



Access to Nature: Creating the Legacy

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This paper provides a summary of the measures taken by projects funded by Access to Nature to ensure a legacy from their work. Access to Nature was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and run by Natural England as a Changing Spaces award partner. £28.75 million was distributed to 115 projects, all of which were aligned with two or more overarching programme level outcomes, including a compulsory requirement to work towards building ownership with local communities.

This focus on ensuring a sustainable future for projects' work was further reinforced when an additional £1.37 million was made available to the Access to Nature programme as part of the Big Lottery Fund's Supporting Change and Impact initiative. The goal was to give existing projects, in the last 18 months of their funding, vital time to review how they worked and how they could become more sustainable.

Projects worked towards creating a legacy in a number of ways. Operating within an increasingly uncertain and volatile funding environment, many organisations employed multiple strategies to build a future for their work after Access to Nature. Their efforts are described in this report and organised under five broad areas of legacy-related activity.

- Creating resources that help people access the natural environment.
- Disseminating project learning.
- Embedding the learning from their Access to Nature project within the host and / or partner organisations.
- Continuing activities funded initially by Access to Nature by securing ongoing funding or resourcing.
- Putting structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature.

Creating the legacy

This paper showcases the many ways in which Access to Nature projects sought to create a legacy. It illustrates how projects have responded to the programme's aspirations to 'build a sense of ownership' of the natural environment (Outcome 5), and capitalised on the opportunities presented by Supporting Change and Impact to ensure the benefits of their work are 'sustained longer term'.

Creating resources that facilitate access to the natural environment

Many projects have created resources to guide people to local sites, highlighting the many social, physical, recreational and educational activities that can be enjoyed outdoors. Others focused on building the capacity of teachers, volunteers and group leaders to support others to utilise and benefit from the natural environment. In promoting these resources, organisations have made use of social media and other online platforms to reach a wide audience. Partners have played an important role, sometimes offering to house and disseminate resources for local communities to access.

The dissemination of project learning

Conferences, training courses, local networks and celebration events have all provided opportunities for projects to share their learning and showcase their achievements. Although it is too early to gauge the impact of this work, there are early indications that their dissemination activities have allowed some projects to secure new commissions and develop new collaborations, which will enable them to continue their work after Access to Nature.

Project learning embedded in the host organisation and / or with partners

There is evidence from the programme to indicate that many projects have succeeded in their ambition to change the way people are engaged in the natural environment. The principles of community engagement and empowerment that were prominent in Access to Nature are now applied more widely by project hosts and their partners; methods and approaches that were trialed through Access to Nature are recognised as good practice and are being replicated in other settings; a wide range of organisations, from schools and Children's Centres to housing providers and faith groups, now have the skills and confidence to engage others in the natural environment.

Project activities continuing due to ongoing funding / resourcing

Unsurprisingly, grant funding has played an important role in the continuation of project activities. The list of funders that are now investing in continuation / legacy activities is impressive and an illustration of the broad appeal of activities that engage people in the natural environment. This is not, however, the only mechanism through which continuation funding has been secured: some projects have succeeded in repackaging their offer for target audiences and have been able to charge a fee for participation in specific activities; and others have secured new commissions from strategic partners or found a way of retaining posts so that key staff can take the work forward.

Structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature

Projects have contributed to the establishment and consolidation of local structures that support the ongoing engagement of non-traditional audiences in the natural environment. Local groups are a critical part of these community structures and many are now in a stronger position to organise and deliver activities outdoors. New partnerships and collaborations have been forged between non-environmental organisations and wildlife / conservation sites and groups and new communication channels have been created. Recently designated as Local Nature Reserves, some sites now have the potential to attract new resources and become a focus point for volunteer engagement.

It is also the case that there is a commitment in Natural England to learn and share the lessons from Access to Nature. Work has been done in bringing people together from a range of organisations to disseminate the learning and sow the seeds for further initiatives.

Conclusion

What this shows is the degree to which Access to Nature, via both Natural England itself and the funded projects, has created a significant legacy both for people and the natural environment. The funding has made a discernable difference in many communities and for numerous individuals. Lives have been changed by the programme; natural places have seen improvements that enable improved access and aid biodiversity; and people have come together to enjoy and care for the natural places around them. This is a great testament to the investments made by Access to Nature.

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Section one:

Introduction



1 Introduction

This paper summarises what has been achieved by projects funded by the Access to Nature programme, and the supplementary Supporting Change and Impact funding (SCI), in terms of creating a legacy for their work once programme funding ended.

It focuses on the range of ways that projects approached the task of ensuring an ongoing impact from their work. For some this meant securing further funding to see their project, or aspects of it, continue. For others it was about embedding the learning from their project within their organisation, or sharing that learning with others. Some projects created physical resources, such as websites and interpretation materials; and in other instances projects were building ownership in local communities along with the structures (such as 'Friends of' groups or volunteer groups) that could continue their work into the future.

This paper forms one part of the final round up of the evaluation process that has followed the Access to Nature programme across its lifetime. A second, partner paper examines the learning about programme management that the evaluation has captured, while the third paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the programme's impact on individuals, communities and the natural environment¹. Each one uses evidence generated by the Access to Nature formative evaluation process, primarily the projects' interim and final evaluation reports, as well as research undertaken by the programme evaluators Icarus².

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- 1 Icarus (2013) *Access to Nature Final Evaluation Report*. UK: Natural England.
Icarus (2014) *Access to Nature: Inspiring people to engage with their natural environment*. UK: Natural England.
See <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>
 - 2 Further information about the Access to Nature evaluation process is summarised in the following Learning Paper:
Icarus (2013) *A Learning Programme: how evaluation added value to Access to Nature*. UK: Natural England.
See <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>

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Section two:

About the funding that enabled legacy planning



2 About the funding that enabled legacy planning

2.1 Legacy planning

The specific term 'legacy planning' was never explicitly used within Access to Nature. While measures were put in place to require projects to think about their ongoing impact once programme funding ended, the context was very much different when Access to Nature launched compared to that which existed as it drew to a close. Many organisations would have submitted applications believing that, if successful, their work would become mainstreamed or would secure further funding when Access to Nature came to an end. In short, the need to pay attention to legacy planning from an early stage was not identified as a priority.

However all of this was to change with the onset of the economic downturn in 2007 / 2008. With cuts to public and third sector funding, and significant reductions in the available sources of grant aid, Access to Nature projects were working within a wholly different funding climate. While this affected some projects' plans for their delivery, it also brought the question of long-term sustainability and legacy to the attention of them all.

What follows in this section of the paper is a description of Access to Nature, and the supplementary Supporting Change and Impact funding. It includes the ways in which each one had measures in place to help projects with legacy planning. The remainder of the paper then examines the different ways in which projects worked towards creating a legacy from their work: creating resources that facilitate access to the natural environment; the dissemination of project learning; project learning embedded in the host organisation and / or with partners; project activities continuing due to ongoing funding / resourcing; and structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature.

2.2 About Access to Nature

Access to Nature is a grant programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund and run by Natural England as a Changing Spaces award partner, opening for bids in April 2008. Natural England works on behalf of a consortium of eleven other major environmental organisations and has distributed £28.75 million of funding.

A total of 115 grants were awarded, ranging from £50,000 to £500,000, including three flagship projects, each awarded more than £500,000. The funded projects ranged from local community based schemes to national initiatives from large organisations. Diversity in scale was mirrored by a diversity and richness of projects. For example, many projects provided a range of volunteering and educational opportunities for local communities and young people who ordinarily face barriers to visiting the countryside. Some combined this with site improvements, whilst others provided new equipment or facilities to enable people with disabilities to access the natural environment.

2.3 The changes Access to Nature aimed to make

Access to Nature was an ambitious demonstration of how to bring about lasting change in the relationship between the natural environment and people across England who had little or no previous contact with nature.

It set out to create connections and build awareness and understanding for people about the natural places around them. It was driven by the belief that, given the right opportunities, people who had previously seen the natural environment as irrelevant or peripheral to their lives, would discover the benefits, for themselves and for nature, of being outdoors. They would then come to value those benefits and develop a level of care and commitment for the natural places around them.

These ambitions were articulated by a set of five programme level outcomes. As a minimum requirement, all funded projects had to contribute to outcome five and at least one other.

- **Outcome 1:** A greater diversity and number of people having improved opportunities to experience the natural environment.
- **Outcome 2:** More people having opportunities for learning about the natural environment and gaining new skills.
- **Outcome 3:** More people able to enjoy the natural environment through investments in access to natural places and networks between sites.
- **Outcome 4:** Richer, more sustainably managed, natural places meeting the needs of communities.
- **Outcome 5:** An increase in communities' sense of ownership of local natural places, by establishing strong partnerships between communities, voluntary organisations, local authorities and others.

The inclusion of Outcome 5 by the consortium gave some emphasis to the question of legacy from the outset of Access to Nature. The fact that it was the only compulsory outcome for projects reinforced the consortium's desire to ensure that projects did not operate in isolation from the communities they were trying to create benefits for, and this, in turn, would ensure a degree of sustainability for projects' work. By working towards Outcome 5, projects would ideally be establishing the basis for their project legacy³.

3 Further information about the approaches used by Access to Nature funded projects with regards to Outcome 5 are summarised in the following Learning Paper:
Icarus (2013) *A Sense of Ownership: fostering change in the relationship between people and the natural environment*. UK: Natural England.
See <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>

2.4 About Supporting Change and Impact

The Big Lottery Fund's £50 million Supporting Change and Impact (SCI) initiative was launched in late 2011 in response to concerns from the voluntary and community sector about the effects of public funding cuts and the future sustainability of existing projects and services. The goal was to give existing Big Lottery Fund projects in the last 18 months of their funding some vital time to review how they work and explore ways of becoming more sustainable. In addition to making funding available to the Big Lottery Fund's directly funded projects, almost £20 million was provided to partner organisations that distributed or managed funding on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund to further support their grant holders. This included £1.37 million to Natural England as a Changing Spaces grants programme award partner. The Access to Nature programme was, as a result, extended from April 2013 to September 2014, and a further £200,000 was also made available for projects thanks to an Access to Nature management costs under-spend.

SCI was intended to support the projects in their work towards their existing Access to Nature outcomes, as well as one new dedicated SCI outcome.

- **SCI outcome:** Mechanisms are in place to ensure the benefits of the project will be sustained longer term, after funding from Natural England ends.

SCI was composed of two parts, (1) Supporting Change and (2) Supporting Impact. The rationale of this split was that projects could apply for Supporting Change alone, or Supporting Change plus Supporting Impact. They could not apply for Supporting Impact only.

- **Supporting Change:**
 - To help projects review their current work, share learning and promote their achievements so that they could sustain the benefits as their grant ended.
 - The proposed work must be in addition to project activities funded through the existing Access to Nature grant.
 - Up to £10,000 revenue grant paid was available at 100%.
- **Supporting Impact:**
 - To enable projects to build on their activities funded through the Access to Nature grant and not to simply continue their existing work.
 - A sum up to the equivalent of the final 12 months revenue project funding of the current Access to Nature grant was available and paid at 100%.

Supporting Change funds of £507,222 were awarded to 52 projects. Of these, 12 were also successful with Supporting Impact applications, securing a further £1,026,373. It was additional funding intended to give projects the time and the scope to dedicate time to sharing or embedding their learning from Access to Nature, and confirm the legacy from their project.

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Section three:

Creating resources that facilitate access to the natural environment



3 Creating resources that facilitate access to the natural environment

“The complete redesign of the Abney Park website (www.abneypark.org) has finally given the Trust an online platform that is user friendly, educational and informative for the public.”

Engaging with Abney Park, Abney Park Trust, London

3.1 Examples of the resources created by projects

Across the programme, many resources, physical and virtual, have been created that will facilitate access to the natural environment beyond the life of Access to Nature. Taking many different forms, from trail maps and notice boards to websites and digital films, these legacy resources reflect the effort of projects to build on what they learnt and achieved through Access to Nature, and provide the means for people to locate, access, enjoy and contribute to their local natural environment long into the future.

Some resources have been developed for particular groups such as teachers, young people or volunteers; and some have sought to engage a much wider audience. In addition, a number of projects chose to involve their target audience in the creation of the resources (for example, young people making films and volunteers creating trail maps) in order to ensure that the format, style and content were appropriate and engaging for the intended audience/s.

The table below provides an illustration of the different types of legacy resources that have been developed and their core function in terms of promoting access and engagement.

Function of the resources	Medium used	Project examples
Inform people about local parks, nature reserves, trails etc.	Trail maps Notice boards Resource booklets Posters	Where the Wild Things Grow (Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change) placed notice boards about local trails at key community locations, such as schools and community centres.
Illustrate the benefits of the natural environment	Films telling the story of how people have benefited from their natural environment	Call of the Wild (Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC) involved young people in the creation of a film about their work, which was then launched and promoted using social media. As well as being accessible online, the film has been shown at psychology conferences and it is also being used by various schools in their PSHE classes to communicate to young people about the importance of nature.
Promote events and volunteering opportunities	Films promoting volunteering Websites advertising organised events/walks/workshops/courses etc.	Access to Nature in Leeds (The Conservation Volunteers) created a film about their education and volunteering offer.
Encourage learning	Outdoor learning sites created Activity booklets for teachers An online booking system to enable teachers to book outdoors equipment Audio trails	Local Nature Reserves Project (North Warwickshire Council) created a schools activity booklet which set out activities for teachers to encourage outdoor learning at the four Local Nature Reserves created by the project. The booklet was distributed to all schools in the district as well as Children's Centres and child-minders. Blue Loop (Groundwork Sheffield) created an audio trail which visitors can download to find out about the history of Tinsley Canal and the River Don.
Encourage enjoyment and fun outdoors	Downloadable resource kits for families Resource pack about practical arts activities A brochure promoting natural play activities	Natural Wight (Spectrum Housing Association) created resource kits for families that could be downloaded from the organisation's website. The Young Carers' Nature Challenge (The Conservation Volunteers) compiled a project toolkit that has been distributed across Young Carers Services. This has 25 nature-based games and activities for the young carers to engage in, together with a list of 18 sites where they can undertake practical conservation work with the wardens and site managers.

Guidance for volunteers and groups	Site management handbook	Telford Access to Nature (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust) produced an online handbook focused on the development of 'Friends of' groups and tools for caring for sites.
Equipment for practical work on sites	Easy access and central storage	Wild Places (Octopus Community Network) ensured that the physical resources that they acquired during the project's life, such as portable drawing boards and drawing materials, nets for pond dipping and sweeping, spotter guides and much more have all been collected, indexed and made available for loan through the website they created.

3.2 The promotion and distribution of resources

The promotion and distribution mechanisms used by projects marked a departure from some of the more traditional marketing methods that organisations had used previously. In particular many drew on external expertise to develop their social media skills and make more effective use of their websites to promote and advertise opportunities to access and enjoy the natural environment.

"There has been a huge amount gained from learning to use social media – in particular Facebook and Twitter. It has the capacity to share learning, information, spread a message in a fast effective way and we have been able to draw on expertise to understand how to use this medium."

Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC, Sussex

"We started actively Tweeting in February 2012. By March 2013 we had just over 400 followers. By taking on board the advice given during the social media training, our following has risen by just under 100 in the last six weeks alone. This is a fantastic result."

Rivers and People, Creekside Education Trust, London

3.3 Into the future

With the end of programme in sight, projects have had to take measures to ensure mechanisms are in place for the ongoing maintenance, storage and distribution of their resources. One project, for example, re-designed their website to make it easier for anyone in the organisation, including volunteers, to update and advertise walks and events. Other projects developed links with community based organisations such as libraries and GP surgeries so that they can play a role in the ongoing distribution of resources. In one area, the local Children's Centre has agreed to store and distribute maps and information leaflets; and there are a number of examples of schools and community centres hosting notice boards about local sites and trails or committing time to the maintenance of natural sites.

As most projects were only in a position to launch or promote their legacy resources near the end of the Access to Nature programme it is not possible to draw conclusions about their ongoing usage. There are early indications from some projects that their resources have been very well received, and indeed this has prompted some reflections about when it is appropriate to develop legacy materials and resources.

“Producing a booklet like this earlier in the life of the project would have been really beneficial and then we could have made more direct use of them. In future project planning we would consider budgeting for a publication of this sort at an earlier stage.”

The Nature of Art in Wessex, Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival

The **Rivers & People** (RaP) project was designed to complement capital infrastructure improvements to the Waterway Link, a river corridor through Lewisham. The project, which commenced formally in February 2010 and was managed and delivered by Lewisham Council and Creekside Education Trust (CET), offered a range of activities relating to the rivers and associated wildlife to the local communities. RaP's engagement achievements by the end of their Access to Nature funding were considerable: 207 walks and wades engaged 1,793 people; educational activities benefited 4,052 students; and 105 training events attracting 1,609 participants.

Intent on ensuring that the benefits of these engagement activities would be sustained into the long term, Lewisham Council and CET used additional funding from SCI to develop, product test and promote online legacy resources for teachers.

Educational resources included guidance, background information, a range of new teaching materials and film clips introducing the spaces / context, health and safety and some of the topics. Accompanying the teaching resources was an online calendar, which enabled teachers to book school equipment for their field studies and visits, and some introductory training sessions.

Rivers and People

Have fun in Lewisham's Rivers

[Home](#) [Walks](#) [The Project](#) [School Resources](#) [Resources Bookings](#) [Catchment Maps](#) [Wildlife](#) [Invasive species](#) [Testimonials](#)



School Resources

In this section you can find useful tools and resources to run sessions with your class on the river. For further information or other resources, please contact us using the [form](#) below or by emailing us.

[Video Workshops](#) [Background Information](#) [Maps](#) [Teachers Guides](#)

[Lesson Plans](#) [Worksheets-KS1](#) [Worksheets-KS2](#) [Freshwater ID Sheets](#)

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In creating these resources, RaP has made an important contribution to the capacity of education professionals to direct and support children to learn about the river environment in Lewisham. Teachers now have access to online briefing notes, maps, lesson plans, recording sheets, visual imagery and practical equipment that they can use on field visits and their response to these new teaching resources has been very positive. The vast majority of teachers involved to date have rated the website as very user-friendly; they have reported that the online materials and equipment are easy to use; and they found the associated training sessions have provided a huge boost to their skills and confidence levels.

"Very good web resources"... "Great work very impressed!"... "Great resources do exist!"... "Brilliant web resources and extremely user friendly!"... "I've had a look at the website. I really like the fact that you have videos to show and easy to access resources e.g., maps, teacher sheets etc."... "It's great that you can rent the equipment needed for free"... "I have now gained enough knowledge and experience to organise and run river fieldwork activities without the help of a supervisor"

For more information visit

<http://riversandpeople.com/school-resources/>

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Section four:

The dissemination of project learning



4 The dissemination of project learning

4.1 Examples of the approaches to dissemination

Projects' efforts to disseminate the learning from Access to Nature have taken many different forms. Some chose to host a conference or celebration event to bring together a broad range of stakeholders to hear about and discuss their experiences, whilst other projects ran workshops or presented at conferences hosted by partners. As well as providing opportunities to present case studies, showcase achievements, and distribute legacy materials, conferences have offered a valuable opportunity to build stronger networks with the organisations that can champion this work into the future.

"We have attended a National Grid Environment Education Centres conference where we presented our learning and experience of the Access to Nature project in Leeds. This has led to a commitment to meet up on an annual basis for similar information sharing."

Access to Nature in Leeds, The Conservation Volunteers

Some projects disseminated their learning through structured training courses so that a wide network of people had the skills and knowledge to build on and benefit from what was achieved through Access to Nature.

Dissemination method	Reported benefits	Project examples
<p>Host or present at a conference / celebration event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase achievements • Promote and distribute legacy resources • New collaborations and commissions 	<p>Call of the Wild (Circle of Life Rediscovery) hosted a celebration event that was attended by over 100 people and gave young people an opportunity to speak about why nature is important to them. Key people were invited which led to several new collaborations.</p>
<p>Embed learning via training courses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the learning has a practical application elsewhere • Build networks 	<p>There is Space Here (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust) arranged the delivery of Forest School type training to Army Welfare Service (AWS) Community Development Teams in Catterick, Colchester, Blandford and Dishforth. The project has reported direct benefits for the military communities and noted the contribution of the training to positive working relationships between the AWS and their local Wildlife Trusts.</p>
<p>Presentations to colleagues or partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure recognition and support for skills and expertise gained through the delivery of the project • Attract potential customers / commissioners 	<p>Wildways (South Gloucester Council) delivered presentations to colleagues to raise their profile and highlight the importance of using the outdoors for neighbourhood engagement. The project reported that 80% of seminar attendees said they would try to champion green space because of what they had learnt from Wildways.</p>
<p>Produce and distribute reports, short papers or manifestos</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey learning succinctly to others 	<p>Early Learning in Nature (Sightlines) produced a web and paper based manifesto which set out the learning, practices and principles linked to their work.</p>

4.2 Lasting impact

Many projects have utilised their internal and external networks to present at meetings and disseminate learning in the form of full reports, short papers or manifestos.

Due to the timing of much of this dissemination activity (near the end of the programme), there is limited evidence to indicate if and how the learning has been used by others. There are however some notable stories of success, where presentations to colleagues and partners have resulted in new collaborations and new commissions, and where organisations have chosen to adopt good practice from Access to Nature in other areas. **The Sowe Valley Project** (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust), for example, created four learning papers to tell others about the benefits of their engagement work and to highlight the important stages of establishing a 'Friends of' group. In response to this, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust adopted the learning from the scheme within a recent Landscape Partnership Bid, and the Environment Agency is considering adopting a similar model for its work on the River Rea in Birmingham.

With the end of their project approaching, **Access to Nature in Leeds** (The Conservation Volunteers- TCV) was aware that to continue providing positive social and learning outcomes in and around Skelton Grange in South Leeds, they needed to find different strategies to sustainably fund their work. In the face of the current funding climate challenges, they planned a package of Supporting Change activities that would raise their profile locally, regionally and nationally, and educate potential customers, commissioners and grant givers about the benefits associated with working with TCV.

Building on their traditional marketing methods of using printed press media and word of mouth, **Access to Nature in Leeds** attended social media workshops to learn how to increase their Facebook and Twitter presence. They also made changes to their website, produced two films and made use of other marketing websites to promote their volunteering and education opportunities widely.

Using evaluation evidence from their current and potential service users, and from complementary wider research, they delivered a number of presentations and pitches to local networks, such as Young Lives Leeds, Leeds Early Years Service and Local Nature Partnership meetings. Extending their reach further, they also attended and presented at regional events and national conferences, such as the National Grid Environmental Education Centres conference.

There is evidence that their dissemination activities are already bearing fruit.

- As a direct result of learning about the benefits for people of engaging in nature, the Barnardo's Willow Youth Carers project booked a year long programme of holiday activities for their service users.
- Leeds City Councillors supported bids from The Conservation Volunteers for grant funding for activities with local schools and families.
- First Direct bank have now pledged support for 15 schools to visit Skelton Grange and providing funds and employee volunteers to create a pond, to the value of £12,750.

5

Section five:

**Project learning
embedded in the host
organisation and/or
with partners**



5 Project learning embedded in the host organisation and / or with partners

“Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival is committed to developing future arts and environmental work and has added this as a goal to their Learning and Participation Strategy. We have already secured funding for an environmental arts project for 2013/2014 and beyond this we are committed to exploring future funds for environmental and arts projects similar to Nature Of Art In Wessex.”

Nature of Art in Wessex, Ageas Salisbury International Arts Festival

“As the South Essex People and Wildlife Programme comes to an end, continuity of two members of staff will ensure key work areas developed during the project will continue.”

South Essex People and Wildlife, RSPB

5.1 Examples of embedded learning

At the heart of Access to Nature funded projects’ efforts to create legacy resources and disseminate their learning has been a desire to ensure that their practice has a longer term influence over the way people are engaged in the natural environment.

There is evidence from the programme to indicate that many projects have succeeded in their ambition to change practice. Host organisations and partners have absorbed good practice principles emerging from project activities and applied them to other initiatives; and some have adjusted their strategic goals and / or invested resources in new ways to reflect new aspirations borne out of Access to Nature.

Previous evaluation reports⁴ have noted Access to Nature’s success in enabling practitioners from a range of backgrounds to acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver outdoor learning and practical engagement activity themselves. Group leaders, community officers, youth workers, teachers and early learning practitioners have all benefited from from working with the host organisations and it is clear that this pattern of building sustainability through education and training has played a significant role in the embedding of good practice.

4 Icarus (2014) *Access to Nature: Inspiring people to engage with their natural environment*. UK: Natural England.

See <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>

How learning has been embedded	Project examples
<p>Host organisations have applied principles of community engagement and empowerment to other projects</p>	<p>The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has used the principles of community empowerment which underpinned the Great Outdoors Project to develop community engagement activities at the Trust's newest nature reserve in Northamptonshire. The reserve lies within a rural deprived area, similar to some of the Great Outdoors areas and has funding for three years from the Heritage Lottery Fund.</p>
<p>Host organisations are embracing methods that were initiated and developed through Access to Nature</p>	<p>As a result of their Wildlife Ambassadors project, Froglife are now developing training and apprenticeship schemes to help people get their first experience of working for a conservation charity.</p> <p>The National Trust is looking to replicate aspects of their Birmingham-based Green Academies Project and roll it out to five other cities nationally. They hope to bid for Lottery funding to do this.</p>
<p>Host organisations make a strategic commitment to sustain good practice from their Access to Nature project</p>	<p>The Abney Park Trust is now firmly committed to using their site to promote Forest School activities. A volunteer has been trained to progress this work and a long term partnership with a lead Forest School provider has been forged in order to pave the way for future school visits and workshops.</p>
<p>Partner organisations make a strategic commitment to sustain good practice from their Access to Nature project</p>	<p>Wild About Weymouth and Portland (Dorset Wildlife Trust) has had a positive effect on the development of new nature conservation initiatives within the borough. One such initiative is the Portland Living Landscapes Project, an ambitious project that aims to restore several hundred acres of limestone grassland habitat on the Isle of Portland. The support of the WAWAP project team helped to secure £850,000 from the Landfill Communities Fund, allowing the delivery of a 3-year habitat restoration project. This trained and employed a number of local people, and delivers hundreds of opportunities for local young people to take part in volunteering activities.</p>
<p>Partners have gained skills to enable others to benefit from and enjoy the natural environment</p>	<p>Early Learning in Nature (Sightlines) provided a series of bespoke Continuing Professional Development sessions for individual schools and nurseries to promote a classroom culture where natural learning is central to the educational offer. The response was very positive and five schools and Early Years settings are now developing their own grounds to provide outdoor learning.</p>

5.2 Ongoing impact

In many cases projects have been delivered by partnerships between organisations. Evidence from the Access to Nature evaluation has shown how this has been a beneficial approach, bringing together different skill sets and experience of working with and knowledge of the beneficiary groups. What is clear is that these benefits also extend beyond the duration of the project, and that learning about the practices developed by Access to Nature projects has been embedded in partner organisations as well as internally within the host.

Natural Wight (Spectrum Housing Association) commenced in December 2010 and was originally designed to run until 31st March 2013. With additional funding from Supporting Change and Impact, the project was able to run for a further year to 31st March 2014. Targeted primarily at young unemployed people, many of whom are living in supported accommodation, the project represents a highly collaborative effort to offer conservation and learning opportunities in the natural sites around the Isle of Wight.

An impressive range of organisations were involved in the project as delivery partners, funding contributors, advisors or members of the steering group. Amongst these are The Footprint Trust; Southern Housing Group; Isle of Wight AONB Partnership; The Isle of Wight College; The Wildlife Trust; and The Foyer for the Island. Commenting on what they have learnt from Natural Wight, partners have offered examples of practice that they have now adopted, or they will now promote, because of their involvement in the project:

- The New Carnival Committee has now utilised funding from another source to deliver the Kite Festival, initiated through Natural Wight, for a second year. They want to ensure that the Kite Festival becomes a regular feature of the Isle of Wight calendar with Big Bug Day and Pan Park Safari to follow.
- Some partners have drawn on Spectrum Housing's experience of engaging vulnerable young people, and introduced new policies and procedures that will benefit their organisation more generally.
- The AONB partnership are now aware of the benefits associated with working alongside Spectrum Housing to ensure a wide range of people are engaged in the natural environment. That Spectrum Housing are now a key player in the HLF bid responsible for overall landscape outreach and community engagement is a reflection of AONB's acknowledgement of the important contribution that they make.

"The AONB partnership understand now that we don't have the expertise to engage everyone and different approaches are needed which Spectrum Housing are far better placed to lead. They have a broad understanding of many issues that affect young people and communities so they can appeal sensitively and appropriately to a wider diversity of people. We now understand the value of what they do and we are so excited by this. Natural Wight has confirmed and clarified the benefits of a collaborative approach."

Isle of Wight AONB Partnership

6

Section six:

**Project activities
continuing due to
ongoing funding/
resourcing**



6 Project activities continuing due to ongoing funding/resourcing

6.1 Examples of projects establishing new sources of funding and resources

Grant funding has played an important role in the continuation of project activities, through providers including the Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, Charitable Foundations and Trusts and local grants. This funding has enabled strands of activity to continue, develop and expand, commonly for a period of one to two years but in some notable cases, involving the Heritage Lottery Fund or Big Lottery Reaching Communities, the size of the grant has been fairly substantial and the commitment is long term (four to five years).

A small number of projects have had some success with piloting income generating activities; for example, by charging people and / or organisations a fee to access play schemes, workshops or training courses, or for hire equipment. Access to external business and marketing advice and the ability to 'repackage' their offer for specific audiences has contributed to the success of some of these ventures. Although the levels of income that have been generated in this way have been fairly modest to date, it is clear that a blended approach to raising funds through grants and fees is possible.

"Islington Play Association has created a new brochure which advertises natural play work for a fee. The offer in the brochure has been taken up by three area managers of Islington parks who have paid for a living sculpture, den building and water system workshops. The unrestricted income helps to sustain the organisation whilst the activities themselves ensure that hundreds of children across Islington have the opportunity to engage with natural outdoor spaces."

Finding Nature through Play, Islington Play Association, London

In their role as commissioners of local services, Local Authorities, schools and colleges have contracted project hosts and partners to continue, expand or extend their Access to Nature activities in some areas. Amongst the activities that have been commissioned or contracted are: Forest School training to teachers in Liverpool; parks based community engagement activities in Islington; conservation based educational work with NEET⁵ young people in Sunderland; and nature based engagement work with older people on the Isle of Wight.

The retention of posts by host organisations or partners has also allowed some project activities to continue. In Blackpool, for example, the Local Authority is funding the continuation of the officer involved in engagement activities linked to the North Blackpool Pond Trail project; in Telford, the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust has retained their partnership officer to enable

5 NEET – Not in education, employment or training.

community development linked to natural spaces to continue across the Borough; and the Sussex Wildlife Trust has allocated core funding to continue and expand community development work in Brighton and Hastings.

The following table lists some more specific examples of how funding and resourcing will enable some Access to Nature activities to continue. It is not a comprehensive list of all the projects that have secured resources, but instead provides a flavour of the breadth of investments that have been secured.

Approaches to resourcing ongoing work	Project name	Organisation	Activities that will continue
Active Travel Grant	Wild City	Bristol City Council	Access improvements
Baily Thomas Charitable Foundation	The Forest of Avon Trust	Natural Connections	Training courses for practitioners who want to take people outdoors
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	Getting Out There	Imayla	A new 3 year programme of work will work in the natural environment with looked after children and troubled families
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	Access to Nature in Leeds	The Conservation Volunteers	5 year programme of community engagement and volunteering activities
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	Discovering Nature at Lawrence Weston Community Farm	Lawrence Weston Community Farm	Funding for community education work on the farm
Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund	Wildways	South Gloucestershire Council	Key organisations will continue to use the outdoors as a tool for social improvement, health and wellbeing
City Bridge Trust	Finding Nature through Play	Islington Play Association	A food growing project on natural play sites
Commissions from Local Authority Liverpool City Council	Setting the Scene for Nature	Community Forest Trust	Forest Schools training to teachers and early years staff
Commissions from education providers	Discovery Farm	Sunderland Training and Education Farm Ltd	Education work with NEET young people in conservation / animal care
Esmee Fairbairn Trust	Making the Most of What We've Got	Otley Road and Barkerend Environment Project	A one year extension of the Community Development worker post
Fee charging	Living Options	Countryside Mobility South West	The provision of equipment so people with limited mobility can access the outdoors
Heritage Lottery Fund	Natural Wight	Spectrum Housing Association	Engagement activities with young people and Natural Wight main community events

Heritage Lottery Fund	People and the DALES	Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust	Engagement activities will be delivered as part of a wider landscape partnership bid
Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots	Eco for Life Mentoring	The Hampton Trust	Heritage focused work outdoors with young people
Other grants to establish independent charity	Change of Scene	Northampton Borough Council	Outdoors activities with young people and expanded volunteering offer
Private developers	The Great Outdoors Project	Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire	Community activities on project sites

6.2 Success in securing resources

“We have been put forward by Hampshire County Council for a European Award for innovation with older people and dementia. We’ve got through to the top 20 from 2000 entrants and been invited to Brussels for announcement of the award. £10,000 is at stake but more importantly we have had access to advice and support about funding and PR.”

Step into Nature, Rushmoor Healthy Living, Hampshire

It is evident from projects that there have been certain features of Access to Nature that played a critical role in strengthening their ability to secure resource to continue their work.

- **The emphasis on formative evaluation** has meant that projects have been able to submit bids to external funders that are well-evidenced and credible. Projects can speak with confidence about their approach and why it works and, importantly, they can evidence the impact they have achieved as a result of the investments made.
- **The partnership approach to delivery** that has been a consistent theme across the programme has meant that a broad base of organisations are keen to see the work continue. Many partners have become champions of the methods and approaches that projects used and have gone on to play a key role in the process of securing continuation funding.
- **The opportunity to develop resources** that support funding bids and pitches, such as films, brochures and case studies, made possible because of the additional support from Supporting Change and Impact.
- **The opportunity to explore the viability of different funding sources**, using Supporting Change and Impact funding, has benefited some projects. New business models and funding strategies have been created that have provided projects with a clearer direction and solid case for future investment.
- **The development of new business structures** that enable organisations to continue their work, through charging strategies and other routes to income generation.

Wild Places, led by Octopus Community Network, was delivered through four beacon Community Centres in Islington. The project set out to achieve increased skills and knowledge of nature, urban wildlife and biodiversity, and to instil in hard to reach groups a love of the great outdoors and the natural environment. This was achieved not only through the vast number of workshops and experiential learning opportunities delivered in and around each centre, but also through the creation and maintenance of new wildlife habitats which harnessed the energy and creativity of local people, young and old.

Wild Places was never intended to be a short term initiative. Partners were committed from the outset to ensuring that Wild Places created a stable and sustainable platform from which further nature-based initiatives and activities could be launched. The evidence that they have achieved this goal is persuasive.

- Each of the four beacon Community Centres has secured additional funding for outdoor activities. Sources are varied and include Big Lottery Fund Awards for All, local schools, Councillors' Local Initiatives Fund, Islington Greenspace and Community First.
- Octopus Communities has secured additional funding from City Bridge Trust and Islington Council Fairness Commission to support ongoing Wild Places related activity.
- More substantially, Octopus Communities have secured £217,000 for a three year programme of activities from Big Lottery Reaching Communities for a new project which will entail a collaboration with Islington Council's Greenspace team to support their programme of capital investment in the parks.

The following description of funding secured by just one of the four Beacon centres gives a flavour of the huge success this project has had in generating additional resources after Access to Nature.

"The success of the Wild Places project at Hilldrop Community Centre has had some major spin-offs. The Hungerford Children's Centre, who participated in several of our excursions has now made a major commitment to the centre, together with a second Children's Centre, the Willow. Funding brought with them has resulted in a major refurbishment of the centre. £5,000 from the re-allocation of Local Initiative Funding is enabling the centre to offer dry-stone walling workshops to the community including local young people. Funding from the Community First Fund has been secured to enable a Gardening Club to be established. The centre will also be the hub of new activity funded by the Islington Fairness Commission Housing Greenspace initiative.

The Octopus Wild Places team has been commissioned (£11,150) to carry out consultations with the local community about revamping an unused kickabout area adjacent to the Hilldrop Community Centre and creating a new community garden and wildlife area. A key factor in us winning the work was our success in attracting people from hard to reach communities to Council Parks and greenspaces during the Wild Places project. Our offer to run a programme of Wild Places activities to engage the community and retain their interest throughout the build and its adoption by the community was a critical factor in our appointment."

Hilldrop Community Centre Manager

7

Section seven:

Structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature



7 Structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature

“The steering group for the project has evolved into a new organisation, the Friends of Rupert’s Wood, a charitable unincorporated association. The group has begun to take over the running of some activities and events as the project draws to an end, have established an e-newsletter, are raising funds and are seeking developmental support from the local CVS.”

Rupert’s Wood, Student Community Action, Newcastle

“A Tenants and Residents Association that became involved in the project are consulting local people on the installation of kissing gates and vehicle barriers to a local greenspace, and are also undertaking litter picks and maintenance work on the site.”

Bury Accessible Natural Greenspace, Bury Council

“A further legacy of this project will be the setting up of the District Green Partnership, which is pulling together strategic plans for the whole of the Erdington District (which incorporates Perry Common). The Partnership will be looking to draw down funding for the public open spaces across the whole district.”

Perry Common, Birmingham City Council

7.1 Examples of the ways in which projects have created the infrastructure to further the work initiated by Access to Nature

The Access to Nature evaluation process highlighted the approaches that have been important in creating the infrastructure that supports the engagement of non-traditional audiences⁶. In terms of legacy, it has been important for projects to invest in developing the kinds of structures and support mechanisms that are required for this work to continue beyond the end of the programme funding.

A critical feature of this work has been the empowerment of groups to take forward activities independently and the best examples of this are where groups have had access to bespoke and flexible training and support. A vast number of Access to Nature projects have invested resources to this end and noted that as a result groups have gained a number of benefits.

- A wider membership base.
- A stronger online presence.
- More practical skills and equipment.
- Better functioning management structures.
- Better links with other organisations and partnership.
- External funding.
- Management plans.

The contribution to the infrastructure legacy by the strengthening of groups has been considerable.

6 Icarus (2014) *Access to Nature: Inspiring people to engage with their natural environment*. UK: Natural England.
See <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>

Examples of Access to Nature projects reporting that 'Friends of' groups have been formed or strengthened

Rupert's Wood (Student Community Action Newcastle)

Sowe Valley Project (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)

Gateway to Urban Nature (Bolton Council)

Telford Access to Nature (Severn Gorge Countryside Trust)

Bury Accessible Natural Greenspace (Bury Council)

Wild Green Spaces in Hartlepool (Hartlepool Borough Council)

The Woodland Communities Project (Woodland Trust)

Rowan Earth project (Rowan Training & Enterprise CIC)

Setting the Scene for Nature (Community Forest Trust)

Wyke Beck Valley Pride (Leeds City Council)

Reported contribution to the infrastructure legacy

'Friends of' groups are:

- Running engagement activities and events
- Recruiting volunteers
- Undertaking maintenance work and site surveys
- Developing site management plans
- Informing the local direction of greenspace development and management

The partnerships and collaborations that have been harnessed through Access to Nature have also been vital for the creation of a sustainable infrastructure that supports access and engagement work in the natural environment, as the following examples illustrate.

- *Non-environmental organisations have formed partnerships with wildlife / conservation sites and groups, and are now well-placed to provide ongoing opportunities for their members to engage with the natural environment.*
- *Communication channels that promote information sharing and collaboration are now well established* because of the steering groups, networks and partnerships have been established or consolidated through Access to Nature.
- *Improved governance structures, new management plans, and better volunteer management policies* are amongst the capacity improvements that ensure groups are well placed to remain active and effective after Access to Nature.

New designations / formal recognition of green spaces or wildlife habitats, as a result of Access to Nature activities, have created a legacy that will continue to bring benefits both for the natural environment, but also for the people that have and will engage with those sites. In Bolton, for example, both the sites on which **Gateway to Urban Nature** (Bolton Council) was based are now designated Local Nature Reserves⁷ (LNR) – Leverhulme LNR and Haslam Park LNR. On a similar note, the Dell in Scarborough (Scarborough Borough Council) has become Scarborough Borough's first Local Nature Reserve and has been placed under Higher Level Stewardship⁸.

7 Local Nature Reserves are sites which have been given a statutory designation to enable local authorities to manage them as places for learning about, studying and enjoying nature, and for nature conservation.

8 Higher Level Stewardship is a 10 year agreement providing payments to landowners for specific management for biodiversity, landscape, natural resource protection, public access and historic interest.

7.2 New infrastructure and the future

Arguably it would appear that, by developing an infrastructure within which Access to Nature type work can continue, there will be a lasting legacy from the programme. It may be the case however that some of these structures will continue to need a degree of external support, and the ongoing impact of Access to Nature will be dependent on the extent to which this can be accessed, and this is unknown at this stage.

The **Wild Green Spaces** project (Hartlepool Borough Council) developed a successful strand of volunteering work as it carried out site improvements to a number of urban greenspaces. In the latter stages of the project, the volunteers chose to form a new 'Friends of' group, the Friends of Hartlepool's Wild Green Spaces. The project also enabled the formation or re-juvenation of a number of 'Friends of' groups dedicated to specific sites, and there is now a "tangible sense of ownership of green spaces " in the town. The network of 'Friends of' groups and the working collaborations have led to improved working links with the Local Authority, and inclusion of four of the groups in a new project which is seeking resources through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The value of these new or strengthened structures is illustrated by the story of some of the Hartlepool groups.

The Friends of Seaton Park was an established group that co-operated with the Wild Green Spaces project to enable a range of improvements to be made in the park (sensory garden, benches, boundary improvements, a wetland area and pond dipping platform, hedgerows). The 'Friends of' group for the park initiated a programme of events and conservation days in partnership with the wider 'Friends of' group (Friends of Hartlepool's Wild Green Spaces), and are searching for funding to continue physical improvements. Members of the group reported gaining the confidence through their involvement to pursue their aims to rejuvenate the park.

"2012 saw the beginning of a renaissance in the historically overlooked Seaton Park following the construction of the Sensory Garden, which was opened to universal praise. Building on this success, the Parks and Countryside and Wild Green Spaces teams, along with The Friends of Seaton Park, are involved in ongoing improvements. Our aim is to completely rejuvenate the park, and help make it an integral part of the Seaton experience, where both locals and tourists can come to enjoy the facilities we already have, and those which are yet to come."

Chair, The Friends of Seaton Park

The Friends of Ward Jackson Park had actually chosen to wind up in 2012, when the two remaining members agreed to work with Wild Green Spaces on an event hosted in the park. This was very successful and attracted new members, a number of whom have used social media to promote the work of the group and the facilities of the park. The group and the project worked together to create a minibeast area, a wetland area, new fencing and interpretation and a natural play area. The Chair of the group has reported that they now feel motivated and inspired, and regularly co-operate with the Friends of Hartlepool's Wild Green Spaces on events and activities. They are now a "hugely proactive custodian of the park with a growing membership committed to ensuring its future care."

Wild Green Spaces Project Officer

The Friends of Stranton Cemetery was formed in 2011 and was supported by the Wild Green Spaces project. The group have taken ownership of the care of the cemetery, initiating guided history walks, extensive planting, a Christmas Fair and an annual Concert of Remembrance. The group is continuing its work beyond the life of Access to Nature.

8

Section eight:

Summary



8 Summary

This paper has showcased the many ways in which Access to Nature projects sought to create a legacy. It illustrates how projects have responded to the programme's aspirations to 'build a sense of ownership' of the natural environment (Outcome 5), and capitalised on the opportunities presented by Supporting Change and Impact to ensure the benefits of their work are 'sustained longer term'. Operating within an increasingly uncertain and volatile funding environment, many organisations employed multiple strategies to build a future for their work after Access to Nature. Their efforts have been described in this report and organised under five broad areas of legacy-related activity.

Creating resources that facilitate access to the natural environment

Many projects have created resources to guide people to local sites, highlighting the many social, physical, recreational and educational activities that can be enjoyed outdoors. Others focused on building the capacity of teachers, volunteers and group leaders to support others to utilise and benefit from the natural environment. In promoting these resources, organisations have made use of social media and other online platforms to reach a wide audience. Partners have played an important role, sometimes offering to house and disseminate resources for local communities to access.

The dissemination of project learning

Conferences, training courses, local networks and celebration events have all provided opportunities for projects to share their learning and showcase their achievements. Although it is too early to gauge the impact of this work, there are early indications that their dissemination activities have allowed some projects to secure new commissions and develop new collaborations, which will enable them to continue their work after Access to Nature.

Project learning embedded in the host organisation and / or with partners

There is evidence from the programme to indicate that many projects have succeeded in their ambition to change the way people are engaged in the natural environment. The principles of community engagement and empowerment that were prominent in Access to Nature are now applied more widely by project hosts and their partners; methods and approaches that were trialed through Access to Nature are recognised as good practice and are being replicated in other settings; a wide range of organisations, from schools and Children's Centres to housing providers and faith groups, now have the skills and confidence to engage others in the natural environment.

Project activities continuing due to ongoing funding / resourcing

Unsurprisingly, grant funding has played an important role in the continuation of project activities. The list of funders that are now investing in continuation / legacy activities is impressive and an illustration of the broad appeal of activities that engage people in the natural environment. This is not, however, the only mechanism through which continuation funding has been secured: some projects have succeeded in repackaging their offer for target audiences and have been able to charge a fee for participation in specific activities; and others have secured new commissions from strategic partners or found a way of retaining posts so that key staff can take the work forward.

Structures in place to further the work initiated by Access to Nature

Projects have contributed to the establishment and consolidation of local structures that support the ongoing engagement of non-traditional audiences in the natural environment. Local groups are a critical part of these community structures and many are now in a stronger position to organise and deliver activities outdoors. New partnerships and collaborations have been forged between non-environmental organisations and wildlife / conservation sites and groups and new communication channels have been created. Recently designated as Local Nature Reserves, some sites now have the potential to attract new resources and become a focus point for volunteer engagement.

It is also the case that there is a commitment in Natural England to learn and share the lessons from Access to Nature. Work has been done in bringing people together from a range of organisations to disseminate the learning and sow the seeds for further initiatives.

What this shows is the degree to which Access to Nature, via both Natural England itself and the funded projects, has created a significant legacy both for people and the natural environment. The funding has made a discernable difference in many communities and for numerous individuals. Lives have been changed by the programme; natural places have seen improvements that enable improved access and aid biodiversity; and people have come together to enjoy and care for the natural places around them. This is a great testament to the investments made by Access to Nature.

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