

# Our Bright Future Learning Paper 3



YOUTH-LED CELEBRATION OF OUR BRIGHT FUTURE'S  
IMPACTS FOR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

This paper is part of a series of learning papers seeking to understand and share learning from the Our Bright Future programme.

Our Bright Future, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, was a programme of 31 projects running from 2016 to 2021 which brought together the environmental and youth sectors. Projects shared the aim of empowering young people (aged 11-24) to lead future environmental change and ranged in scale from national to local. Project activities included: involving young people in practical environmental conservation; engaging them in vocational training and work experience; supporting them to develop their own campaigns around environmental issues; and helping them to start their own sustainable enterprises.

The evidence in these papers has been collected as part of the evaluation of Our Bright Future. It is based on interviews and surveys with those involved in the programme, and progress reporting by the projects. The papers were written by the programme evaluators, Economic Research Service Ltd (ERS) and Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP), as a tool to enable learning from the programme to influence future provision.

## Introduction

This learning paper focusses on the stories of two Our Bright Future projects and how they benefitted the **environment and local communities**. In July 2021, Our Bright Future programme evaluators, ERS Ltd, recruited two young people from different projects to carry out research to answer the question:

## What difference has our project made to the environment and communities?

The young people who came forward were from the projects: **BEE You** (Blackburne House) and **Our Wild Coast** (North Wales Wildlife Trust). The assignment of three days paid work included a briefing session and, with support from the ERS Ltd team, the two young people conducted research and produced a written report. The young people led on all aspects of their research projects, including designing the methodology and research tools, capturing data, analysis, and reporting.

The two reports produced by the young researchers are presented in the pages that follow. These case studies demonstrate examples of the outcomes for the environment and communities that Our Bright Future projects have achieved. For a full description of the outcomes achieved across the programme, please see the Our Bright Future final evaluation report. <https://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/about/our-impact/>

The conclusion section of this paper then pulls together findings from both case studies and presents these in the context of learning from the wider programme.

<sup>1</sup> The young researchers were paid a Living Wage.



Project  
design  
and  
planning



Data  
collection



Analysis



Reporting

# Outcomes for the environment & communities: The BEE You Project youth-led report

## The BEE You Project

The BEE You Project aimed to provide young people with knowledge about honeybees and pollinators, and their importance to the environment. The project also gave young people the opportunity to develop skills in beekeeping. It did this by providing lessons and practical, hands-on experiences working with honeybees. A core part of BEE You's activities was to visit different organisations, such as schools and colleges, to provide training on how to keep bees. Once students had completed the course, BEE You donated hives to the organisation for students to keep and maintain. Over the course of the project, 800 young people were trained and each educational organisation involved in the project received hives to allow students to continue to apply their skills.

## Introduction to the research and methodology

This case study report details how the BEE You project made a difference to the environment and communities. In order to gather evidence on the impact of the project, four semi-structured interviews were carried out: three with staff members involved in the project and one with a young person who participated in a BEE You course. Key themes were drawn out from the data and the findings suggest that the project had a range of positive impacts on the local environment and community.



## Outcomes for the environment

1. As a result of the BEE You project, **several communities have likely seen a large influx of pollinators to their local areas**, which in turn may lead to healthier and more prosperous plants in future. As a result of the new influx of honeybees that BEE You supported, one project tutor **"noticed a huge yield in the fruit trees because of the amount of bees that are pollinating there"**. It is likely that this increased yield will lead to a healthier, more diverse local ecosystem as the fruit will provide increased foraging opportunities for other pollinators in addition to honeybees, such as solitary bees, bumblebees, butterflies, moths, hoverflies and beetles.
2. **Young people and communities gained knowledge and awareness about bees and their importance to the environment.** The project delivered courses in beekeeping to 694 young people, where they learned about the needs of bees and the plants that help them to survive. In addition to the courses, the project used events to reach 2,988 young people and raise their general awareness of pollinators. One young person interviewed for this report expressed how much more aware they have become about the usefulness of certain types of plants that are often classed as weeds.
3. The project has also supported **an increase in people taking action to make positive changes to the environment.** The young person interviewed for this report said that, as a result of taking part in a BEE You course, they now take care not to remove or cause damage to plants that bees use as a vital food source. The young person also reported that, thanks to their increased environmental awareness they are now more likely to spend time clearing up their local area.
4. As a result of the project, **young people are more likely to share their knowledge and raise awareness about the importance of taking care of the environment.** For example, one of the BEE You participants went on to become employed as a tutor on the project, providing them with an excellent opportunity to continue sharing the knowledge they acquired through taking part in the courses. According to the project staff members interviewed, young people also shared their environmental knowledge with their wider networks. This finding was supported by the young person interviewed, who reported that as a result of taking part in the project they started having more conversations with their personal network about how to take care of the environment.

“

You've got people thinking, 'Oh I can grow food - okay I've got to do x y and z and that looks after the bees and it's all interlinked,' making it for a better green space and a better environment

**BEE YOU TUTOR**

”

## Outcomes for communities

### 1. The BEE You project helped to improve local community cohesion.

The project brought together different groups of people with an interest in the environment. The project provided these community members with a unique space where they were able to learn in a group and interact and bond with each other. Because the project trained people within community-led organisations, it was able to bring together local people from different age groups who may not otherwise have met. The young person interviewed echoed this finding and expressed how successful the project was in bringing people from 'all walks of life' together, saying it was **"easier to meet new people when you've got to get involved doing the same activities, easy to start conversations."** The young person reported that the project had been a great opportunity to meet people and expand their circle of friends in an area where not many activities are available.

### 2. The project also helped to improve six community spaces

(including a community farm and a community garden) **and boosted local economies**, creating an incentive for local people to continue to help with the upkeep of the honeybees. One of the BEE You tutors interviewed said that when they visited one of the apiaries set up at a school, they saw that the students still had a great interest in bees and would regularly volunteer their time to help in the apiary. According to the tutor, the production of local honey also gave the community **"a reason to be proud of their local area"** and encouraged them to buy other local products. One of the BEE You tutors reported that the project supported participants to boost their community economies, as residents were able to sell the honey produced from their local area.

## Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear that the BEE You project had a positive impact on both the environment and local communities. The project achieved these outcomes by providing a place to gain knowledge and skills relating to the care and importance of bees, as well as the opportunity for local community members to build connections and create a sense of community pride around their local produce.



## Outcomes for the environment & communities: The Our Wild Coast youth-led report

### The Our Wild Coast project

The Our Wild Coast project aimed to increase young people's knowledge, understanding and engagement in the environment, and encouraged them to take environmental action. The project also aimed to improve community cohesion and to create and improve natural spaces across North Wales.

As part of the project, young people were taken to local habitats and nature reserves and educated on conservation work. Some young people were also able to complete traineeships, qualifications and awards through their conservation activities. As well, the project organised educational events to which young people, the local community, and tourists were invited to carry out activities such as beach cleans. Young people took a lead role in designing and delivering these activities.

### Introduction to the research and methodology

This case study report outlines the impacts that Our Wild Coast created for the environment and local communities. To inform this report's findings, ten semi-structured interviews were completed: two with project managers, two with project staff members, and six with young people.

## Outcomes for the environment

- 1. Young people were educated on how to protect the environment and changed their behaviours as a result of engaging with the project.** Through the volunteering opportunities and the traineeships offered as part of the project, young people learnt how to manage a range of environmental areas by carrying out practical conservation on different local nature reserves. As a result of the knowledge they gained through the project and the chance project activities provided to connect more directly with nature, young people also reported that they started taking actions to protect the environment in their day-to-day lives.
- 2. Young people also shared their environmental knowledge with their networks and local communities.** Young people did this by running educational events where they taught local people about topics such as reducing single-use plastics, or the importance of wildflower planting. For example, at a wildflower planting event, local people were supported by the young people to plant their own wildlife space. Many young people also shared their knowledge with friends and family, both within and outside of the local community. For example, one of the young people interviewed reported that their reduced use of single-use plastic encouraged others in their family to do the same. As a result, their overall household waste was reduced.
- 3. The project created new wildlife areas and improved the condition of existing natural spaces in North Wales.** Young people improved and conserved natural spaces by carrying out practical conservation works such as tree planting and the creation of new wildflower gardens. Project events, such as beach cleans and litter picking, also improved the condition of the local area. Project staff reported that community members have also gone on to create new wildlife areas as a result of attending the project's educational events and interacting with the young people.
- 4. The project was able to bring community members together through environmental topics.** The young people involved in Our Wild Coast organised a number of events to talk to local people about the environment. For example, during Covid, young people hosted online quizzes and competitions for the general public. One of these competitions was a Minecraft wildflower competition, where the young people set up a server for people to create their own Minecraft wildflower gardens, and people on Facebook were able to vote on which garden they thought was the best. According to a staff member, the competition received the highest amount of engagement on the North Wales Wildlife Trust Facebook page. This has influenced the ways in which the Trust will engage with the local community in future.

“ One of the things I've done is I've [used] a lot less single use plastic, trying to get rid of as many things that aren't recyclable as possible. It's not always possible.

YOUNG PERSON ”

“ We ran pub (online) quizzes, we ran Minecraft competitions, art competitions, we signed loads of petitions, we talked to lots of different people, we ran online events. It gave us the knowledge and the capabilities to be able to diversify the work that we do.

PROJECT MANAGER ”

## Conclusion

To conclude, through taking part in the Our Wild Coast project young people were able to take ownership of environmental projects which allowed them to become passionate about achieving positive changes for the environment and communities. As a result, young people inspired local people to learn more about their own local nature reserves and wildlife and to change their behaviours to become more environmentally friendly. The project also improved many wildlife spaces across North Wales and created many new natural spaces for local communities to enjoy.

“ What was an overused piece of ground was able to be repurposed - because everyone has forgotten about it- and it was made much nicer because of that. And it also probably put that area on the map... for other people that may not have known that it was there.

YOUNG PERSON ”



## Environmental and community impacts

These case study reports demonstrate benefits two Our Bright Future projects have had on the environmental and within communities. Many of these outcomes will be sustained beyond the lifetime of the Our Bright Future programme, creating a legacy of positive impacts for the environment and communities.

### Outcomes for the environment

- **Young people influenced others to make positive changes to protect the environment:** through sharing their learning at community events and via project-led activities, young people influenced community members to take care of the environment more than they would have otherwise. For example, young people influenced others to reduce their waste and to create their own wildlife spaces.
- **Physical improvements to the local environment:** projects carried out conservation work at a number of local sites, including nature reserves, coastal areas, and schools and colleges. The outcomes of this work included improved condition of green spaces, creation of habitats, and decreased litter.
- **Young people's increased knowledge and awareness of the environment:** young people gained knowledge and skills relating to a variety of environmental subjects, particularly practical conservation work. 100 young people from BEE You and 243 from Our Wild Coast gained professional and/or accredited qualifications in environmental subjects.
- **Young people developed practical skills relating to environmental conservation.** This included skills such as beekeeping, rewilding, and litter picking.

### Outcomes for communities

- **Projects improved community cohesion** through bringing various groups together via project activities. Young people were able to form close networks and build strong, lasting relationships with others in their community. Community members were also able to meet with other local people from different backgrounds, including young people, at a range of events.
- **Community spaces were directly improved by project activities:** new spaces such as nature reserves were improved and as a result communities were both made aware of the natural spaces available to them and experienced increased enjoyment of these spaces, making them more likely to visit again and continue to care for them.
- **Young people were also able to get communities involved in positive environmental action and tree planting.**

## Reflections on the youth-led approach to this learning paper

Overall, young people found the experience of reporting on their projects in the role of youth researchers to be a valuable experience, equipping them with both the skills and examples of 'real life' experiences to support potential future careers in research.

The young researchers reflected positively on the training provided and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about specific research tasks, such as interviewing, reporting, and project planning. They also noted the complexities of the reporting stage and reflected on the importance of providing plenty of opportunity to ask questions and seek advice during this project phase.

The young researchers also reiterated the importance of allowing plenty of time for youth-led research projects: not only do time constraints present challenges in terms of data collection, but as well young researchers were also required to fit their research work around their existing commitments.

