeing has improved. People move on from these estates, and this makes continuity of work difficult. – *Alliance Homes*

Weather issues curtailed the length of the sessions on some occasions when we were working in the local park. We had one occasion where a young group of children tried to take some of the tools. What we did after this session was to limit the tools that were out on the field and have more vigilant supervision of the allocated tool area. We also asked the local PCSO's to stop by on the following session and to talk to the young people involved from the previous week. We had no other incidents after this. Developing connections with the local PCSO's helped both them and the young people to build stronger communications and relationships. – *Time bank*

Unfortunately, disagreements arose around Hebron Burial Ground between local residents as to how the area should be enhanced and managed. This resulted in the Council intervening and postponing the work in autumn 2014.

At the Community Allotment, meetings took place to agree short, medium and long-term plans. Ideas ranged from a mud kitchen, cob oven to additional volunteering days. One idea was to construct another building, all organisational partners agreed it was not necessary, but unfortunately this led to disagreements between a few volunteers and staff.

Community-led projects are essential, but not all ideas can be implemented. Guidelines and processes need to be made clear at the start to avoid disappointment or lead to the perception that projects are not community-led.

Mis-communication between land owners and their contractors often led to new areas of planting being mown. Some vandalism of areas also took place.

External staff support that had been available for certain project areas often ceased with no replacement, or groups moved location. Cuts or restructuring of other organisations often meant that new contacts had to be made and new relationships built, slowing the delivery and progress of the project.

Lessons Learnt

Working where groups were seen as contributing to community had positive outcomes for both participants and local people; enhancing social interactions and increasing overall engagements.

Agreeing objectives and outcomes between organisations ensures efficiency of delivery and effectiveness of evaluation.

Attending larger community events encouraged new relationships and activities. It allowed a larger proportion of local people to engage with the project and highlighted the benefits that nature has on wellbeing.

Working in key deprived areas, the project;

- gained trust with that community, forged new partnerships improving community cohesion and brought different people and groups together
- offered regular and longer term support
- helped support groups to apply for small funding grants, therefore increasing skills, confidence and ownership of their projects.

Attending local Park Group meetings ensured activities were relevant. It also encouraged familiarity between CAN staff and local residents, resulting in increased confidence and ownership by local people through continuous support and advice.

Project work was identified through community consultation and offered people practical solutions that they could help to deliver. This ensured local people involvement in the projects, leading to more social interactions and sustainability for management of these sites.

Chernobyl Group around the Folly Farm Oak





5. Sustainability

Sustainability plays an important role in Avon Wildlife Trusts work. The CAN programme developed local projects that ensured community ownership, provided skills and training, continued management of sites and inspired groups to explore and reconnect with nature.

- Skills and knowledge sharing has led to the successful **'Growing Together Project'** run by Alliance Homes who have been awarded BLF Reaching Communities funding.
- Volunteering Matters continues to work on **Dundry Slopes** through Bristol Green Capital and other grant funding. The ecological management plan is a valuable resource which will continue to be used by the community. Dundry Slopes is located within AWT's B-Lines project that aims to link existing wildlife areas to create a network of wide strips of permanent wildflower-rich habitats across the West of England.
- **Easton Community Centre** are planning to develop their Community Corner Garden and have recently received a grant from the Quartet Foundation to fund this work.
- The CAN project has provided **tools** so communities can continue to manage local sites. It's provided **resources** such as project specific leaflets, bat detectors, binoculars and wildlife identification guides in local centres and libraries.
- AWT's **My Wild City** Project, funded by Bristol Green Capital has ensured continued support and advice for local Friends of Park groups.
- A **'Five Ways to Nature Wellbeing'** leaflet will be a final outcome of the CAN project. It will be a resource for individuals and groups to encourage continued engagement with nature. The leaflet will be used by AWT at Feed Bristol and Folly Farm and on future nature and wellbeing projects, to encourage us all to take positive actions in nature.

AWT continues its nature and wellbeing work at **Feed Bristol** and **Folly Farm wellbeing garden**. A pilot project for people experiencing anxiety and depression via a GP referral process is being undertaken. The Trust's new Natural Estates Programme in partnership with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Housing Associations will engage young people to improve green spaces, gain new skills and improve wellbeing inspiring them to take action for nature.

Funding is being sought to continue and develop our Communities and Nature work.

6. Conclusion

“Before AWT worked in the Park, there were no flowers: now there are beds of wildflowers for all to enjoy”

Funding from BLF has enabled the Trust to deliver new approaches to engagement that benefit both people and wildlife. Over the course of the project 15,282 people were engaged through a wide range of nature activities that promote the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

The project had a positive impact on communities, improved people lives and created new habitats in urban areas. The quantitative and qualitative data showed significant increase in self confidence, skills learnt and social interactions with 85% indicating improved health and wellbeing.

Key outcomes

Empowered communities

Working where groups were seen as contributing to the community had positive outcomes for both participants and local people; **enhancing social interactions, increasing cohesion, with more people taking ownership of their green space.**

Improved health and wellbeing

Engaging with participants for a longer period of time is necessary for sustained improvements to health and wellbeing and to support increased resilience. Implementing the **Five Ways to Wellbeing** promoted awareness of participants' actions in nature and encouraged continued actions outside of the project.

Inspired people to care for nature

Providing positive experiences that improve knowledge, skills, health and wellbeing has led to a **greater number of people caring for their environment.**

Contributed to our urban living landscape

The project has enhanced over 40 sites across Avon, creating **new habitats for wildlife to thrive and people to connect to nature.**

Provided new opportunities for partnership working

Good partnerships are key to providing stronger, coherent projects. Developing joint projects improves quality of activities with **resources shared to deliver more in the area.** Partnership working with the health sector has **increased efficiency of approach.**

Championed the value of nature

Providing a platform for people to reconnect with nature, demonstrating the value of the 'Natural Health Service', the programme **increased understanding of the need to protect and enhance green spaces.**

“We had no idea what wildlife lived in the Park, when AWT took people on bug hunts, we were amazed at how many 'bugs' were discovered - including one species of rare ladybird”

“ The happiest people in life are the people who spend their days outside doing work instead of sat in the house doing nothing ”

- Young person with mild learning disabilities



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Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future