OUR BRIGHT FUTURE MID-TERM EVALUATION

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Produced by ERS Ltd and Collingwood Environmental Planning

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Table of Contents

Glossary of terms

Consortium:	The partners governing the programme.
Green Room:	A secure login website for the Our Bright Future community, providing resources, information, key dates and hosting conversations.
Hard to reach:	For the purpose of this evaluation this is defined as any group with whom a project is finding it challenging to engage, for whatever reason and might include participants: with a disability; of a minority ethnic background; those unable to read, write or speak English/Welsh well; those with mental health problems, who are experiencing homelessness, are disadvantaged socio-economically or are geographically isolated.
Influencer:	Target stakeholders external to the programme who are considered to be in a position to influence the direction of relevant practices and policy more widely than themselves.
Our Bright Future Team:	The team responsible for programme management at The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) and National Youth Agency (NYA).
Policy Ask:	A change(s) in policy sought through advocacy activities and/or a campaign. Three Policy Asks were put forward by the programme (see Figure 9.8).
Policy Function:	This function identifies opportunities, supports the projects and young people in the programme to participate and activate advocacy activities, engages with policymakers/decision makers and ensures that the Policy Asks and evidence produced by the programme are shared to have wider influence.
Policy influence:	The act of influencing the direction, conversation, or application of a change in policy, either at an organisational or strategic level.
Retweet:	The sharing of another Twitter user's Tweet (posted content) on their own Twitter page to their own followers.
Share Learn Improve (SLI) Function:	This function works with projects to identify areas of need, provide support and facilitate knowledge sharing and learning across the programme.
Social action:	Defined in the National Youth Social Action Survey 2016 as 'practical action in the service of others to create positive change' and covers a wide range of activities that help other people or the environment, such as fundraising, campaigning and giving time to charity.
Social capital:	The factors contributing to effective functioning of a particular social group, such as social norms and values, networks and linkages, and trust and sense of belonging etc.
Social media takeover (e.g. Instagram):	When an individual or organisation is given permission to login to another individual or organisation's social media account and post new content.
The portfolio:	The 31 projects receiving grants from Our Bright Future.
The programme:	The collective work of the portfolio, the functions/activities and Our Bright Future Team.
Youth Function:	This function provides support for youth involvement and facilitates the Youth Steering Group and Evaluation Panel (coordinated by NYA).

Acronyms

CEP: Collingwood Environmental Planning
Defra: Department for Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs
ERS: Economic Research Services
EU: European Union
LINE: Learning in the natural environment
NEET: Not in employment, education or training
NUS: National Union of Students
NYA: National Youth Agency
ONS: Office for National Statistics
PCM: Policy and Campaigns Manager
SLI: Share Learn Improve
TWT: The Wildlife Trusts
YDMT: Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

Data Sources

Source of quote/data	Who this includes
Project manager interview	Manager of any one of the 31 projects within the portfolio.
Project delivery team member	Individuals spoken to as part of the case studies who may not be the project manager.
Programme team	The Wildlife Trusts staff responsible for the programme: Programme Manager, Policy and Campaigns Manager, Communications Officer, SLI Coordinator.
Internal programme stakeholder interview	Members of programme consortium organisations (including CEOs, Steering Group and Evaluation Panel members) and members of TWT not in the central team who are involved in the programme but not at an operational level.
External stakeholder interview	Organisations and departments within the youth and environment sectors as well as the Fund and Defra who are not directly involved in the programme).
Youth representative/ Forum member	Youth representatives on the Evaluation Panel or the Steering Group, members of the Youth Forum.
Project participant (Outcomes Flower)	Responses provided by young people to the Outcomes Flower survey (an outcomes star which draws on the Warwick Edinburgh Well-Being Scale) undertaken by participants across the portfolio (see Annex 1 for Separate Conclusion Paper).
Project participant (*case study project name*)	Project participants interviewed by evaluation consultants as part of case study site visits.
Participant/Parent/Teacher *in Quarterly Report*	Where an individual is quoted in quarterly reports by a project manager.
Quarterly Reports *Year*	Monitoring reports provided by project managers.
Annual Reports *Year*	Monitoring reports provided by project managers.
Post-Parliamentary event survey	Administered by the programme team and completed by project managers.
Youth Forum survey	Feedback surveys completed by Youth Forum members and administered by the programme team: 1) after the Youth Forum meeting in 2018 and, 2) after the Youth Forum meeting in preparation for March 2019's Parliamentary event, 2019.
PCM's Influence log	A log kept by the PCM recording actions taken by the PCM and by projects to connect to key influencers.
Case Study project	13 projects were visited on two occasions (2017 and 2018) by the evaluation team. Individuals reports were produced for these projects after each visit to detail good practice observed, outcomes and impacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of the mid-term independent evaluation of the Our Bright Future programme. The mid-term evaluation covers the first three years of the programme focussing on the period from set-up in June 2016 to December 2018. The subsequent evaluation will cover the remaining programme period through to 2021. For a thorough explanation of the Our Bright Future programme please see the Baseline and Context Report[1] produced in 2017.

About Our Bright Future

1.2 Our Bright Future is a programme of 31 individual projects (listed in Appendix 1.1) across the UK that brings together the environmental and youth sectors. Projects are united by the common aim of empowering young people (aged 11-24) to lead future environmental change. Ranging in scale, from local to national, projects focus on activities such as involving young people in practical environmental conservation, engaging them in vocational training, supporting them to develop their own campaigns around environmental issues and helping them to start their own sustainable enterprises.

1.3 The National Lottery Community Fund (hereafter referred to as *the Fund*) has invested £33m to support the programme which is governed by a consortium of eight organisations[2] led by The Wildlife Trusts (TWT). All eight partners are expected to support the delivery of the programme by: linking projects together; providing specialist expertise/experience; being responsible for particular elements of the programme; and, in some cases, delivering projects.

1.4 In addition to administering the funding, TWT are also coordinating two of the three programme 'functions' to support projects to work together. The aim is that these functions will enable the programme to achieve an overall impact which is greater than the sum of its parts. The two functions coordinated by TWT are: Share Learn Improve (SLI) and the Policy Function while the National Youth Agency (a consortium member) coordinate the Youth Function.

- SLI supports the 31 projects to work towards their shared aims, learn from one another and share best practice through face to face and online interactions (including via the programme's members only web portal, *The Green Room*). It is hoped that the gathering and sharing of evidence on the development of young people and the environment will subsequently guide external policy making at local, regional and national levels.

- The Policy Function aims to encourage and facilitate the influencing of policy and practice related to young people and the environment. It does so by supporting the projects and young people in the programme to participate and stimulate advocacy activities, engaging with policy and decision makers and ensuring that Policy Asks and evidence produced by the programme are shared.

- Meanwhile the Youth Function offers opportunities for young people to influence the strategic direction of the programme, through involvement in the Youth Forum and as youth representatives on its Evaluation Panel and Steering Group. The Youth Function underpins a primary value of Our Bright Future which is for both the programme and projects to be youth-led with an emphasis on empowering young people.

1.5 Our Bright Future has four defined programme Outcomes[3]. Projects within the portfolio are all contributing in some way to these outcomes, and it is upon these outcomes that the success of the programme as a whole will be assessed.

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[1] http://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Baseline-and-Context-Report-for-publish-PUBLISHED-070918.pdf

[2] The Wildlife Trusts (TWT); Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE); Field Studies Council (FSC); The Conservation Volunteers (TCV); Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT); Friends of the Earth; Uprising and National Youth Agency.

[3] The programme originally had three outcomes before the final list of portfolio projects was agreed. These formed part of the formal offer agreement between TWT and the Fund. Following selection of the project portfolio and development of the

- **Outcome 1:** Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change.
- **Outcome 2:** The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities.
- **Outcome 3:** The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy.
- **Outcome 4:** The Our Bright Future programme utilises an effective partnership working and a youth-led approach, leading to stronger outcomes for young people and the environment.

1.6 Quantifiable indicator targets for the programme (to be achieved by September 2021) are listed subsequently. They were set by totalling the individual targets of those projects with corresponding targets (the sum of project targets is stated in brackets where this was rounded to create the programme target).

- 60,000 (59,945) young people have participated in Our Bright Future activities.
- 26,000 (26,190) young people have increased environmental skills and knowledge.
- 4,000 young people have gained environmental qualifications or awards e.g. OCN, NVQs, John Muir, DofE Award, academic qualifications.
- 900 (894) young people have entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships.
- 400 young people have started entrepreneurial projects as part of the programme.
- 450 (468) community spaces have been improved.
- At least 80% projects have utilised the Share Learn Improve Function to share best practice, collaborate and develop relationships with organisations that they may not previously have worked with.

1.7 Each of the 31 projects in the portfolio will run for up to five years and has been allocated around £1m in order to scale up and/or replicate existing activity which might allow them to reach new beneficiaries or new locations.

About the evaluation

1.8 ERS Ltd in partnership with Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP) were commissioned in August 2016 to undertake an evaluation of the Our Bright Future programme. The programme evaluation seeks to identify, analyse and assess:

- The collective impact of the 31 projects;
- The added value of the programme i.e. what value has been derived from bringing 31 projects together under the Our Bright Future umbrella (e.g. cross- sector learning, influencing policy and practice);
- Whether the programme has achieved its long-term ambitions; and
- Evidence to demonstrate impacts, good practice and lessons learnt to support programme learning and improvement and inform wider policy and practice.

1.9 The evaluation has been designed to produce evidence which will support ongoing delivery of the programme and projects, as well as demonstrate what has been achieved. While the primary audience for reports is likely to be the programme team, the Fund and funded projects, findings are also likely to be of interest to practitioners and those delivering similar projects in the environment and youth sectors, as well as policy makers. This report has therefore been produced to be accessible to those with no prior knowledge of the programme. The methodology of the evaluation and structure of the mid-term report are subsequently outlined in the following section to ensure understanding of the evidence and to maximise ease of navigation for all readers.

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programme evaluation framework it was felt that the original outcomes did not reflect the breadth of programme ambitions and activities. The current four outcomes were consequently introduced in August 2017.

Methodology

1.10   In order to provide evidence to improve the effectiveness of the programme over its 5-year delivery, the evaluation team is collecting data and sharing findings on an ongoing basis. The methods of data collection for the evaluation are detailed in Table 1.1 (further detail is available in Appendix 1.2). They comprise both secondary data collection from each of the 31 project managers (in the form of programme monitoring reports and evaluation reports) and primary data collection.

Table 1.1: Evaluation data collection and analysis methods				
Collection method		**Data**	**Analysis**	**Reported/summarised elsewhere?**	**N=**

	Collection method	Data	Analysis	Reported/summarised elsewhere?	N=
Secondary data collection (produced by project managers)	Quarterly reports	Qualitative and quantitative	Qualitative: thematic analysis using NVivo	Summary reports submitted to programme team at end of each quarter	Quarterly reports (2016, 2017 & 2018)
	Annual reports		Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics	Summary review provided to programme team at end of 2017	2017 x 31 projects 2018 x 30 projects
	Project evaluation reports and participant case studies	Qualitative reports	Separate analysis		Reports from x10 projects
Primary data collection (collected by evaluation team)	Annual telephone interviews	Qualitative transcript notes	Thematic analysis using NVivo	n/a	Project managers: x31 (2017 & 2018) Programme team (TWT): x4 (2017 & 2018) Internal programme stakeholders[4]: x19 (2017), x7 (2018) External stakeholders: x11 (2018)
	Workshops with internal programme stakeholders	Observation notes and participant notes	Thematic analysis using NVivo	n/a	2018: x1 Steering Group X1 Evaluation Panel Total = x 11 members
	Outcomes flower paper or e-survey of participants	Quantitative Likert scale and single qualitative response	Thematic analysis using NVivo Descriptive statistics and significance tests	Conclusion paper (Annex 1)	x455 participants
	Case study observation and research notes	Notes, write up of interviews and focus groups	Separate analysis and reporting	Conclusion paper and Case study reports (Annex 2)	13 projects x 2 visits
	Telephone interviews with unsuccessful applicants	Qualitative transcript notes	Thematic analysis using NVivo	Counterfactual summary paper submitted to programme team in 2017	x22 applicants

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[4] See glossary for distinction between external and internal.

1.11   The qualitative data from interviews and quarterly and annual monitoring reports was collated and inputted into the qualitative data analysis (QDA) software, NVivo, for coding. A coding tree[5] was developed by the evaluators to reflect the programme's logic model and specific lines of enquiry. The software has allowed for the organisation and analysis of the multiple sources of data collected for the evaluation at key intervals.

1.12   Case study reports were produced separately by evaluation team members undertaking site visits to projects. They include a variety of evidence from observations to primary research undertaken directly with participants. The case study reports are contained in Annex 2 along with conclusions drawn from analysis of the collective set of reports.

1.13   Analysis of the outcomes flower survey of participants is also detailed in a separate report (Annex 1).

1.14   Quantitative analysis was undertaken in Microsoft Excel in order to calculate totals for various output and outcome metrics (e.g. space improved, participants gaining employment), review progress against specific programme-wide targets and draw comparisons across different typologies.

Mid-Term Evaluation

1.15   The purpose of the mid-term evaluation stage is to report on what has been achieved since the beginning of the programme and identify key lessons so far to drive improved performance. This report is intended to promote learning and to support the future delivery of the programme, as well as allowing the programme to share findings with others. Where appropriate at the end of subsections throughout the report, conclusions and recommendations are highlighted in blue and pink boxes. These are amalgamated in the final conclusions and recommendations chapter.

1.16   It is hoped that the collective evidence base can inform similar programmes in the future and provide better evidence on how young people can improve their local environment, which can be used to inform wider policy and practice.

Part 1: Review of programme operations

1.17   The first half of the report briefly describes the characteristics of the programme including the rationale, context, delivery structure and activities. Analysis goes on to critically assess whether programme and project operations are working well, identifying lessons learned.

1.18   Part 1 of the report is structured under the following chapters:

- **Rationale, Context and Strategy:** reflects on the original rationale for the programme and considers whether and how it remains relevant; provides an update on the strategic context and external influences; and examines how the programme is responding to changing drivers and needs.

- **Programme:** reviews delivery of the programme:
  o The resources used by the programme and how funding for each element of the programme compares with planned expenditure.
  o The effectiveness of programme management and governance and how the anticipated role of each partner is playing out in practice.
  o The effectiveness of wider processes, namely publicity and communications and the evaluation and Evaluation Panel.

- **Project portfolio:** examines the portfolio approach including: the selection and composition of the portfolio; the characteristics of the projects; feedback from 'non-beneficiaries'[6] and key lessons to be shared from project delivery.

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[5] A set of key topics and areas of interest organised hierarchically to catalogue categories and subcategories in order to arrange the content of interview transcripts, monitoring report responses and other textual materials. This process supports analysis and understanding.

[6] Projects that applied to the programme but were unsuccessful.

- **Engagement:** considers the profile of participants, how young people have been engaged at a project and programme level and how closely this reflects the Fund's initial ambition and original targets.

Part 2: Our Bright Future Outcomes

1.19 The second half of the report examines each of the four programme outcomes in turn, considers the future and potential legacy of the programme and concludes with key findings and recommendations.

1.20 Each of the four outcomes chapters assesses whether combining activities for young people and environmental objectives is effective in meeting the four programme outcomes. Each chapter also seeks to share evidence on '*what works, for whom, in what situations and why?*'.

1.21 At this mid-term evaluation stage, in order to assess progress, evidence has been evaluated to test whether the funded activities are beginning to lead to the desired outcomes and impacts of Our Bright Future. This includes activities at both a project and programme funded level with the effectiveness of the Youth Function and SLI considered under Outcome 4 and the effectiveness of the Policy Function examined under Outcome 3.

1.22 Extracts from the 13 case studies produced by the evaluation team are used within this section to provide example evidence of how different approaches are achieving outcomes and impacts.

RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

- The rational for the programme is still considered strong, if not stronger than at its inception.

- There is thought to be a unique opportunity to influence future policy, particularly in light of the UK's exit from the EU and the weight of current environmental issues.

- There is a key opportunity to link into Defra activities relating to young people and the environment.

"it's a once in a generational time to help influence government"

Programme stakeholder interview, 2018

@Cornwall Wildlife Trust

@Our Bright Future

2. RATIONALE, CONTEXT AND STRATEGY

2.1   This chapter outlines the rationale and context for Our Bright Future and seeks to assess how closely the programme is operating in line with the Fund's initial ambition, and how the rationale or direction of the programme is being altered in line with changing context and need.

Rationale and ambition for the programme

2.2   The need for an environment-themed programme was identified by the Fund's UK Funding Committee in 2012. Motivated in part by increasing environmental concerns and Government support for the Green Economy, a gap and need was identified for a UK wide funding programme to support environmental initiatives. In addition, the Committee agreed that the programme should contribute to supporting social and economic outcomes and focus on providing opportunities for young people to gain skills and experience that would help them to contribute to the Green Economy. The Fund suggested taking a portfolio approach, bringing multiple projects together around shared outcomes while enabling individual projects to deliver their own objectives. With support from a UK-wide co-ordinator, the hope was to assist projects and help them learn from each other by sharing knowledge and information.

2.3   The ambition was to:

- forge stronger links between young people and their environment and facilitate long lasting change;

- create a portfolio that provides opportunities for young people to lead change, improve their environment, empower them to shape and influence change within their local environment and gain new skills linked to the green economy;

- fund projects that will provide employment, volunteering and training opportunities that are clearly linked to environmentally sustainable activities.

2.4   Over the next seven years, the programme aims to join up the social, economic and environmental benefits that will come from enabling young people to shape their own future and others that follow them.

2.5   The programme's four outcomes were revised in 2017 to more accurately reflect what the programme was trying to achieve, and to cover the breadth of activities across the portfolio. Two notable changes were the removal of the 'green economy' as a programmatic aim, and greater emphasis on partnership working and policy influence. Most stakeholders viewed the new outcomes positively. A member of the programme team felt that the greater focus on policy influence reflected greater attention towards the legacy of Our Bright Future and had meant projects focused more on this aspect.

Summary of Baseline Report findings

2.6   The Baseline and Context Report[7] was completed in August 2017 and examined the evidence base for the programme, highlighting the variety of problems that some young people face (for example low levels of mental well-being; obesity; high numbers with 'NEET'[8] status; and high debt levels) along with the increasing threats posed to the natural environment. The report drew upon compelling evidence to demonstrate the potential need and support the rationale for the Our Bright Future programme with its emphasis on: youth leadership; volunteering, social action and vocational training; and greater engagement and learning in the natural environment.

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[7] ERS Ltd and CEP (2017) Evaluation of the Our Bright Future Programme Baseline and Context Report [available online: http://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Baseline-and-Context-Report-for-publish-PUBLISHED-070918.pdf]

[8] Not in Education, Employment, or Training

2.7   Evidence and current theory clearly showed how a programme such as Our Bright Future could help address multiple issues and have significant benefits for young people, the environment and communities. According to the evidence, these were likely to include positive changes in:

- Skills and knowledge;
- Pro-environmental behaviour change;
- Employability;
- Health and well-being;
- Youth empowerment; and
- Social capital and community cohesion.

Change in context

2.8   This section builds on the findings of the Baseline and Context Report and sets out key changes to evidence and policy since August 2017. It covers key policy topics outlined in the Baseline Report including: the political landscape generally; environmental policy; health and well-being; social action, volunteering and civic engagement; education, skills, training and employment.

2.9   As the Baseline Report provides an overview of the programme's strategic context over the past ten years, this section focuses on significant recent developments and their relevance to Our Bright Future in terms of the potential for support, conflict or synergy. At this mid-term report stage the question of the programme's legacy is now at the forefront. Understanding the strategic context is as important as ever if the programme intends to tap into current developments relating to the youth and environmental sectors, and particularly the crossover between them.

Key events and changes in the political landscape

2.10   There have been a number of important developments in the UK's political landscape since the beginning of the programme. Key events are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Key events over the duration of the programme

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

2.11   There is a sense that although the UK's exit from the EU may bring uncertainty and challenges, it may also provide unique opportunities. The 25 Year Environment Plan additionally represents an opportunity for the programme to offer expertise and influence delivery of specific actions. However, it is worth noting that due to the nature of devolved responsibility in some areas of environmental policy, not all of the policies and activities included in the 25 Year Environment Plan will be applicable to Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Our Bright Future as a UK-wide
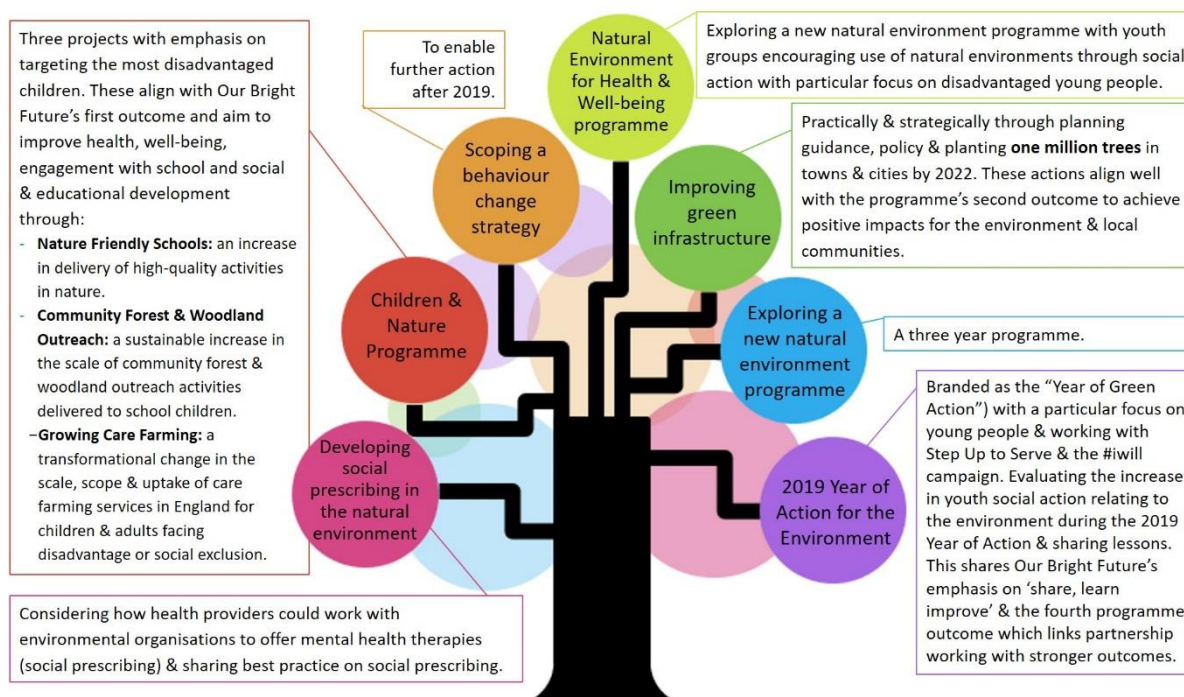
programme may be well placed to highlight the need for equivalent provision under devolved administrations.

"it's a once in a generational time to help influence government" Programme stakeholder interview, 2018

The 25 Year Plan

2.12   Broadly, the Plan intends to improve the UK's natural environment, to reduce the risk of harm from environmental hazards and to improve the UK's resource and waste management within a generation. A summary of key areas of alignment with Our Bright Future is outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Alignment of 25 Year Plan with Our Bright Future

Three projects with emphasis on targeting the most disadvantaged children. These align with Our Bright Future's first outcome and aim to improve health, well-being, engagement with school and social & educational development through:
- **Nature Friendly Schools:** an increase in delivery of high-quality activities in nature.
- **Community Forest & Woodland Outreach:** a sustainable increase in the scale of community forest & woodland outreach activities delivered to school children.
- **Growing Care Farming:** a transformational change in the scale, scope & uptake of care farming services in England for children & adults facing disadvantage or social exclusion.

To enable further action after 2019.

Exploring a new natural environment programme with youth groups encouraging use of natural environments through social action with particular focus on disadvantaged young people.

Practically & strategically through planning guidance, policy & planting **one million trees** in towns & cities by 2022. These actions align well with the programme's second outcome to achieve positive impacts for the environment & local communities.

A three year programme.

Branded as the "Year of Green Action") with a particular focus on young people & working with Step Up to Serve & the #iwill campaign. Evaluating the increase in youth social action relating to the environment during the 2019 Year of Action & sharing lessons. This shares Our Bright Future's emphasis on 'share, learn improve' & the fourth programme outcome which links partnership working with stronger outcomes.

Considering how health providers could work with environmental organisations to offer mental health therapies (social prescribing) & sharing best practice on social prescribing.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP based on the 25 Year Plan

2.13   Reflecting the uncertainties caused by the UK's exit from the EU, research shows that young people are particularly concerned with the impact that leaving the EU may have on the UK's environmental policies[9]. The School Strikes for climate, which called on the Government to take immediate action on climate change[10] and occurred across more than 100 countries worldwide[11], demonstrate young people's increasing interest in tackling environmental issues.

2.14   Further media and wider public interest in the environment have also resulted from the recent (2018) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report which warned that 'rapid and far reaching' transitions need to occur by 2030 to avoid warming of over 1.5 degrees[12]. At the same time a report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) concluded that 60% of the world's wildlife has become extinct since 1970, and only immediate global action can halt further and catastrophic damage[13]. Alongside this interest, there have also been a number of social shifts since the beginning of the programme. This is particularly in terms of the increasing awareness of environmental issues

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[9] http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/A-Better-Brexit-for-Young-People.pdf
[10] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47250424
[11] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/15/its-our-time-to-rise-up-youth-climate-strikes-held-in-100-countries
[12] https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/
[13] https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/wwfintl_livingplanet_full.pdf

such as single-use plastic[14] and fracking[15] and research has shown that more and more people are getting out in nature[16].

Health and well-being

2.15   Many of the key issues and opportunities regarding young people's health and well-being outlined in the Baseline Report remain, including both the well understood benefits of engagement in the natural environment for young people's mental and physical health and the increasing challenges that young people face.

2.16   In general, there have been some positive steps towards greater support for mental health and well-being amongst young people such as the recent announcement of additional funding including a commitment for specialist crisis teams for children and young people across the UK[17]. In addition, nature-based therapies as a type of social prescribing have been gaining traction in the political sphere, as demonstrated by the inclusion of social prescribing in Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Government's loneliness strategy *'A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness - laying the foundations for change'* also recognises that the natural environment can play a role in tackling mental ill health and loneliness[18]. The Loneliness Strategy outlines a commitment to expand broader social prescribing by 2023 and announced that £1.8 million would be allocated to unlocking the potential of underutilised community spaces to help build social connections. These are two very important announcements relevant to Our Bright Future. Although they are not focused exclusively on young people, they highlight an increasing interest and commitment towards social prescribing and links between well-being, outdoor and community spaces.

2.17   The 25 Year Environment Plan also proposes a host of actions aimed at engaging people with nature for health and well-being. One action is to launch a 3-year Natural Environment for Health and Well-being programme[19] with the aim of supporting use of the natural environment for health benefits. This programme will initially focus on mental health but with a view to expanding to other areas of health with the ultimate aim that access to the natural environment becomes a central part of local Health and Well-being Board strategies. Similar programmes are reflected in devolved administrations. In Scotland 'nature prescriptions'[20] (prescribed time in nature as part of patients' treatment) were successfully piloted by NHS GPs, recognising the respective physical and mental health and well-being benefits. This is just one example which reflects Scotland's Our Natural Health Service[21] concept which is supporting the health sector to embrace green exercise as part of policy and practice. Elsewhere, Mind Cymru and the British Red Cross have recently been awarded funding to test pilot projects using broader social prescribing based on other interventions such as mindfulness and community-based well-being activities such as walking and arts and crafts groups[22].

Social action, volunteering and civic engagement

2.18   Since the beginning of Our Bright Future, there has been a continued emphasis on programmes which encourage voluntary and social action of young people, such as Step Up To Serve's #iwill campaign and the National Citizen Service. The Government and the Fund are jointly investing £80million through the Youth Investment Fund and #iwill Fund. An important aspect of the Youth Investment Fund is developing a strong evidence base, and the government has invested £1 million in the Centre for Youth Impact which aims to review and build the evidence base around youth

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[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strong-public-backing-bolsters-fight-against-blight-of-plastic-waste
[15] https://yougov.co.uk/news/2015/05/19/opposition-fracking-britain-grows/
[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/people-are-spending-more-time-outside-in-the-natural-environment-than-ever-before
[17] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/28/mental-health-services-to-get-2bn-funding-boost-in-budget
[18] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750909/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web_Update.pdf
[19] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf
[20] https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/nature-prescribed-to-help-health/
[21] https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/contributing-healthier-scotland/our-natural-health-service
[22] https://www.localgov.co.uk/Social-prescribing-pilots-for-mental-health-patients-launched-in-Wales/46105

services. Government policies have also emerged which emphasise voluntary, community or social action, which represent a crucial component of Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, and particularly the Year of Green Action 2019. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) *Civil Society Strategy: Building a Future That Works for Everyone[23]* shows commitment to the social action agenda, building on the cross sectoral partnerships developed through the #iwill campaign and providing funding through the DCMS and the Fund's Place Based Social Action programme (2017-2025)[24].

2.19   There have also been significant developments in terms of strategic youth participation. For example, as part of the Civil Society Strategy, a Youth Steering Group will be set up within DCMS to oversee policies affecting young people. It is hoped that they can pioneer approaches to youth participation which can be adopted across other government departments. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has also announced the £10m Kick the Dust programme which is providing grants for a number of projects across the UK focusing on engaging young people in heritage projects. There is a strong focus on the programme being youth-led, and a core group of Heritage Ambassadors has been recruited to work with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to make heritage more inclusive for young people. These developments provide an opportunity for Our Bright Future to link into, and inform the social action agenda with particular focus on practical environmental action and approaches to youth participation.

Education, skills and training and employment

2.20   Since the Baseline and Context Report there have been limited changes to education, training and employment policy relevant to Our Bright Future. Positively, the number of young people in the UK who are NEET was 6,000 fewer in April-June 2018 compared to April-June 2017[25]. However, programmes focused on education and training for young people identified as NEETs are one of the areas expected to be hardest hit by the financial impacts of the UK's exit from the EU[26,27]. Since the beginning of the programme, there has been a growing recognition of the educational benefits for young people of engaging with nature, as identified in the Baseline Report. For example, the Department for Education (DfE) and Defra's Children and Nature programme aims to equip schools with the skills and resources to bring the natural environment into teaching and to expand community forest outreach and care farming for schools in disadvantaged areas.

Stakeholder views on Our Bright Future's rationale and focus

2.21   The evaluation team interviewed a range of stakeholders, internal and external to the programme between September and November in both 2017 and 2018 (as detailed in Table 1.1). Although some external stakeholders from within the youth and environment sectors had heard of Our Bright Future, this was limited to those who were involved in organisations which were partnering on Our Bright Future projects, and those who had received direct contact from the Our Bright Future policy team. It was felt by both stakeholders internal and external to the programme that Our Bright Future still had a relatively low profile within their sectors (both youth and environment). However, this was not altogether surprising given that the 'youth environment sector' was not well established, and that there had not yet been any evaluation evidence to share. Our Bright Future was seen as important by stakeholders in terms of providing a stronger link between the youth and environment sectors, which were still considered relatively separate.

2.22   The external stakeholders noted that Our Bright Future was currently meeting a need, particularly in terms of reaching and engaging disadvantaged young people who are very much underrepresented

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[23]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf

[24] https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/place-based-social-action

[25]https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotinedu cationemploymentortrainingneet/august2018

[26] https://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2018/brexit-funding-gap-could-hit-welsh-colleges/?status=open&lang=en

[27] https://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2018/brexit-funding-gap-could-hit-welsh-colleges/?status=open&lang=en

in social action, environmental volunteering and accessing green space more generally. However, some stakeholders questioned whether the programme was focusing enough on those who would not normally engage in such activities.

> *"we're seeing how the environmental movement can be pigeon-holed, in terms of more middle class white, older demographics and so on. Reaching out to a greater diversity of young people, building their confidence and safeguarding nature is more important than ever before." External stakeholder interview 2018*

2.23   The rationale of the programme in terms of the issues it addresses was seen as stronger than ever before, particularly in terms of mental health, environmental issues, and developing the leadership and confidence of young people.

> *"There couldn't be a greater time, need or urgency around environmental issues… young people are in one of the most challenging employment circumstances at present…The broader environmental policy context is fluid at moment with Brexit, changes to the Common Agricultural Policy etc…" External stakeholder interview 2018*

2.24   There were however notes of caution about the sustainability of the programme – many suggesting that it was now time to find ways of continuing momentum. Three key suggestions to harness the current momentum were to focus on:

- Supporting young people to have a greater voice in the development of policies and initiatives;
- Building institutional collaborations to take the youth-environment agenda forward; and
- Intensive engagement with a small number of key stakeholders to have maximum influence over the remainder of the programme.

Conclusions: Rational and context

Many of the same challenges remain from the beginning of the programme. Given both the increased programme emphasis on policy change, together with the views of key stakeholders, the rationale for the programme is still considered strong, if not stronger than at its inception.

As noted, the agenda on certain issues, which closely align with the Our Bright Future outcomes, has progressed in the last two years offering significant potential for the programme to support or have an influence. There is a strong sense that globally, and particularly within the UK, the time to take key actions for the environment is as urgent as ever. This urgency relates to several key environmental issues (e.g. plastic and air pollution, climate change).

At the same time the UK is facing fundamental shifts in terms of policy and environmental legislation. Much of the programme's influence is likely to come from sharing evidence, lessons learnt and best practice about approaches taken by Our Bright Future and the portfolio of projects. Funders and policymakers will need to know what works for which groups of young people. They are also likely to be interested in whether projects or programmes such as Our Bright Future offer value for money in terms of delivering outcomes for young people, communities, the environment and economy, compared to alternatives.

Recommendations: Rationale and context

In light of these changes to the context of the programme, it is recommended that Our Bright Future takes advantage of current opportunities identified including:

- Linking into Defra activities relating to young people and the environment, in particular the 2019 Year of Green Action. Our Bright Future will also be able to offer evidence and best practice in support of other Defra initiatives such as Children in Nature.

- Highlighting evidence and best practice around health, well-being and the environment particularly in light of the continued interest in social prescribing, and emphasis on young people.

- Shaping policy and legislation development in the wake of UK's exit from the EU, most notably around the environment, but also potentially policies relating to training, skills and employability.

- Supporting and facilitating greater youth participation, within organisations and in the development of policies.

- Continuing to link into the youth social action agenda e.g. #iwill campaign, Heritage Lottery Fund Kick the Dust and share evidence and learning on practical environmental action for young people.

The programme needs to ensure that it, and projects remain responsive to, and capitalise on (where appropriate) evolving agendas, high-profile and disruptive events (such as the ongoing youth climate strikes) and the increased attention to plastic waste linked to the BBC's Blue Planet television series. In responding to such news items, the team should ensure they communicate a coherent viewpoint as a programme, consortium and portfolio.

PROGRAMME OPERATIONS

- Programme management is considered effective, and projects value the flexibility and one to one support offered by the team.

- The Steering Group and Evaluation Panel are generally working well although there are suggestions to improve their effectiveness, primarily setting clearer roles for members to enable greater challenge and critical reflection.

- The quality of evidence captured by projects is a concern, making it particularly difficult to report consistently about the outcomes of the portfolio. Reporting and evaluation processes would benefit from a review and refresh.

- There are shared aspirations across the programme for Our Bright Future to receive more national media attention and become better known.

@Our Bright Future

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3.   PROGRAMME FINANCE, STRUCTURE AND PROCESSES

3.1   This chapter presents evidence relating to programme finances, management, governance and wider processes relating to marketing and evaluation. Evidence has been drawn from programme monitoring data, project quarterly reports and annual consultations with the programme team, consortium members and project managers. This section draws out conclusions and lessons learned on the effectiveness of programme processes and the organisational structure of the programme.

Financial management

3.2   This section considers the resources used by the programme, and how funding for each element of the programme compares with planned expenditure. Table 3.1 shows a simple breakdown of costs for the programme. The majority of the budget is allocated to project grants (88%), with up to £1m allocated to each of the 31 projects. The management of the portfolio lies with the Our Bright Future Team at TWT, which is planned to account for 12% of the total costs.

Table 3.1: Our Bright Future cost breakdown (2016 – 2022)					
	Total Original Funding Allocation	Anticipated spend by end of Year 3	Actual spend by Jan 2019	Variance	% of total funding allocation spent to date
Portfolio management and evaluation (Appendix 3.1)	£3,849,364	£1,715,353	£1,607,895	-£107,458	42%
Total portfolio grants	£29,405,139	£18,832,403	£17,152,903	-£1,679,500	58%
Total	**£33,254,502**	£20,547,756	£18,760,798	-£1,786,958	56%

Source: Programme monitoring data

3.3   At this mid-term stage in the programme, just over half of the total £33m budget has been spent. The lower than planned spend to the end of year 3 is largely due to underspend in portfolio grants which is discussed in Chapter 4. The budget is regularly reviewed, and although there has been some variation in spend to date, the anticipated final headline totals for portfolio management, evaluation and grants remain the same.

3.4   Within the total cost of portfolio management, the greatest allocations of budget are to staff costs (59%), evaluation (16%) and to the collective set of programme functions e.g. SLI, Youth Function etc. (13%). A full breakdown is provided in Appendix 3.1.

3.5   Expenditure to date for each category has largely reflected the proportions planned to be allocated to each area in total over the length of the programme. Some variations, such as the higher proportion spent on evaluation currently compared to the total, differ due to varying periods of activity over the 5 years e.g. resource intensive setup phase. There has also been a consistent underspend on SLI, in part due to the removal of the Critical Friend Function and limited use of the Project Support Network which replaced it (discussed later in this chapter under *SLI Function*).

3.6   Staff costs to date currently account for a slightly greater proportion of spending than the proportion planned for the entire programme. There has been little change since the original bid though the programme team believed that some of the costs for Human Resources, IT and training may have been underestimated initially.

3.7   Comments from projects on programme finances focused primarily on the need for greater funding in three areas: the SLI, Youth and Policy Functions. Multiple projects commented that they were not aware of the additional demands SLI would place on staff time and transport costs. They

consequently requested that flexible funding be made available to support them to engage in such activities and events. In response to this, some programme funding was made available to projects for travel costs (through the funds previously allocated to the Critical Friend Function).

> *"We experience a constant tension between programme-wide engagement and other priorities around project delivery… this activity wasn't outlined at the beginning of the programme, we didn't put aside money for travel and going to conferences. I am now starting to have to use project money for these trips and I worry that this might be damaging to the project." Project manager interview 2017*

3.8   A small number of project managers also recognised that the Policy Function was a significant amount of work for a single role and felt that this could be better resourced. There were also suggestions that the Youth Forum could be better resourced in order to allow it to meet more regularly and sustain connections.

Management and governance

3.9   Figure 3.1 shows the overall management and governance structure of the programme. The majority of programme delivery roles are fulfilled by TWT. These include portfolio management, the SLI and Policy Functions (the latter two of which are discussed in the second half of this report). Portfolio management is overseen by a Programme Manager who is responsible for the management of the grants, monitoring and reporting to the Fund.

3.10   Key roles and responsibilities have broadly remained the same with the exception of some changes in consortium members. In April 2017 the Plunkett Foundation withdrew from the consortium as a result of an organisational review which concluded that the programme no longer reflected their organisational priorities. Although this did not represent a significant loss, the Steering Group took the opportunity to reflect on the consortium and identified that the partnership lacked skills in campaigning and advocacy. Therefore, Friends of the Earth were invited and joined the consortium in January 2018. In addition, vInspired left the consortium in late 2018 having gone into liquidation. Formerly, vInspired was responsible for the Youth Function and this was temporarily taken on by the central portfolio management team at TWT. In April 2019 the contract for the Youth Function was awarded to the National Youth Agency (NYA).

3.11   The CEO Advocacy Advisory Group was established in 2018 and met for the first time in October the same year. This was established in response to a recognised need for support for the Policy and Campaigns Manager (PCM), combined with the need to gain greater input from, and bring together senior members of consortium organisations. The hope is that the group can offer expertise and contacts to support the programme's policy influencing ambitions. It was agreed that the group should meet at least once per year, usually in person. The terms of reference state that members shall include the Chief Executive from each consortium partner organisation, two to three young people and a rotating chair supported by a facilitator from the Steering Group.
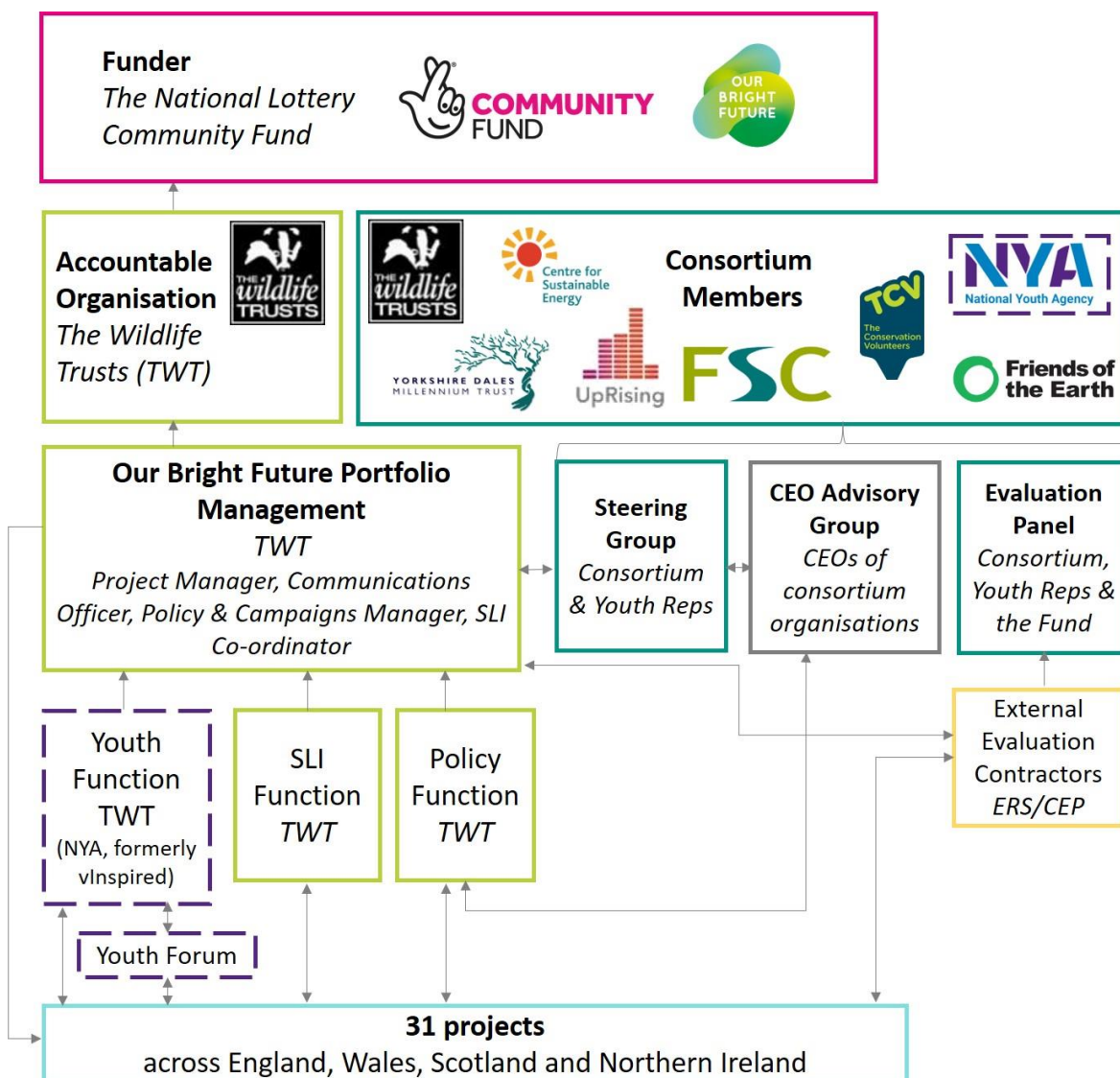
Reflections on portfolio management

3.12 There has been some change in staff within the management team since the beginning of the programme. The original PCM left in February 2017 and a replacement began in May later that year. Project managers observed a drop-off in activity during the transition after the departure of the first policy lead, which was felt to have slowed progress in pursuing policy change. In March 2018 the original SLI Coordinator transferred roles internally within TWT. They retain an overview through line managing the new coordinator (equivalent to 10% of their original role) and provide strategic oversight. It was recognised that a future risk will be key staff members seeking new employment towards the end of their existing contracts for the programme.

3.13 Project managers and internal programme stakeholders felt that portfolio management was working effectively. Project managers value the direct support and input provided by the management team, including help to make connections with other projects and engage with the Our Bright Future community. Project managers also widely commented on how the flexibility allowed by programme management (and the funders) was beneficial in enabling them to develop and respond to opportunities and learning over time. One project commented that many funders would not allow that level of flexibility.

"The Lottery funding is interested in the impact, rather than setting projects on tram lines that they can't get off." Project manager interview, 2018

Reflections on governance

3.14   The programme is governed by a Steering Group made up of senior representatives of each of the eight consortium partner organisations, a representative from the Fund, a chair from TWT Council and youth representatives. The remit of the Steering Group is to identify and steer ways to maximise the impact of the portfolio; to ensure a lasting legacy of the programme and to oversee the development and management of Our Bright Future (including risks and performance). The agenda is set collaboratively by the Programme Manager, the PCM and the chair (a member of TWT Council).

3.15   The Group meets quarterly with the total number of attendees per meeting ranging from seven attendees (in September 2017) to 16 (in October 2018). The average attendance is 12 attendees with two representatives absent from each meeting on average – this peaked in August 2018 when six attendees were absent. All 14 meetings were attended by the chair and the Programme Manager, while 13 of the 14 meetings were attended by the PCM.

3.16   Governance was described as a "*sound, well-documented and orchestrated system*" (programme stakeholder interview, 2017) with effective communication, reports and good representation of organisations. The relationship with the Fund was considered positive and oversight of the programme is thought to have worked well. From the perspective of the programme team and members of the consortium, the key advantages of having a consortium have been sharing good practice on youth engagement and environmental work and collective campaigning and advocacy, albeit at an embryonic stage. The outcomes and impacts of this approach are discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

3.17   The role of the youth representatives on the Steering Group was felt to be positive in offering a different perspective and reflecting the ethos of "*young people being at the heart of the programme*" (programme stakeholder interview, 2017). From July 2016, once youth representatives were recruited, two young people typically attended all meetings. In addition to a valuable experience for the young people, Steering Group members felt that they benefitted from hearing about updates from the youth representatives on the Youth Forum. It was felt that the chair of the Steering Group was effective in supporting young people to engage and feel comfortable contributing. However, one member felt that more could be done to support them to develop their reflective skills, confidence and to lead the group rather than simply be involved. The involvement of youth representatives is further discussed later in this chapter under *The Youth Function.*

3.18   A criticism of the Steering Group (and Evaluation Panel) made by three interviewees (from two organisations) is that members are not paid for their roles. Only TWT staff and the organisation leading the Youth Function have attended in paid roles and this was felt to be problematic for the members, and consequently the programme. A small number of group members felt that they were unable to justify engaging in the process in an active way, particularly due to the travel time and lengthy agendas. One commented that this had prevented them from steering things as much as they would have liked. This has, according to a few members, potentially led to an over representation of TWT relative to other consortium members. Others observed that some members were not contributing sufficient time to the Steering Group or had dropped out entirely.

> *"I do not understand why only the vInspired Youth Function is funded – whereas no one else gets remunerated for role in SG – this has made some members unhappy, as it seems strange one group / function is funded, but others are not… This voluntary time really adds up over time, and makes it difficult to justify having a more active participation." Programme stakeholder interview, 2017*

3.19   Although the majority of members of the Steering Group felt that their roles were clear, a minority described feeling unsure they were fulfilling their role, particularly when reviewing the papers presented. They described feeling passive rather than actively steering the vision and leadership of

the programme. While one programme stakeholder felt that the strategic role of the group had improved in 2018, several others reflected that they were still not offering enough challenge, criticism or critical analysis. This was described specifically in relation to steering the direction of policy and influencing.

3.20   Early on in the programme several members of the Steering Group felt that it would be helpful for individuals to have more specific roles and responsibilities, reflecting their knowledge and expertise. It was suggested that all members could benefit from reflecting on their involvement, what they bring to the group and how collective skills could best be used. It was hoped that more refined roles would justify individual representation in the group and allow individuals to contribute meaningfully and share responsibilities.

3.21   Further suggestions for developing the role of the Steering Group included additional sub-groups for more substantial topics; members engaging more with the portfolio (not just their own projects); and receiving training alongside the Evaluation Panel (e.g. in what to look for, how to question, analyse and identify gaps). A couple of suggestions were also made for a group bonding session or residential in order to strengthen relationships. Although this has not been taken forward, members of the Steering Group are already invited to the Annual Programme Seminar residential attended by staff from all projects.

Publicity and Communications

3.22   A Communications Officer is responsible for publicity and communications which includes press releases, media relations, the programme's website, and social media channels.

3.23   When discussing marketing of the programme, one project manager commented on really valuing the marketing and promotional support provided by the programme team and noted that, without this support, they would likely have undertaken less marketing activity. Projects also commented that the team were quick to provide information for their own publicity needs e.g. producing a press release. Suggestions were made by projects for the programme to provide:

- monthly press releases to projects which they could adapt and distribute locally;
- more support, training and encouragement of external communication;
- examples of good external communication and use of hashtags on Twitter;
- regular updates on how the programme is being promoted.

Promotion of the programme

3.24   The programme team undertook a review of communications and media coverage for the Steering Group in 2018. Appendix 3.2 details some insights on the strengths of different communications methods from the report. The programme's Twitter account has the greatest reach of all the social media channels. It is targeted at influencers and stakeholders and, as of January 2019, has a growing following of almost 2,000 users and an average of 949 profile visits a month. The programme targets young people specifically through its Instagram and YouTube accounts. These were both launched after the Twitter account and have a much smaller following of 649 followers and 24 subscribers respectively.

3.25   The programme recorded 162 instances of media coverage (including TV, radio and print media) in its first two years. However, the majority of this was specific to projects, for example MyPlace was featured on BBC Breakfast and ITV News while Countryfile magazine covered Green Futures. The review of communications and media coverage commented that projects are more proactive and successful in promoting their stories at a local level and local media is largely more receptive to this than a distant communications officer.

3.26   A couple of projects reinforced this, reporting difficulties promoting the Our Bright Future 'brand' as well as their own project and organisation. This was described by one project manager as a "*double layer of communication*". It also became clear to evaluation team members undertaking case study visits that projects did not always discuss the programme when introducing their project to new

participants. It was felt by several projects that this added detail was too much for some young people and that there would be little benefit to them in knowing about Our Bright Future.

3.27   Despite this, there are ambitions held across projects and the programme team to gain wider recognition and attention in the media, specifically national television coverage. A member of the programme team commented that they were close to securing such an opportunity but that the broadcaster lost interest when they found that the programme was not new. It was felt that the mid-term report could offer the next opportunity to capture the interest of the media.

> *"Great things are happening, but we need to shout louder if we want to achieve the voice and influence that we aspire to" Project manager interview, 2018*

> *"Would like to see the programme having policy influence – for it to be seen to be well-known outside of the Big Lottery [the Fund]. It should be more 'famous' than it is, given that it's £30 million. What conferences, round tables, advisory groups etc could we be attending?" Programme stakeholder interview 2018*

3.28   The Communications Officer has been approached by media contacts unprompted and this is considered indicative of the growing awareness of the programme.

Monitoring and evaluation

3.29   Projects are required to provide quarterly reports, annual reports and end of project reports. Each quarter projects report on: progress towards engagement targets and environmental outputs; progress against outcomes; delivery challenges and successes; advocacy activity; engagement with programme functions such as SLI or Youth Function. The annual project report focuses on demographic data, outcomes metrics and a narrative of lessons learned. As projects close, they are asked to complete an end of project report which mirrors aspects of the quarterly and annual reports whilst encouraging reflection on findings from project evaluation activities and evidence.

3.30   There have been multiple requests across the duration of the programme for information and guidance on specific areas of evaluation, expectations of projects and on the progress and result of the programme evaluation. Interviews with project managers indicate that there remains a lack of understanding as to how project data is being used and whether it is useful. It is clear that some projects remain unaware of the resources available to them on the Green Room and communicated to them through e-mails. However, there is ongoing appetite for updates on the findings of the programme evaluation.

> *"Some combined impact assessment stats on reach and impact nationally would be ideal. Headlines across the programme – feel like something bigger. Having some headline impact indicators that are circulated about national impact." Project manager interview, 2017*

3.31   The programme team felt that the monitoring and evaluation data collected from projects was useful for the development of the programme for a number of reasons: informing SLI events, social media posts and good practice guides; attracting attention from the media, relevant organisations and policy makers (e.g. Defra); and for informing advocacy campaigns. Internally, the programme has used evaluation insight (particularly the quarterly reports) to address issues within the portfolio. Examples include changing the way the Critical Friend Function worked after it was clear that it was not what projects needed, and putting on SLI events such as webinars to address common challenges such as safeguarding, or working with hard to reach young people.

3.32   The delay in appointing external evaluators for the programme evaluation was recognised by the programme team and internal programme stakeholders as hindering the evaluation process. The changes which were instigated part way through the programme (to programme outcomes and reporting) evidently led to some confusion and some projects continue to report against the programme's original outcomes. In general, there has been a lack of clarity from the programme on

what is contractually required of projects in terms of reporting and evaluation, and expectations were not set about the quantity and quality of evidence needed.

3.33   Projects are expected to undertake their own project evaluations, or appoint external contractors to do so. In December 2018 programme evaluators conducted a review of interim project evaluations that have been produced to date (n=10). The review found that relatively few of these evaluations scored highly against a quality criterion[1], with reports lacking clear analysis or evidenced conclusions. This has been problematic in terms of the programme evaluation because the standard of evidence provided by projects is not robust. However, it is not altogether surprising given that no strict requirements were put on projects in terms of evaluation. The recommendations of this review are being considered by the programme Evaluation Panel.

3.34   As a result, there has been a problem identified at the mid-term stage regarding the quality and consistency of data collected and reported across the portfolio. However, project managers, the programme team and stakeholders are increasingly recognising the importance of the data for developing strong advocacy messages. It is clear at this point that reporting and evaluation processes would benefit from a review and refresh by the Evaluation Panel and programme team. This should seek to ensure that evidence at a project and programme level is more robust, and that wider impacts are being recorded. For example, at this stage there may be opportunities to chart longer-term impacts and it is felt that there is a need to follow up with participants in order to identify the full impact of the programme.

3.35   In response to the lack of consistent programme-wide data, in 2018 the programme trialled the use of an 'outcomes star' to measure outcomes for young people across the whole programme, entitled the Outcomes Flower. The tool combined questions on well-being with questions about pro-environmental behaviour change. It was challenging to find measures that could be applied to all projects in the portfolio to demonstrate the collective impact of the programme but this was considered something which could be commonly used across all projects. The tool was mostly well received by projects, and 26 projects were able to complete it with a sample of approximately 20 participants each. Further information is provided in Annex 1.

Evaluation Panel

3.36   Input is provided by consortium members on the Evaluation Panel, which oversees the programme evaluation. The Evaluation Panel meets quarterly and is chaired by a member of the Field Studies Council (a consortium partner who is also a member of the Steering Group). The representation of the Fund on the Panel was felt to be valuable in improving rigour. A similar issue to the Steering Group is that TWT and Youth Function representatives are the only members paid for their roles. While not expressed as a criticism, some members felt this limited the time they were able to devote to the Panel.

3.37   A self-assessment survey was undertaken by the Evaluation Panel in 2017. The results of the survey revealed that members collectively had limited confidence in the Evaluation Panel's ability to provide enough 'challenge' in meetings as well as the current capturing and reporting of risks. Risk reporting is now an agenda item for the Panel meetings, however, concerns about the ability of members to provide challenge were reported again during annual consultations. Some members of the Panel felt that it is not representative of programme partners and projects while others commented that members lacked evaluation expertise which would be beneficial to the performance of their role. However, a couple of members felt that the role had supported their learning on evaluation which had improved data collection for their own projects.

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[1] Evaluation criteria: Report includes an executive summary, introduction, methodology (sampling, tools used, research questions), findings (clearly presented, supported by data, graphs and/or quotes), discussion (how outcomes are being achieved, what they mean for delivery), conclusions (key findings, lessons learned, how this will inform delivery), recommendations and appendices.

3.38   It was felt that evaluation was a difficult and abstract topic and challenging for youth representatives to engage with. A youth representative on the Evaluation Panel also commented that it was not clear what their role was on the Panel and who they were representing.

Conclusions: Programme and portfolio management

Finance

There have been some small changes to the original planned spend on portfolio management and evaluation but overall spend is largely as expected for the mid-point of the programme.

Some projects are struggling to cover the costs of participating in programme activities (e.g. SLI events). This is largely because many project budgets submitted within initial bids did not allocate finance or capacity to these activities. Project managers reported that they were unaware this was necessary at the time of bid writing. This has been partly resolved by providing a central fund but requires careful monitoring.

The Policy and Youth Functions have been identified as areas potentially requiring additional resource to work more effectively.

Portfolio management

Project managers think the programme is well managed by the team at TWT. Direct communication and flexibility have been welcomed, particularly by projects and there have been no suggestions for changes.

There has been some turnover in staff and consortium members in the first three years. The delay in appointing the PCM is thought have slowed progress on policy influence. The potential for increased programme staff turnover towards the end of the programme has been identified as posing risks to its ongoing delivery.

Governance

Having young people represented on the Steering Group is considered particularly positive though it is thought they may benefit from further support to develop their skills.

The involvement of different partners was not felt to be equal, with only some paid for their participation and TWT thought to be over-represented. This has meant some members have found it difficult to justify engaging as much as they would have liked.

Suggestions for improvement include greater clarity over the roles and actions of individual members (reflecting their knowledge/expertise), greater challenge and critical analysis from members and the establishment of sub-groups to tackle specific topics.

Publicity and communications

There is some indication that projects are finding the Our Bright Future brand difficult to communicate to all participants.

There seems to be an ambition across projects and stakeholders for Our Bright Future to gain wider recognition. At present however, media attention has focused on projects as opposed to the programme which has lacked national coverage to date.

It is hoped that the evidence provided by the mid-term report will offer new opportunities to capture the interest of the media.

Monitoring and evaluation

The quality of evidence captured by projects is a concern, making it particularly difficult to report consistently about the outcomes of the portfolio. A review of evaluations carried out by projects

found that relatively few scored highly against a quality criterion[1], with reports lacking clear analysis or evidenced conclusions. This is primarily due to a lack of clear guidance and requirements in terms of evaluation from the outset. This has been problematic in terms of programme evaluation, because the standard of evidence provided by projects is not robust. It is clear at this point that reporting and evaluation processes would benefit from a review and refresh by the Evaluation Panel and programme team.

Feedback on how monitoring data is used could be more regularly shared with project managers. In addition, guidance on project evaluation should be refreshed and shared with projects alongside re-emphasis of the importance of evidence for future funding and sustainability.

Recommendations: Programme and portfolio management

The programme should continue to support project participation in programme activities (e.g. SLI) and monitor attendance, and if possible and necessary, support projects financially to be able to participate.

A review should be undertaken of current resourcing of the Youth and Policy Functions, to assess whether they require additional resource to fulfil their potential. To some extent this is likely to happen with the commissioning of a new contractor for the Youth Function. There is now a better understanding of what is required of these functions, the opportunities available, and several suggestions have been made about how to maximise their potential that could be investigated further.

The programme may wish to reflect further and take actions to improve the functioning of the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. Suggestions for improvement include greater clarity over the roles and actions of individual members (reflecting their knowledge/ expertise), greater challenge and critical analysis from members, the establishment of sub-groups to tackle specific topics and greater evaluation expertise amongst members.

The programme should consider reimbursing all partners on equal terms for their participation on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel in order to address concerns about the effectiveness of the partnership as it currently stands.

Young people should be further supported to enable more active engagement in the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. Both panels should consult with the youth representatives to determine how this might best be achieved.

The difficulty of communicating the Our Bright Future brand (both to young people and within media) needs to be better understood and addressed. Communicating the context of the programme, in addition to projects, has evidently been difficult in many circumstances (e.g. when speaking to participants and local media).

- If there is a desire for young people to feel part of a wider programme and movement then there is a need to provide greater opportunities for all young people (not just Youth Forum members) to engage with resources or other participants at a level beyond their own projects. This is particularly important if participants wish to maintain an affiliation with the programme once they have surpassed the age limit of 24 or if they move away from their previous project's location. In addition, the recent wider interest from young people in the environment would suggest an appetite to engage with these issues and one another (regardless of whether they have access to an Our Bright Future project).

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[1] Evaluation criteria: Report includes an executive summary, introduction, methodology (sampling, tools used, research questions), findings (clearly presented, supported by data, graphs and/or quotes), discussion (how outcomes are being achieved, what they mean for delivery), conclusions (key findings, lessons learned, how this will inform delivery), recommendations and appendices.

- Equally, if it is hoped that the programme will maintain a presence and sustain relationships beyond the life of the programme, then it will be important to consider what its legacy could be beyond 2021. As more projects are nearing completion, there is also a need to consider how to engage with the organisations involved in completed projects. The benefits of, and appetite for an alumni network and corresponding opportunities could be considered. This might support ongoing relationships and the sharing of ideas and lessons learnt.

It is hoped that the mid-term report will provide an opportunity to gain wider media coverage, and therefore effective dissemination of evidence is crucial at this point in the programme.

A comprehensive review of monitoring and reporting is recommended following the publication of the mid-term report and feedback on how monitoring is used could be more regularly shared with project managers. As part of this review, the programme should consider how the approach to project evaluation could be improved. This will not only be of benefit to the programme but also for projects seeking future funding.

The Evaluation Panel should consider options, and reflect upon the current gaps in evidence on programme outcomes in Part 2 of the report to make positive changes and maximise the potential to collect meaningful and impactful evidence.

PROJECT PORTFOLIO AND DELIVERY LESSONS

- Our Bright Future projects provide good coverage across the UK and are extremely varied in focus. Formal and informal training is however a core theme across the programme reflecting the original rationale for the programme.

- The flexibility of the funding is particularly valued by the project managers, enabling them to change their approach in response to emerging challenges.

- Whilst a clear and recognised strategic ambition, the desire to scale up and replicate previous or existing activity may lessen the ability to create a coherent programme movement with shared ambitions.

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4.   PROJECT PORTFOLIO

4.1   This chapter presents an overview of the 31 projects that make up the Our Bright Future portfolio. The analysis considers the characteristics of the projects, progress to date and what would have happened in the absence of Our Bright Future funding. Evidence is primarily drawn from quarterly reports submitted by projects, and interviews with project managers and the programme team during autumn 2017 and 2018. The data tables associated with the discussion within this section can be found in the appendices.

Portfolio characteristics, activities and spend

Scale up, adapt and replicate

4.2   It was a strategic ambition of the Fund for Our Bright Future to scale up and replicate existing projects based on proven delivery. Yet the rationale and expected benefits of this approach were not well articulated. It is therefore a little difficult to assess whether the benefits of this approach have been evidenced in practice. Table 4.1 categorises the project portfolio by the way in which they have broadened their scope. There are strong indications that projects have successfully scaled-up or broadened their reach at this stage. The majority have scaled up pilot projects (i.e. have simply engaged more of the same participants, and in the same way as a previous pilot project) and around a third have been able extend an existing project to cover new age ranges or audiences. Around a quarter of projects have extended an existing project into new geographical areas.

Table 4.1 Scale up, adapt or replicate		
Category	**Type**	**Projects**
Expansion on previous work	Scale up (engage more of the same from a pilot project)	13
	Engage new age range/audience	9
	Cover new topics	2
	Expand geographical areas	7

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

4.3   Although projects seem to have followed the ambitions of the programme, it is not clear if this has been beneficial in any way to project delivery, and what the programme has achieved. Furthermore, the level of added value or additionality that the Our Bright Future funding is bringing to already established large-scale projects or programmes can be less clear. For example, regional managers, volunteers and young people involved in a national project (that, via programme funds increased its focus on younger people) were completely unaware of Our Bright Future and the wider context of the programme. This may, understandably be due to partnership delivery models and multiple organisational priorities. It is unfortunate and a clear risk that the Our Bright Future brand, and programme aim to create a movement of young people, may be lost in this scenario.

4.4   Overall, although projects have scaled-up previous activities there is a need for further understanding about what benefits this has achieved in practice. An assessment of progress against scale-up model might be useful at this stage, particularly if this is something that the Fund wishes to replicate in other funding programmes.

Geography

4.5   Some projects work within particular geographies such as a city or county, whilst others work nationally and engage young people with a shared characteristic (e.g. visually impaired young people, university students etc.) or interest (e.g. entrepreneurship, political/environmental campaigning etc.). Further information on each project can be found on the Our Bright Future Website.

4.6   While there is a high concentration of Our Bright Future projects operating in London (five projects), only two are based exclusively in London (the other three also deliver in multiple locations elsewhere across the UK). In contrast, Bath, Somerset and Gloucester are supported by only one Our Bright Future project but the targeted engagement in this project is high as it is concentrated solely in that area.

4.7   Overall, of the 31 projects:

- 4 projects are UK-wide;
- 4 are England-wide;
- 15 are operating within England, working locally, regionally or in multiple locations;
- 2 operate in localities across England and Wales;
- 6 projects work only within Wales (2), Northern Ireland (2) and Scotland (2).

4.8   With a core objective of the Our Bright Future funding being to scale up or replicate existing provision, six projects enabled projects or organisations to expand into new geographical areas.

Duration

4.9   All but one project began between January and April 2016, with the final starting in October 2016 (see Appendix 4.1). The majority (26) are expected to complete by December 2020 with the remaining five completing by mid-2021. Five projects have a shorter duration, completing by mid-2019. These five projects have similar total grant to those operating for up to 5 years, thus there is no relationship between length of project and total project grant. The highest grant per month is £30,296 and the lowest £11,884.

Activity types

4.10   Activities within the project portfolio are varied, reflecting the open call for project applications. Figure 4.1 presents a breakdown of project by type using different categories such as ways of working with young people, and if and how projects interact with school provision. A full list of project categorisation can be found in Appendix 4.4.

Figure 4.1: Number of projects by category
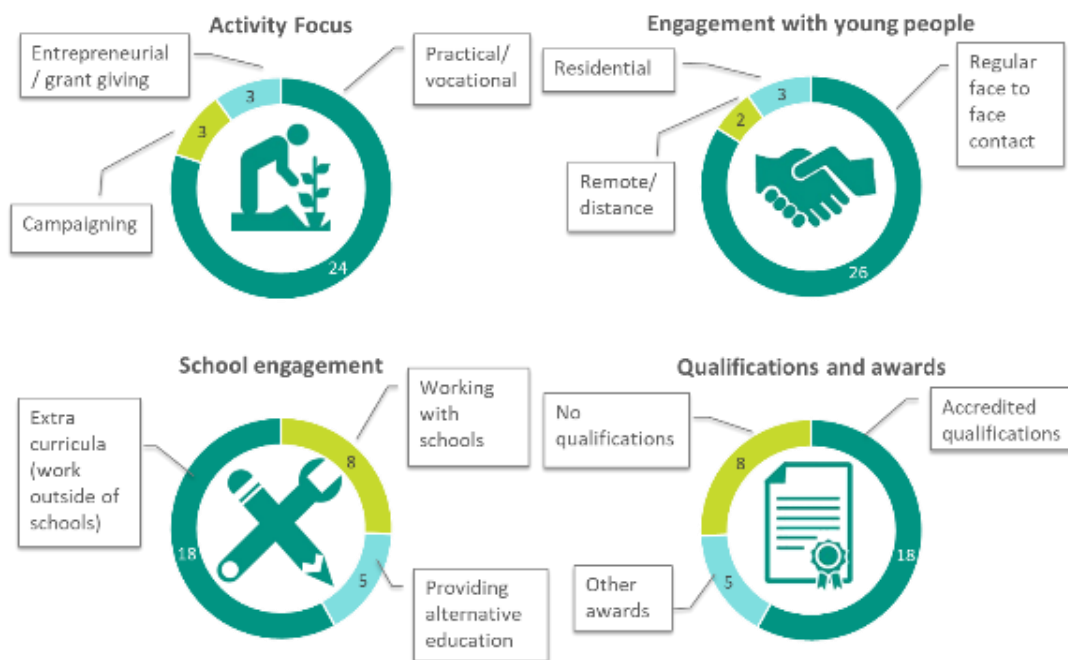
Source: Project manager interviews and annual reports, 2018 (base= 31 except activity focus where one project was classed as 'other'

4.11   Figure 4.1 highlights the emphasis on practical and vocational training. This directly aligns with the original rationale for the programme, particularly the emphasis on the Green Economy.

4.12   Reflecting on project types also highlights the large number of projects offering qualifications to participants. 'Other awards' included Your Shore Beach Rangers' Academy Award (developed and awarded by the project itself) and the John Muir Award. Notably, 11 projects are offering the John Muir Award which represents over half of projects categorised as focusing on physical environmental improvements (e.g. conservation). A project manager explained:

> *"This [the John Muir Award] is a very logical way of framing it. The award also gives participants a form of accreditation and the motivation to attend: it is explained to them that that they have to attend all the field work dates. It also excites young people. […] We had heard about the John Muir award before but hadn't had opportunity to explore the approach until we got Our Bright Future funding. It fits very well with the project and has contributed way more than had been anticipated." Project manager interview, 2017*

Delivery organisations

4.13   A core ambition of the programme is to bring together the youth and environmental sectors. The core objectives of the organisations who were successful in achieving funding are listed in Table 4.2. 'Other' organisation types include those within the arts and heritage sector as well as national charities working with vulnerable adults and young people.

Table 4.2 Delivery organisation: core business/objectives		
Organisation type / sector		Number of projects
Environment	Practical conservation	10
	Sustainable futures[28]	6
Youth		6
Other		9
		31

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

4.14   There are more than double the number of delivery organisations whose core business is within the environmental sector than those within the youth sector taking part in the programme. Those grouped under the environmental sector include both those working on practical conservation projects and those taking a longer-term action towards environmental sustainability. The dominant representation of the environment sector has perhaps contributed to the widespread ongoing discussions across the portfolio about how to engage young people and manage challenging behaviour.

Environmental objectives

4.15   Our Bright Future has adopted a wide-ranging definition of the 'environment' and therefore the projects in the portfolio cover a variety of environmental activity. Table 4.3 shows a breakdown of the number of projects focusing either entirely or to some extent on different subject areas. Some projects are focusing on multiple subjects. It is clear that physical environmental improvement (the majority being practical conservation activities) accounts for the focus of the majority of projects, but there are also other areas of interest which demonstrate the breadth of projects. These include sustainability, behaviour change, influencing or campaigning, sustainable enterprises and other more specific subjects.

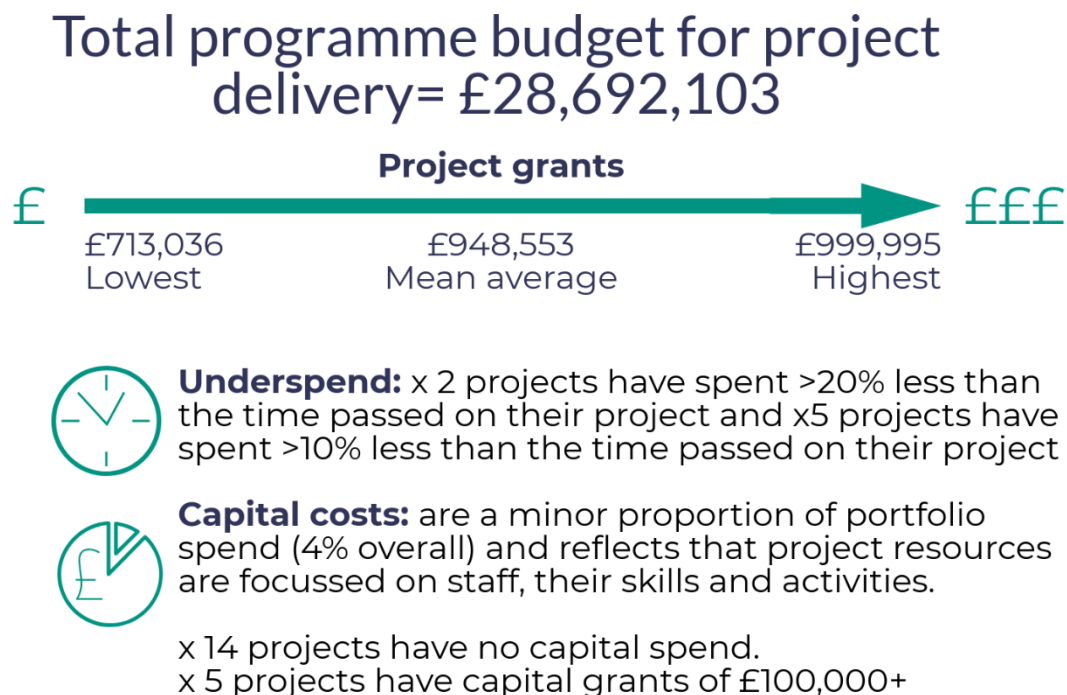[28] E.g. sustainable construction, resource efficiency (food, energy)

Table 4.3: Subject areas of projects	
Subject area	Number of projects
Physical environmental improvement (e.g. conservation)	20
Sustainability (e.g. resource efficiency) and behaviour change (e.g. recycling, travel behaviour)	5
Influencing policy or campaigning	5
Food (e.g. sustainable production and food waste)	4
Sustainable enterprises (e.g. social enterprises)	5
Other (including environmental arts, sustainable construction, technological innovation)	3

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Project spend to date

4.16   The total programme budget allocated to project delivery was fairly evenly split between projects with 25 projects awarded over £900,000. Further details of the distribution of funding across the portfolio and expenditure to date are provided in Appendix 4.2. When comparing the proportion of the project completed (as projects are of different durations) to the proportion of the grant paid, it is apparent that there is some project underspend. Further detail is provided in Figure 4.2. This should continue to be monitored as the programme progresses.

Figure 4.2 Project budgets

Total programme budget for project delivery= £28,692,103

Project grants

£ —————————————→ £££

£713,036 Lowest   £948,553 Mean average   £999,995 Highest

Underspend: x 2 projects have spent >20% less than the time passed on their project and x5 projects have spent >10% less than the time passed on their project

Capital costs: are a minor proportion of portfolio spend (4% overall) and reflects that project resources are focussed on staff, their skills and activities.

x 14 projects have no capital spend.
x 5 projects have capital grants of £100,000+

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

4.17   The capital and revenue split across the whole project portfolio is presented in Appendix 4.5. Year 1 included a higher than planned spend on capital, this reflects the need to claim in advance, however capital spend was slower than anticipated. Total actual spend in years 2 and 3 was lower than anticipated and so has been re-allocated to years 4 and 5. Whilst a relatively small proportion of spend, there may be further lessons to learn from the use of capital budgets. For example, how to secure the legacy of capital spend beyond the programme end date.

4.18   Project managers welcomed the flexibility in budget management from the programme team. This included being able to transfer funds between budget lines in order to respond to project delivery challenges or unforeseen costs. For example, one project re-allocated budget to cover bus fares and meals for young people by setting up a 'learner hardship fund' and another invested more funding in running outdoor activities which are proving a valuable engagement method.

Match-funding

4.19   As part of their quarterly reporting, projects reported on match funding secured as a result of and/or to support activities delivered as part of Our Bright Future. There have been a number of problems with the collection of these data, including some projects reporting monthly or annual figures where cumulative data was requested. There have also been different measures of the financial value of volunteering and in-kind contributions reported, and incomplete or unclear data provided by other projects. As such these data have indicative value only and must be viewed with caution as they are not considered to be an accurate record of funding leveraged by projects.

4.20   By 2018, 23 projects had provided some form of data on match funding (see appendix 4.3), contributing towards total match funding equivalent to more than £1.2 million leveraged by Our Bright Future projects. This includes an estimate of approximately £750,000 of cash contributions and over £500,000 contributions in-kind, including for example volunteering time, provision of venues, equipment, and staff time. In kind contributions have been reported as financial figures, and most projects have calculated these values based on e.g. a financial value per day of volunteering given, or the cost of venue hire, had it not been provided in kind. Based on these data the amount of leveraged funding and support reported by individual projects varies from a little over £1,000 to more than £200,000 cumulatively to December 2018.

4.21   These figures may underestimate total funding leveraged as they do not represent data from all projects (23 out of 31), and it is not clear if those not reporting have not secured any additional funding or in-kind support, or if they have omitted to report it.

4.22   It is worth noting from analysis of the match funding reported that project volunteers[1] appear to be an extremely valuable asset to Our Bright Future portfolio projects' resources. This added value is multi-faceted as it has enhanced the quality of delivery (e.g. via higher adult to young person ratios), and at times has also strengthened engagement with communities. It may be valuable for the programme to explore how this value is captured, both quantitatively and descriptively, and celebrated at a programme level.

The counterfactual (What might have happened in the absence of Our Bright Future?)

4.23   In order to understand the added value of the projects within the portfolio it is important to examine what would have happened in the absence of Our Bright Future funding. Applicants to the programme which were unsuccessful in receiving funding were approached to act as a 'proxy control group'. Each was asked if their project idea had progressed in the absence of Our Bright Future Funding. In all, 22 unsuccessful applicants were interviewed covering 23 unsuccessful projects. More than half of interviewees reported that their projects had been unable to progress, having been unsuccessful in their applications to Our Bright Future. Only one unsuccessful applicant had been able to continue with their project as planned and this was as a result of government support. Other applicants reported: taking their projects forward on a smaller scale; narrowing geographical reach; adding to existing projects; or acquiring smaller scale funding. A couple of interviewees suggested that they were applying for alternative funding opportunities, locally or from other programmes supported by the Fund.

4.24   Since their applications, 19 of the interviewees reported that they had not been involved with the programme and had not received any engagement, newsletters or event invitations. Three unsuccessful applicants had been involved in the programme as a result of partnerships with other

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[1] Specifically here we are considering volunteers who support project delivery as distinct from volunteering opportunities made available to young people via the projects in the Our Bright Future portfolio.

projects or events. It was suggested that some collaborative working or engagement with unsuccessful applicants might have been beneficial to the programme.

4.25 Unsuccessful applicants specifically suggested that more funding with a youth and environment focus is needed. They raised the importance of opportunities for young people to: become empowered and champion environmental issues; contribute to their local communities; take part in intergenerational activities; and gain skills and work experience in the environment and conservation sectors.

4.26 Project managers of *successful* projects were also asked to consider what might have happened, had they not been successful in the Our Bright Future funding application. They broadly reported that their projects probably would have continued, albeit at a smaller scale or with less focus on engaging and supporting young people. For some projects, the partnerships facilitated by Our Bright Future have been instrumental in broadening the reach and impact of their projects. Some project managers suggested they would have sought funding elsewhere but there was acknowledgement that there is a lack of funding sources for youth and environmental projects.

Conclusions: The portfolio

Portfolio profile

Our Bright Future projects provide good coverage across the UK.

The project portfolio is extremely varied reflecting the open call for project applications. Formal and informal training is however a core theme across the programme reflecting the original rationale for the programme.

Projects undertaking practical environmental improvements make up a majority of the portfolio (20 in total). This is balanced by a smaller proportion of projects tackling longer term environmental challenges such as resource efficiency, sustainability or policy campaigning.

Just over a third of projects (11) in the portfolio are offering the John Muir Award, which represents over half of the 20 projects categorised as focusing on physical environmental improvements (e.g. conservation).

The desire to scale up and replicate previous or existing activity was a strategic ambition, and yet although projects appear to have pursued this, there is no clear understanding of how this has benefitted the programme.

Project spend and funding

Project managers welcomed the flexibility of budget management allowed by the programme team, which has allowed them to adapt in light of emerging delivery challenges.

At 4% for the overall portfolio, capital is a minor proportion of planned and actual spend. This reflects that project resources are very much focused on staff, their skills and the activities they deliver.

Match-funding was not a requirement of the funding, and yet several projects have provided data which indicates that this totals an estimated £1.2m to date. This includes approximately £750,000 cash contribution and around £500,000 in-kind contributions (e.g. volunteer time). There is a lack of consistency in how this data is reported at present, e.g. not all projects are consistently reporting volunteer time.

> **Counterfactual**
>
> When asked to reflect on what would have happened in the absence of Our Bright Future funding, both successful and unsuccessful project applicants believe activities would not have gone ahead at the scale and scope planned (if at all). This provides an indication of the added value of the funding.

> **Recommendations: The portfolio**
>
> The prevalent use of the John Muir Award across the portfolio could offer opportunities for further research, potential partnership or networking. It may be valuable to explore formal collaboration opportunities with the John Muir Trust. In addition, the qualifications gained could provide a proxy for the amount of time participants have spent engaging with the natural environment. This could be scaled up to a programme level across the multiple projects offering the award. Another suggestion has been to facilitate some kind of network for those completing the John Muir Awards, potentially as an online forum/community.
>
> An assessment of progress against the scale-up model employed by projects might be useful at this stage, to fully understand what the benefits of this strategic approach have been in practice and if some approaches have been more successful than others.
>
> Whilst a relatively small proportion of spend has been devoted to capital costs, there may be further lessons to learn from use of capital budgets. For example, how capital spend relates to programme outcomes, or how to secure the legacy of capital spend beyond the programme end date.

Project processes and delivery lessons

4.27 This section presents the lessons emerging from project delivery including: skills; staffing; project management and governance; and marketing, engagement, and recruitment of young people to project activity. These issues have been logged by project managers on quarterly reports and shared with the programme team, Steering Group and Evaluation Panel on a regular basis. This has enabled the programme, and particularly the SLI Function to respond to immediate concerns, gaps in knowledge/skills or persistent and widespread challenges as they emerge. The following section has looked broadly across the quarterly and annual reports and analysed annual project manager interviews to summarise the key issues at the mid-term stage.

Project team skills and capacity

4.28 Project managers reported that an appropriately skilled team is crucial for effective, high quality and professional delivery. Project skills and capacity were mentioned consistently as challenges across all quarterly reports between Q1 2017/18 and Q4 2018/19, most often in connection to the skills and extra resources needed to support young people with challenging behaviour and/or additional support needs. The necessity to support individuals with additional needs was noted at the outset, with acknowledgment of the mental health needs of young people increasing in prevalence as the programme has evolved.

4.29 Solutions to project team skill and capacity deficits enacted by projects have included: staff training and development; sharing approaches between projects; seeking alternatives to contracted staff (e.g. sessional workers, external trainers, volunteers etc.); increased project manager support; and improved planning processes.

4.30 Encouragingly, project managers report that Our Bright Future funding has been instrumental in supporting delivery organisations to upskill staff. Skills development has reflected the programme outcomes and brought together the youth work and environmental sectors. At a programme-level,

the SLI workshops, webinars and informal inter-project support have enabled organisations to develop specialist skills related to youth work (e.g. non-confrontational behaviour management). Some organisations are working in this area for the first time and this expertise is, in turn, influencing organisational policy and practice relating to young people.

4.31   Project managers also noted that as well as new skills, they have sought to develop more positive attitudes towards young people. Furthermore, these new attitudes and approaches have improved the engagement of young people and wider communities, most specifically working towards challenging the "*society norm of negative views of young people*" (Quarterly Report, 2017).

4.32   The types of new skills that have been developed within project teams reflect the overarching core aims of the organisations within the portfolio, bringing together the youth and environmental sectors.

> *"[We] draw on expertise from both sides i.e. highlighting principles of what we'd expect in youth work to non-youth workers, and vice versa highlighted environmental elements to those with youth work background. This training package will be a substantial resource in the long-term." Project manager interview, 2017*

4.33   One organisation described successfully addressing a new need to train team members and volunteers to work with young people with mental health issues. The skills developed and associated resources within lead organisations are envisaged to be a longer-term legacy of Our Bright Future. Further, project managers also reported the need to ensure project staff are appropriately supported to safeguard their own mental health when working with challenging young people.

> *"Increased referrals from mental health teams and the challenges this brings have led us to accessing local counselling services to ensure that staff are supported, and a 2.5-day intensive mental health course to be available to both the team and volunteers" Quarterly Report, 2018*

4.34   Sharing of skills between projects has been recognised as an added value of the programme portfolio approach. This has been most notable with projects sharing ways to engage, retain and work with young people, particularly hard to reach groups.

> *"We've definitely benefitted from the expertise of other projects, and particularly those who have more experience of working with harder to reach young people or those who are less naturally inclined to want to be involved in projects such as ours". Project manager interview, 2018*

Staff recruitment and turnover

4.35   Staff turnover has been a constant challenge for projects, and has been logged consistently since the introduction of the quarterly reports, both due to individuals changing roles, as well as turnover. The challenge of staff attrition was reported by almost half of projects in Q1 and Q2 2017/18 when quarterly reporting began. Whilst this appears to have stabilised a little (dropping to a 5th of projects and then to five projects in Q3 2017/18 and Q3 2017/18, respectively). Where turnover does happen, this continues to be impactful.

4.36   The time and resource costs associated with recruitment and induction, as well as managing risks such as a loss of knowledge and relationships is a key delivery challenge. Staff turnover may affect outcomes for young people in particular, as project managers report that relationship-building has been instrumental in retention and outcomes for young people in a number of cases, particularly for individuals with additional or complex needs.

> *"Although managed well [name]'s departure resulted in a reduction in activity and relationship building with other organisations during the transition period." Quarterly Report 2017*

*"Staff changes and associated recruitment have significantly impacted on
capacity this quarter" Quarterly Report, 2018*

4.37 The programme responded to these reported issues in April 2019 by producing a guide on promoting effective handovers (*Useful Information for the Induction of New Project Staff*) and a separate *Staff Induction Document*.

Project management and governance

4.38 Within the quarterly reports, issues associated with establishing project steering groups to meaningfully review progress and advise on delivery and strategy were raised. The key challenge has been securing resource, both from young people and partners to commit to attending these groups.

*"It was originally envisioned that a Project Steering Group would help to review
the progress being made by the project, advise on new developments, identify
areas of concern and organise the annual project-wide celebratory event. In
reality this has been very difficult to establish, the main reason being that it's
proved difficult to encourage buy-in from other organisations who don't actually
have a vested interest in the success of the project and are expected to contribute
to the Steering Group voluntarily in their own time". Annual Report, 2017*

4.39 However, when working well, advisory groups have demonstrated significant value. One project manager, for example, described how representatives from the wider Further Education (FE) sector provided valuable feedback and guidance on practical operational issues. Projects such as Green Futures and Grassroots Challenge have also successfully engaged young people in project steering groups.

4.40 In the first few quarters in which quarterly reporting was implemented, challenges in this regard included capacity to undertake management and government tasks, as well as the aforementioned difficulties engaging people in an advisory capacity. From Q4 2017/18 onwards this settled somewhat, and projects have reported these functions to have been working well.

Engaging external partners

4.41 A prolonged period of budget constraints across the youth, community and environmental sectors has made engaging external partners challenging. Many potential partner organisations with similar objectives are reportedly wary of getting involved. This is thought to be attributed to viewing partnership work as a distraction from their own core business, even if an interest and shared values are there. In terms of impact on delivery, projects noted that this has resulted in e.g. lower than expected number of referrals and fewer sites coming forward for environmental improvement projects.

4.42 Project managers note that pre-existing partnerships have been very beneficial when establishing new activities, more so than any new engagement or marketing strategies adopted. It is noted that selecting appropriate partners is key. It is important to work with partners that young people will trust and respect, such as those with a professional track record. Youth groups/organisations can help target disadvantaged groups for example. It was also noted by project managers that the success of engaging with partners can often come down to intangible factors such as an individual's enthusiasm or motivation and organisational culture.

4.43 Project managers report benefits and challenges of engaging with schools. For example, engaging young people through schools does secure a greater continuity of engagement with a cohort of participants. However, engaging young people through schools can mean that wider community is less engaged, which can be crucial to project aims. For some, creating some distance between themselves and formal education can enhance engagement if participants have had a negative experience at school.

Engagement of young people

4.44   Challenges spanning marketing, recruitment, and retention (engagement) of young people have been cited in reporting, spanning every quarter where data has been collected. There are some consistent, common factors cited as barriers including the timing of activities, such as lower attendance in summer holidays and in adverse weather.

4.45   It is clear that projects have worked hard to refine their approach to recruitment over the course of the programme to date. In early quarterly reports (Q1 and Q2 2017/18), a common theme was a lack of coherent marketing or engagement strategy, and a lack of knowledge about 'what works' in attracting, engaging and retaining young people within project activity. Since then, projects have made consistent efforts to develop and substantiate this area of knowledge, and have demonstrated resourcefulness and flexibility in dealing with such challenges and developing best practice.

4.46   A number of projects have been active in sharing and developing approaches alongside other members of the portfolio. As one example of progress being made, in recent quarters multiple projects reported having upped their engagement in summer holiday activities- in one case through teaming up with other portfolio projects to cross-refer.

Project support needs

4.47   Project support needs have been mixed across the duration of the project so far, albeit with common themes and factors. Sometimes, this has directly reflected the project development stage, such as early challenges in 'scaling up' activity. On the other hand, there are some consistent support requests such as support with monitoring and evaluation, and an enthusiasm to share learning with other projects.

4.48   From Q4 2017, within quarterly reports projects have broadly seemed satisfied that support requests were being met by the programme team, as well as having useful results and generating solutions.

Conclusions: Project processes and delivery lessons

Project staff skills and capacity were mentioned consistently as challenges, most often in connection to the skills and extra resources needed to support young people with challenging behaviour and/or additional support needs. Encouragingly though, project managers report that Our Bright Future funding has been instrumental in supporting delivery organisations to upskill staff, particularly via SLI activities. Fewer problems have recently been reported, indicating that there is now a group of skilled professionals, able to support youth focused environmental activities.

Staff turnover has been logged as a consistent delivery issue since the beginning of the programme. The importance of specialist skills makes high staff turnover a concern.

The key challenge in terms of partnership working at a project level (e.g. partners involved in project governance) has been securing resource, both from young people and partners to commit to attending these groups. Yet where partners have been able to engage meaningfully in this way, there have been some positive outcomes.

It is clear that project staff have worked hard to refine their approach to recruitment of young people over the course of the programme to date. They have made consistent efforts to develop and substantiate this area of knowledge, and have demonstrated resourcefulness and flexibility in dealing with such challenges and developing best practice which has been shared effectively between Our Bright Future projects.

Positively, recent quarterly reports suggest that projects are broadly satisfied that support requests were being met by the programme team.

Recommendations: Project processes and delivery lessons

Thanks to the programme, there now appears to be a network of professionals skilled in combining youth focused environmental activities. Consideration should be given as to whether efforts should be made to maintain or capitalise on this network and how organisations might be encouraged to retain this skillset post-project. It is important that the skills developed through the programme are not lost after the completion of projects. In other words, how can the capacity of environmental organisations to engage young people be maintained and vice versa?

The programme's network and SLI support has contributed to the upskilling of project staff. In addition to skills, a wealth of resources and information on good practice has been developed (including learning around recruitment). An option might therefore be to continue to provide resources and deliver SLI as a product in its own right beyond the programme's completion. This could be useful not only for members of the portfolio but also for organisations external to the programme within the environment and youth sectors. Before any future for SLI is considered, it would be useful to investigate whether project staff have received any other form or common sources of training or been accredited for the combined skillset they have gained through their project.

The programme should continue its successful response to project calls for support. The feedback mechanisms employed (i.e. quarterly reporting and the openness/availability of the programme team) appear to be working well.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- The programme has directly engaged 85,788 young people, already far exceeding its overall target of 60,000 young people participating in Our Bright Future activities.

- Targets have been surpassed significantly for short and medium-term engagement, but it also seems likely at this stage that the target for long-term engagement will be achieved by the end of the programme if similar progress continues.

- Considerations should be given at a programme level about how reporting socio-demographic data can be improved not only in terms of demonstrating the reach of the programme but to benefit projects seeking future funding.

@Brendan Casin (Groundwork) for Blackburne House

5. ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

5.1 This chapter presents an overview of the young people engaged in Our Bright Future project activities. It examines key participation metrics and the characteristics of those involved. Evidence is primarily drawn from quarterly and annual reports submitted by projects, and interviews with project managers and the programme team during Autumn 2017 and 2018. The data tables associated with the discussions within this section can be found in the appendices.

Engagement

Total engagement

5.2 Data collected from projects up to the end of 2018 indicates that the programme has engaged 85,788 young people, already far exceeding its overall target of 60,000 young people participating in Our Bright Future activities. The subsequent figures indicate the number of young people participating in projects to December 2018 according to their level of engagement.

- One off-Engagement (once, up to a day): 60,317
- Short-Term Engagement (more than once, up to three months): 16,485
- Long-Term Engagement (more than three months in duration): 8,986

5.3 These figures are based on projects' self-reporting of each category of engagement and using records of attendance. It can be difficult for projects to track young people and participants may transition between categories with a risk of double counting. The figures are therefore a best estimate and indicate the volume of engagement is above that anticipated at the start of the programme.

5.4 Whilst the high numbers are impressive, project managers note that it is important to engage the right people, in the right way and not just focus on engaging a high volume of young people. This is due to the level of 1:1 support some young people require to engage effectively and that, for example, confidence and skills can be better developed in smaller groups. Numbers should also be considered in the context of project and programme outcomes. For some young people progress can be slower and small changes amount to considerable achievements.

Progress against targets

5.5 At the outset, projects each had engagement targets for at least one of the three levels of engagement outlined previously (which together form the programme targets). Table 5.1 shows that the portfolio overall has surpassed its targets for one-off and short-term engagement and has achieved over half its target for long-term engagement. A small number of projects have also surpassed their targets for each level.

5.6 Targets have been surpassed significantly for short and medium-term engagement, but it also seems likely at this stage that the target for long-term engagement will be achieved by the end of the programme if similar progress continues. It would be worth the programme considering why these targets have been achieved to such an extent and whether any changes should be made to take advantage of these achievements, or focus efforts in other programme areas where targets have not been met.

Table 5.1 Progress against young people engagement targets					
Engagement level	Overall Programme Target	Number of YP engaged across the portfolio to date (% of target achieved)	Number of projects with respective target	Number of projects meeting >50% of target	Number of projects surpassing target
One-off	31154	60,317 (194%)	11	9 (82%)	5 (45%)
Short-term (<3 months)	14579	16,485 (113%)	15	11 (73%)	9 (60%)
Long-term (>3 months)	13856	8,986 (65%)	20	9 (45%)	5 (25%

Source: Quarterly reports submitted by projects

'Cost' per participant

5.7   Figure 5.1 shows there does not appear to be a correlation between the number of young people engaged by projects and the scale of the Our Bright Future funding paid to them to date. It is worth noting that these figures do not take into account any match funding.

Figure 5.1: Funding and number of participants engaged

Total paid Y1-Y3 and number of participants engaged
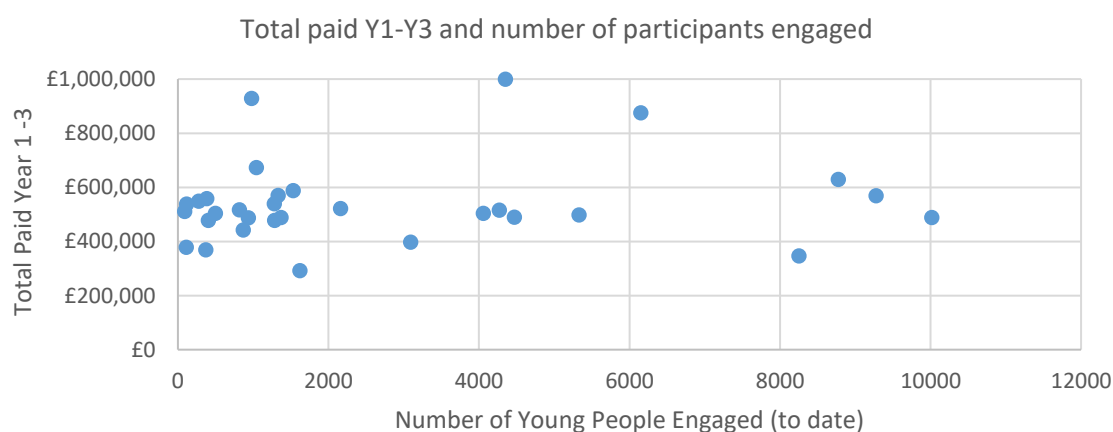
5.8   It might be expected that projects with 'hard to reach' participants and/or those with particular requirements are likely to have a higher costs per young person engaged due to the depth and quality of engagement required. This appears to be the case for Vision England which works with visually impaired young people through residentials. The project has an average cost per participant of over £3,000, compared to a portfolio average of £195 per participant. This comparison is not made to suggest variations in cost-effectiveness, merely to acknowledge necessarily higher costs of delivery per participant in some instances (e.g. because of the target group and intensity of delivery).

5.9   Table 5.2 compares the 'cost' per young person engaged to date according to the young people targeted by projects. The cost is calculated as a ratio of funding paid Y1-Y3 and young people engaged to date. Projects are categorised as either: Targeting young people with physical disabilities, special educational needs or poor mental health or, projects engaging non-specific audiences / all young people. Clearly the quality of engagement and outcomes are paramount and volume must not become a dominant driver for projects. However, this analysis was undertaken to consider the relative costs of engaging with different types of audiences. A full presentation of each project is provided in Appendix 5.8.

Table 5.2 Funding per participant engaged to date			
	Number of projects targeting specified young people	Average number of young people engaged to date	Average spend per participant
Non-specific / all young people	20	3273	£978
Targeting young people with disabilities, special educational needs or poor mental health	11	1824	£690

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

5.10   Based on an analysis of cost per participant according to projects' self-classification, those projects targeting young people with disabilities, special educational needs or poor mental health have a lower average cost per participant than those engaging all young people. Due to some projects having more than one focus, there was some difficulty in categorising projects (with a tendency of project managers to comment that they were targeting all groups). Therefore, these figures should be considered with that in mind.

5.11   There is also no obvious correlation between the scale of project engagement *targets* and whether projects specifically aimed to reach marginalised groups even though it is significantly more resource intensive to engage young people with complex needs (e.g. NEET young people). One project manager reflected that, with hindsight, they would have been less ambitious. Project delivery experiences reflect this challenge:

> *"Working with hard to reach groups of young people is always challenging, but we have been particularly focused on engaging the hardest to reach which is affecting our targeted numbers. We continue to hold to the projects concepts and work hard with referral agencies to engage these young people, but still struggle meeting the original targets." Annual Report, 2017*

5.12   Further analysis was undertaken with other classifications of projects (full results are presented in Appendix 5.9). While the averages for some categories are based on a small number of projects, the substantial differences between them provide an interesting insight. For example, projects which provided grants to participants had an average spend per participant of £3,520, compared to an average of £579 and £757 for practical/vocational and campaigning projects respectively. Those projects working with participants on an individual basis had an average cost of just over £3,000 compared to £556 for those working with groups of participants.

Target groups

5.13   In terms of age range, 14 projects are covering the entire age range of 11-24. No projects are exclusively catering for secondary school aged children (11-16). Whilst all projects target young people within the programme bracket of 11-24, it is common to split this into two or more age groups in order to target specific activities at those of a similar age (e.g. over and under 16s or 18s). One project also indicated that dividing young people for their activity was a requirement of safeguarding legislation.

5.14   Around half of all projects are specifically targeting hard to reach groups of young people. These groups include those that are, or are at risk of becoming NEET, that have mental health problems, physical disabilities, drug and alcohol misuse problems or special educational needs. It is problematic to quantify exactly which projects are targeting these groups as it has been difficult to distinguish between projects for which these groups are a specific focus and those which are including them among others. In attempting to arrive at a distinction, some project managers identified their projects differently to the programme team.

5.15 At the end of 2019, twenty-three projects (74%) provided at least some data in response to the annual report section on the characteristics of participants[29]. Of these, not all projects provided a response to every question (base numbers for each data reported). Although there may be valid reasons why projects cannot collect all demographic data, it should be priority to investigate why basic programme-wide data such as age and gender has not been submitted by all projects. This data is important to understand the make-up of participants and identify where some groups may not be engaging with the programme.

5.16 Socio-economic data is presented in Figure 5.2 (and detailed in Appendices 5.1-5.7).

Figure 5.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of project participants
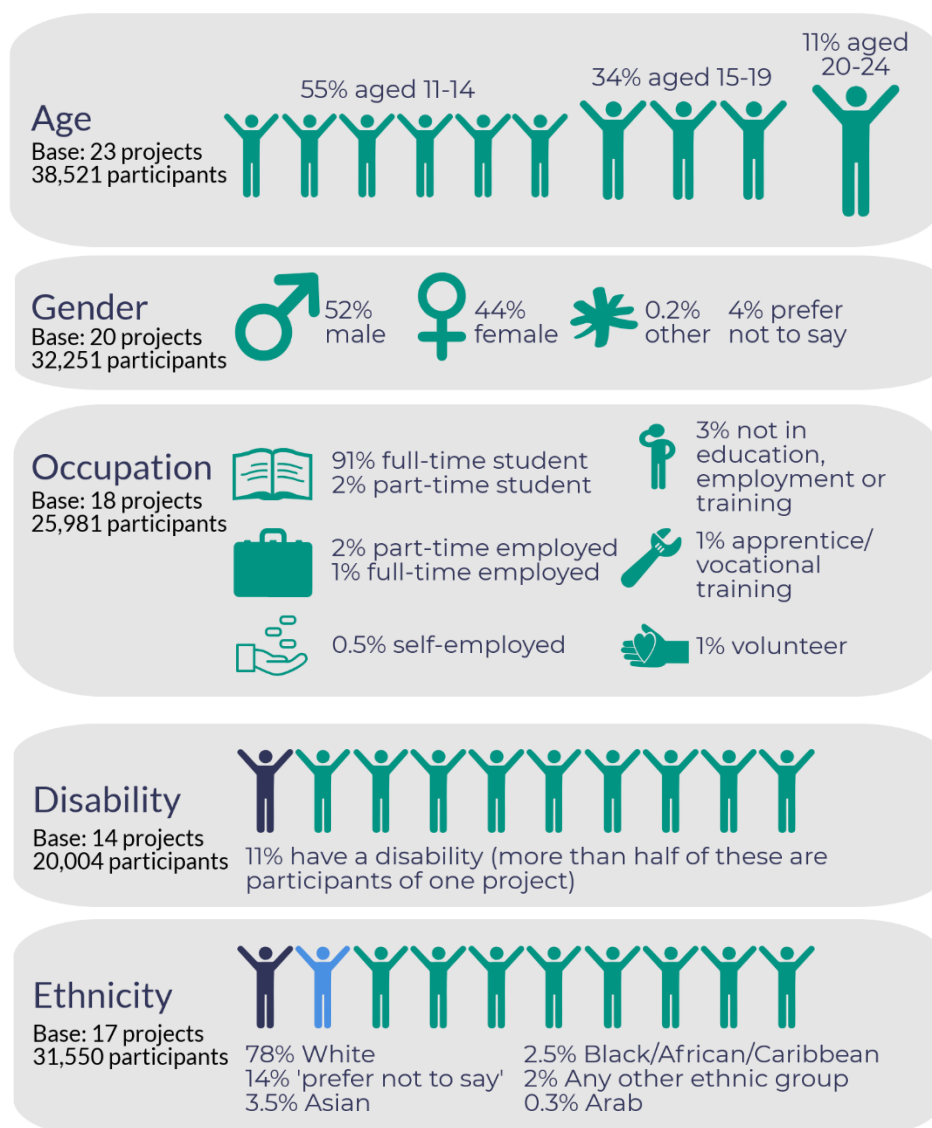
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP using Quarterly Report data

5.17 The prevalence of the youngest age group may have impacted on the level of achievement of certain Our Bright Future outcomes. Specifically, this is likely to have contributed to the high proportion of participants who are full-time students who will therefore not contribute to the number of participants progressing into education, training or employment as a result of the programme. This

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[29] Characteristics includes age, gender, occupation, ethnic background, disability, religion, sexuality, deprivation, referral pathway.

finding also reflects the feedback given by projects stating that older young people are proving harder to engage.

5.18   Whilst the gender split is relatively even, this should be monitored to ensure the female ratio does not decline. One project highlighted that it is carefully ensuring their marketing materials appeal equally to a female and male audiences.

5.19   Some projects have provided data on the engagement of hard to reach young people. The picture is not a full one, but gives some indication of the reach of the programme.

5.20   In total, 19 projects reported on the occupation of their participants, recording 678 participants as NEET. This is equivalent to 4.8% of participants aged 16-24 for which occupation was recorded (base= 14,017)[30]. This compares to a national figure of 11% of young people aged 16-24 in the UK who are NEET[31]. Give that the percentages are not reflective of the national average, this could be a target group for the second half of the programme. 78% of participants identified as white, this compares to 86% across England and Wales [base: 17 projects].

5.21   Projects specifically targeting disadvantaged young people were asked to provide postcode data for participants to provide proxy data for disadvantaged areas. A cumulative total of 6,477 participants have been reported as residing within the 20% most deprived areas (this represents 44% of the of the 17,205 participants for whom postcode data was collected and reported by projects). These young people have engaged via 10 projects [base: 11 projects[32]]. Projects noted difficulties with this metric as they do not always capture participants' postcodes.

6,477 participants

reside within the 20% most deprived areas. This is equivalent to 44% of those participants for whom postcode data was collected and reported by projects.

5.22   Postcodes are used as one proxy for disadvantaged areas, however, young people who fall under other categories of disadvantage have been engaged. For example, one project has involved 68 young carers and 31 refugee and asylum seekers. Additionally, projects such as Putting Down Roots for Young People report being unable to collect postcode data but this is, in part, due to many of their participants experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation.

5.23   The data provided by projects on referrals identifies a cumulative total of 4,877 young people being referred to Our Bright Future projects from other organisations [base: 15 projects]. This is likely to be under reported as projects noted the engagement route is not always recorded. Referral organisations have included: Social Services, PCSOs, Mental Health Charities, Schools, NHS, DWP, Job Centre and other charitable organisations. Some projects identified that they do not tend to use a linear referral model, but work dynamically in partnership with organisations to identify the most appropriate individuals.

5.24   In general, the lack of coverage of socio-demographic data is a problem when trying to draw reliable conclusions about the reach of the programme. For those who have collected this data, there are indications that the programme is engaging with a diverse range of young people, and some who can be considered disadvantaged.

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[30]In order to compare the proportion of NEETS to national figures, the 678 participants recorded as NEET must be considered a subset of only those participants aged recorded as 16-24 as only individuals within this age category may be defined as NEET.

[31] ONS (2017) Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: August 2017. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet/august2017 Accessed 07-02-2018

[32] One project did not report any participants residing in an area within the 20% most deprived areas.

5.25   Project managers shared methods that have proven most effective at getting young people involved in project activities. Some good practice lessons shared by project managers and delivery staff include:

- Contacts: having an effective partnership with a youth worker or organisation can support the brokering of initial relationships and trust. This can also be true of alumni advocating to colleagues and friends.

- Advertising: should be well planned and timed (i.e. not during exam season) and social media campaigns have been fruitful and demonstrated value for money.

- Peer to peer influences: group work can lead to stronger engagement.

- Responsibility: providing opportunities for young people to take responsibility e.g. on practical tasks, is often beneficial for their confidence.

- Flexibility and variety: factors such as location, duration, types of activity should be varied so they are effective hooks for engagement and given factors such as the weather.

5.26   There is also acknowledgement across projects and the programme team (as within the youth sector) that some young people have complex or unpredictable home lives, or are coping with issues such as anxiety. Any combination of these, including that fact that 11-24 years can be a particularly transient time in a young person's life, can make them somewhat unreliable, unable to attend regularly or may need to drop out of activities. Overall the reasons given by project managers when asked why some young people do not 'complete'[33] project activity can be summarised as:

- Academic study or apprenticeship/traineeship demands;

- Part-time employment (or transition from unemployed to employed);

- Caring/home responsibilities (or challenging/unstable home environments);

- Lack of transportation (poor connectivity and/or expensive public transport);

- Mental health challenges (specifically acute anxiety, depression); and

- Drug/alcohol dependency.

5.27   Specific groups that projects have identified as particularly hard to reach are: care leavers, female Syrian refugees, young farmers, NEETs in coastal communities and disabled young people.

5.28   Projects have sought to ensure inclusion and accessibility, for example ensuring affordability of transport. However, there is an acknowledgement from across projects and the programme team that reasons for not completing (ceasing to participate in) projects can sometimes be positive, for example gaining employment, or merely a routine aspect of working with young people who have varying commitments and are at transitional points in their lives.

5.29   Factors supporting young people experiencing challenging personal circumstances (and/or exhibiting challenging behaviour) to continue to engage have included positive relationship-building, and having a single point of contact throughout involvement. In addition, providing a clear structure within activities (as opposed to granting greater choice and autonomy over activities) has been valuable. Finding ways to introduce 'new' activities to young people, either through taster sessions, or having a support worker present has also led to success in some cases.

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[33] For some projects, participants will 'complete' their participation by attending for a certain period or a week-long residential, a school term or a full year. For other projects, there is no defined 'completion' either because participation may be on a one-off irregular basis or because young people are able to participate on an ongoing basis and therefore no individual is considered to have dropped out.

Conclusions: Engagement of young people

The programme has engaged 85,788 young people, far exceeding its overall target of 60,000 young people participating in Our Bright Future activities. It is worth noting however that the majority (70%) are one-off engagement (less than one day).

Targets have been surpassed significantly for short and medium-term engagement, but it also seems likely at this stage that the target for long-term engagement will be achieved by the end of the programme if similar progress continues. A small number of projects have also surpassed their targets for each level.

There does not appear to be a correlation between the number of young people engaged by projects and the scale of the Our Bright Future funding paid to them to date. A crude calculation of average cost per participant shows significant variation between projects, although this does not take into account the frequency and length of engagement. To some extent, projects requiring more funding per participant are those engaging more 'hard to reach' young people and/or those with particular needs, yet this is not always the case.

It is worth noting that the following are only based on partial data, and are therefore estimates:

- The programme is engaging young people at the younger end of the spectrum – the majority (55%) are aged 11-14 and likely to still be in full time education (base= 38,521). Gender split across the participants is fairly even, with only slightly more male (52%) than female (44%) participants (base=35,251).

- More than 90% of programme participants have been recorded as in full-time education (base=25,981). Almost 5% of those aged 15-24 are considered NEET (base=14,017), which is below the national level (11%). Should this be a particular area of focus, this could be a target group for the second half of the programme.

- The picture of engagement of hard to reach young people is not full, but gives an indication of reach. For example, 11% of participants have a disability (base=20,004). 44% of participants for whom postcode data was collected are residing in the 20% most deprived areas (base=17,205), yet it is unlikely that this is the picture across the portfolio given that only 11 projects report on this data.

There is an acknowledgement that reasons for engagement drop-off (participants not 'completing') are varied, and some may not be as a result of barriers to engagement, for example other commitments or transitions to employment. In general, there seems to be a good understanding at project level of issues relating to accessibility, and efforts have been made to address any barriers.

Recommendations: Engagement of young people

It would be worth the programme considering why targets for engaging young people have been achieved to such an extent and whether any changes should be made to take advantage of these achievements, or focus efforts in other programme areas where targets have not been met. Although targets demonstrate reach, they do not explain what is being achieved by engaging these young people, and this is likely to be very different for those engaging in the medium and long-term versus less than one day.

Although there may be valid reasons why projects cannot collect all demographic data, it should be a priority to investigate why basic programme-wide data such as age and gender has not been submitted by all projects. Consideration should be given at a programme level to how reporting socio-demographic data could be improved, not only to demonstrate the reach of the programme but also to benefit projects seeking future funding. Throughout the evaluation, the team has been made aware of the challenges faced by projects in collecting data, particularly for those who may only engage for less than one day (classed as 'short term engagement'). In many ways this is

understandable, yet for medium and longer-term engagement the programme could benefit from more detailed reporting and should consider whether to set minimum data requirements for these participants.

It would be useful to understand unit costs better across the portfolio to provide indicative cost ranges of different types of intervention. Of particular interest would be cost by: type of participant (age, marginalised groups, those with disabilities etc.); engagement duration and intensity (i.e. costs for short, medium and long-term engagement); activity type; and if possible, by types of outcome.

Consideration could be given to the impact the prevalence of the youngest age group may have on achieving Our Bright Future aims, for example employment.

Whilst the gender split is relatively even, this should be monitored.

PART 2: OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

The second part of this report presents the outcomes and impacts of the programme and brings together all sources of evidence collected for the evaluation. It is structured under the four programme Outcomes against which evidence is drawn together to demonstrate collective progress against respective outcomes and impacts across all projects.

Case studies of projects and individual participants are incorporated under each Outcome as examples. The results of analysis comparing different types of projects are also presented. The collective evidence base allows for conclusions to be drawn on whether the four programme Outcomes are being realised.

Our Bright Future Programme Outcomes

Outcome 1: Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change.

Outcome 2: The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities.

Outcome 3: The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy.

Outcome 4: The Our Bright Future programme utilises an effective partnership working and a youth-led approach, leading to stronger outcomes for young people and the environment.

6.   INTRODUCTION TO PART 2 (OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS)

6.1   This is Part 2 of the report on the mid-term programme evaluation of Our Bright Future. The mid-term evaluation covers the first three years of the programme from set-up in June 2016 to December 2018. For a thorough explanation of the Our Bright Future programme please see the Baseline and Context Report[34] produced in 2017. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation stage is to report on what has been achieved since the beginning of the programme and identify key lessons so far to drive improved performance.

6.2   The report has been divided into two parts for ease of reading and navigation. The expectation is that different audiences will have different interests and be able to easily find the section of most relevance. For example, some chapters within Part 1 will be of interest to readers considering funding similar programmes, particularly if they have an interest in the portfolio approach and Share Learn Improve Functions. Within Part 2, the different chapters will be of interest to those seeking evidence of the link between young people's engagement with the environment and a variety of different outcomes and impacts. Participants of the programme may also have an interest in Part 2, specifically how their peers have benefitted from engaging in the programme.

- ▪ **Part 1** explores the operational side of the programme, including its characteristics, such as the rationale, context, delivery structure and activities. Analysis goes on to critically assess whether programme and project operations are working well, identifying lessons learned.

- ▪ **Part 2** examines each of the four programme outcomes in turn, considers the future and potential legacy of the programme and concludes with key findings and recommendations.

6.3   In order that each part of the report can be read separately, details of the programme's four defined Outcomes, and the means by which these have been analysed, are subsequently repeated as an introduction to Part 2.

Programme Outcomes

6.4   The Our Bright Future programme has four programme Outcomes[35]. Projects within the portfolio are all contributing in some way to these outcomes, and it is upon these outcomes that the success of the programme as a whole will be assessed.

6.5   Each of the four outcomes chapters assesses whether combining activities for young people and environmental objectives is effective in meeting the four programme outcomes whilst identifying what has worked well and less well.

6.6   At this mid-term evaluation stage, in order to assess progress, evidence has been evaluated to test whether funded activities are on track to lead to the desired outcomes and impacts of Our Bright Future. For example, it was expected that activities would lead to positive impacts for local communities and the environment (Outcome 2). Additionally, evidence presented in the Baseline Report suggested additional benefits e.g. for participants' mental health and well-being. The evidence will provide an indication of whether or not this was found to be the case and what may have helped or hindered the achievement of these outcomes.

Sources of evidence

6.7   The sources of evidence which have contributed towards this (Part 2) of the mid-term report are provided in Table 6.1. They comprise both secondary data collection from each of the 31 project

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[34] http://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Baseline-and-Context-Report-for-publish-PUBLISHED-070918.pdf

[35] The programme originally had four outcomes which were identified during the application phase and before the final list of portfolio projects was agreed. These outcomes formed part of the formal offer agreement between TWT and the Fund. Following selection of the project portfolio and development of the programme evaluation framework it was felt that the original outcomes did not reflect the breadth of programme ambitions and activities or adequately demonstrate its successes. The current four outcomes were consequently introduced.

managers (in the form of programme monitoring reports and evaluation reports) and primary data collection (interviews).

6.8 Full details of the methodology for the evaluation can be found in Part 1, Chapter 1 (data collection methods detailed in Table 1.1).

Table 6.1: Data sources for evaluation	
Source of quote/data	**Who this includes**
Project manager interview	Manager of any one of the 31 projects within the portfolio
Project delivery team member interview	Individuals spoken to as part of the case studies who may not be the project manager
Programme team interview	The Wildlife Trusts staff: Programme Manager, Policy and Campaigns Manager (PCM), Communications Officer, SLI Coordinator
Internal programme stakeholder interview	Members of programme consortium organisations (including CEOs, Steering Group and Evaluation panel members) and members of TWT not in the central team who are involved in the programme but not at an operational level.
External stakeholder interview	Organisations and departments within the youth and environment sectors as well as the Fund and Defra who are not directly involved in the programme).
Youth representative/ Forum member interview	Youth representatives on the Evaluation Panel or the Steering Group, members of the Youth Forum
Project participant response (Outcomes Flower)	Written responses provided by young people to the Outcomes Flower survey undertaken by participants across the portfolio
Project participant (*case study project name*)	Project participants interviewed or participating in focus groups facilitated by evaluation consultants as part of case study site visits
Participant *in Quarterly Report*	Where a participant is quoted in quarterly reports or by a project manager
Quarterly Reports *Year*	Monitoring reports provided by project managers collated by the programme team and analysed by the evaluation team
Annual Reports *Year*	Monitoring reports provided by project managers collated by the programme team and analysed by the evaluation team
Case Study project	13 projects were visited on two occasions (2017 and 2018) by the evaluation team. Individuals reports were produced for these projects after each visit to detail good practice observed, outcomes and impacts.

OUTCOME 1: PARTICIPATION IN THE OUR BRIGHT FUTURE PROGRAMME HAS POSITIVE IMPACTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND CONFIDENCE TO LEAD ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

- Gaining confidence, skills, knowledge and qualifications has increased some participants' drive to succeed in school, perceived ability to influence environmental change and improved their employability.
- Across all projects this has resulted in 3,932 qualifications gained and 758 young people entering an apprenticeship, paid training, volunteering or employment.
- There are widespread reports from project managers, delivery staff, participants and the family members of participants that young people are gaining confidence through their participation in projects and this is linked with improvements in mental health and well-being.
- Improvements in confidence and well-being have been facilitated by opportunities for socialising, engagement with outdoor environments and boosting self-esteem through developing young people's skills and knowledge, encouraging them to succeed and step outside of their comfort zone.

@Belfast Hills Partnership Trust

"At home and school it can be stressful but being out here it's all calm and it takes away the stress"

Milestones participant (lower secondary school pupil)
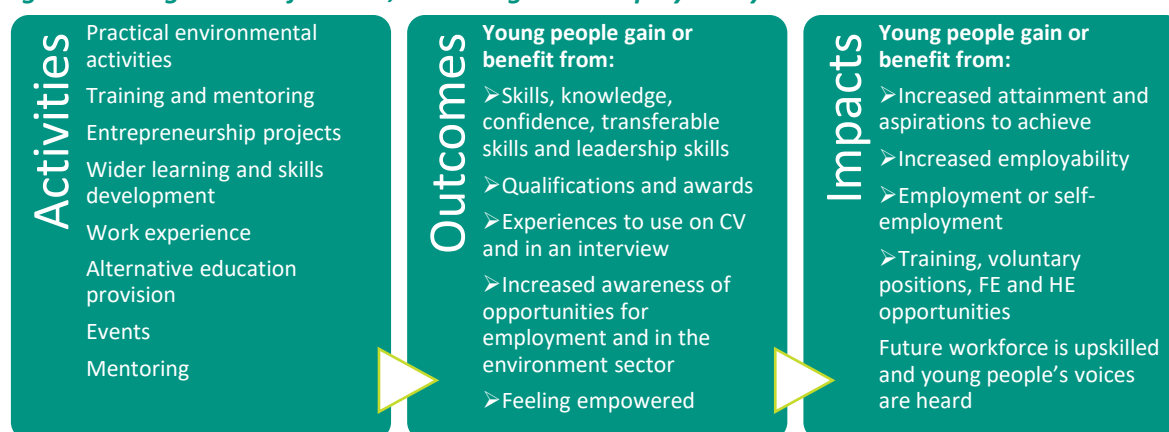
7. PROGRAMME OUTCOME 1: YOUNG PEOPLE

> Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change

7.1 This chapter presents outcomes and impacts relevant to the programme's first Outcome, namely whether participants have gained the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change. The chapter is divided into two sections:

- Skills, knowledge and employability;
- Confidence, well-being and mental health.

7.2 Well-being and mental health have been incorporated as there have been key related outcomes identified by the portfolio and programme, and evidence suggests these have resulted from gaining confidence and new skills. Examples of participants leading environmental change are excluded from these assumptions and detailed in Chapter 10.

Skills, knowledge and employability

7.3 The logic model in Figure 7.1 shows how activities undertaken by Our Bright Future projects are collectively expected to result in increases in participants' skills, enhanced educational attainment and employability. The rationale and theoretical context for this assumption is presented in the Evaluation Baseline and Context report (2017, page 20). The report cites various evidence which demonstrates a range of positive learning outcomes resulting from learning in the natural environment (LINE)[36], including higher educational attainment, improved confidence, motivation, cognitive and motor skills and improved self-esteem for young people with different learning needs[37],[38],[39],[40].

Figure 7.1: Logic model for skills, knowledge and employability

Activities
- Practical environmental activities
- Training and mentoring
- Entrepreneurship projects
- Wider learning and skills development
- Work experience
- Alternative education provision
- Events
- Mentoring

Outcomes
Young people gain or benefit from:
- Skills, knowledge, confidence, transferable skills and leadership skills
- Qualifications and awards
- Experiences to use on CV and in an interview
- Increased awareness of opportunities for employment and in the environment sector
- Feeling empowered

Impacts
Young people gain or benefit from:
- Increased attainment and aspirations to achieve
- Increased employability
- Employment or self-employment
- Training, voluntary positions, FE and HE opportunities
- Future workforce is upskilled and young people's voices are heard

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

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[36] Lovell, R. (2016) Links between natural environments and learning: evidence briefing. Natural England Access to Evidence Information Note EIN017. University of Exeter. Natural England.

[37] Esteban, A., 2012 Natural solutions Nature's role in delivering well-being and key policy goals – opportunities for the third sector. London. The new economics foundation.

[38] Fiennes, C., Oliver, E., Dickson, K., Escobar, D., Romans, A. and Oliver, S., (2015). The Existing Evidence Base about the Effectiveness of Outdoor Learning. Institute of Outdoor Learning, Blagrave Trust, UCL & Giving Evidence Report.

[39] Ohly, H., Gentry, S., Wigglesworth, R., Bethel, A., Lovell, R. and Garside, R., (2016). A systematic review of the health and well-being impacts of school gardening: synthesis of quantitative and qualitative evidence. BMC public health, 16(1), p.286

[40] Dickie, I., Ozdermioglu, E. and Phang, Z., 2011. Assessing the benefits of learning outside the classroom in natural environments. Final Report to Natural England. London. eftec

7.4   The following sections highlight the evidence gathered through the evaluation against the expected outcomes and impacts to judge to what extent these have been achieved so far across the portfolio of projects.

Improvements in skills and knowledge

7.5   Through participating in Our Bright Future projects, young people have gained a variety of sector-specific and more general skills that have supported their personal development. The programme target is for 26,190 young people to have increased their environmental skills and knowledge through the portfolio of projects. As this target was set after the monitoring forms were implemented, there is currently no indicator against which to assess this (besides qualifications gained which is detailed later in this chapter). Assessing skills and/or knowledge gained by each participant would be extremely challenging given the variety of projects and would necessarily rely on the judgement of delivery staff or self-reports from participants (of varying self-awareness). A potential future alternative might be to consider a sample of participants, for example through adding a relevant question to the Outcomes Flower survey distributed to participants.

7.6   Knowledge and skills development are nevertheless key parts of all projects. As part of annual reporting, project managers were asked which of a list of skills and knowledge participants were gaining (full results provided in Appendix 7.3). The most commonly gained knowledge areas taught across the portfolio related to habitats management and conservation (22 projects); biodiversity (21 projects) and understanding of the local environment, issues and solutions (21 projects). In terms of skills, communication and team working were reported to be gained most widely across the portfolio (reported by 28 projects each), followed by interpersonal, decision making and taking responsibility (reported by 27 each). Three areas of knowledge and skills were particularly emphasised in project reports and by participants alike. These were:

- o   knowledge of the environment (including awareness of conservation);
- o   the green economy; and
- o   wider personal development and transferable skills.

7.7   Evidence of these three areas is presented in detail over the following pages.

7.8   The case studies and wider observations by projects managers (in annual reports and interviews) suggest that increased knowledge, for example of wildlife and habitats, has been observed to lead to a greater appreciation of nature as a result.

> *"I've learnt things about the animals, the wildlife, why we should keep it clean and how we should keep it clean, how to involve people and why we should involve people to all take part to protect the wonderful wildlife we have and if we don't, we'll lose it all so we need to protect it." Project participant Case Study: Our Wild Coast*

> *"I know what equipment I need and how to use them and understand correct methods and techniques in pruning correctly" Project participant in Outcomes Flower*

7.9   Where surveys have been carried out by projects, participants have self-reported increased knowledge and skills around specific topics. For example:

- ▪   98% of participants who responded to a survey undertaken by From Farm to Fork (led by Global Feedback Ltd) reported that their knowledge of using surplus food had increased (base=20), 95% of participants reported that gleaning had increased their knowledge of food waste (base=22) and 82% said that they had gained knowledge of how food is grown/produced (base=22).
- ▪   Evaluating its work with schools, the Welcome to the Green Economy project run by Groundwork London found that prior to sessions, none of the 127 pupils surveyed understood the term Green Economy and only 4% could list five jobs within the green

economy. After the sessions this increased to 81% who could describe the green economy and 78% could name five jobs.

- Following participation in Bright Green Future (led by the Centre for Sustainable Energy), 93% of the project's first cohort reported that they had gained new skills and knowledge in low carbon project management [sample size not provided].

- My World My Home, run by Friends of the Earth (FOE) found that the proportion reporting they had 'the skills and experience needed to take on a volunteer role working on environmental issues in the future' increased from 59% at baseline (base=31) to 100% at follow-up (base=11) and the proportion reporting they had 'the skills and experience needed to get a job working on environmental issues in the future' increased from 28% at the baseline to 70% at follow-up. (However, this is problematic because, given the follow-up sample is considerably smaller, it is possible that the 11 completing the follow-up were the same individuals who said they, for example, had the skills and experience needed to take on a volunteer role at the outset).

7.10   The examples provide an indication of the varying strengths of evidence provided by project managers to demonstrate skills gained. For example, some projects have not provided details of their sample sizes while others have reported data from small sample sizes (without caveat). It is likely that this is in part due to low response rates, as some project managers commented that gaining follow-up responses from participants had been challenging. There are nevertheless some good indications that participants believe they have gained skills and knowledge.

7.11   In addition to subject-specific knowledge and practical skills related to the environment, project managers have emphasised that participants are gaining important soft and transferable skills which are supporting their personal development and independence. These transferable skills and competencies include confidence, responsibility, leadership, teamworking and communication skills. Project managers made specific reference to participants engaging with people "*from all walks of life*" and "*with differing opinions*". In addition to observations and self-reported improvements to soft skills, several project managers have reported observations from parents that their children's participation has supported their personal development through confidence building, development of social and communication skills.

> *"[Project x] is and continues to be a real lifesaver for both of us and has given S more confidence. He is also finding the team building and negotiating with different personalities a real benefit to his own social and leadership skills".*
> *Mother of participant quoted in a Quarterly Report, 2017*

7.12   The subsequent case study extract provides an example of the transferable skills gained by participants.

Case Study Extract: Welcome to the Green Economy (Groundwork London)
The project operates on three work strands; working in schools to increase youth awareness of career pathways in the green economy sector, offering vocational training for green sector jobs and providing 6-month waged placements in green sector roles, for those furthest from the labour market.

"Young people take part in ILM jobs that wouldn't exist without the funding – it is additional to the workforce…it provides improved confidence and self-belief to apply for jobs, and time-keeping, it is also about general practice such as turning up on time and being able to answer the phone – a lot of young people haven't had experience of general office etiquette before". Project manager interview

7.13   Collated evidence gathered through annual interviews and reporting indicates the activities shown in Figure 7.2 were considered by project managers to work well in supporting young people to gain skills and knowledge.

Figure 7.2 Activities which support young people to gain skills and knowledge

- Enabling participants to share the knowledge or skills e.g. through co-hosting a workshop or presenting to an audience;

- Providing young people with a real-life task or problem to solve so that they can appreciate the value of the skills or knowledge;

- Giving young people responsibility & ownership & allowing them to see a project through from beginning to end;

- Mentoring, support from staff & low ratio of staff to young people;

- Allowing young people to influence the subjects studied and skills they wish to gain;

- Involving young people in events and opportunities which allow them to learn from and develop connections with external stakeholders and organisations;

- Showcasing what previous participants have gone on to do with the knowledge and skills they have gained through respective projects.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Improved motivation to learn and relationship with education

7.14   In addition to gaining new skills and knowledge through projects themselves, there are reports from project managers, delivery and support staff that some participants' motivation to learn and behaviour has improved as a result of participation in Our Bright Future projects. This is in line with wider evidence which has found that Learning in the Natural Environment (LINE) is particularly effective for getting apathetic students excited about learning and lessening the effects of various mental health issues that can hinder student attention span in the classroom[41]. The alternative learning environment offered by projects, often in open and natural spaces was felt to better suit some young people than traditional classroom environments. As a result, they were observed to learn more effectively during their participation.

> *"The young people also benefit from space to themselves and the alternative learning environment provided which may suit some more than a traditional classroom. The very fact that they voluntarily show up when they don't for school is a success." Project manager interview 2017*

7.15   One teaching assistant present at a case study site visit commented that she had observed participants also exhibiting improved behaviour and concentration on the days they attended school. There were also a small number of other references to this sort of outcome in project quarterly and annual reporting, indicating that some participants have shown increased motivation to succeed as a result of their participation. One project manager felt that the project's empowerment of its participants had led to them "*better achieving their potential*".

> *"There is progress in terms of their behaviour – they become more focused and can work with other people" Project manager interview, 2018*

> *"it had a positive effect on their day to day school work, many doing better than expected in end of year assessments." Head of Science in a Secondary School, quoted in an Annual Report 2017*

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[41] Natural England (2012) Learning in the Natural Environment: Review of social and economic benefits and barriers, http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1321181

7.16   A teacher at a school which is partnered with one of the portfolio projects commented at a case study site visit that many of the students who participate in the project are Pupil Premium students who struggle to access mainstream education, and many have learning difficulties. They were so impressed with the project's work with Year 10 students that the school is continuing to work with the project for another academic year.

> *"The work they are doing and the experiences they are gaining have helped them in their normal lessons. They have gained extra qualifications which have developed their confidence and self-belief. They approach the schooling with more enthusiasm and positivity…The change that I have seen in my students makes this a valuable educational resource for all schools in the area." Teacher quoted in Quarterly Report, 2018*

7.17   There are strong examples which indicate that some projects delivered through Our Bright Future are improving young people's motivation to learn and relationship with education, particularly for those who do not engage well with mainstream education. Being outdoors, and being in an environment which is different from a normal classroom environment seem to be key to achieving this outcome. It may be useful for the programme to collect more robust evidence of this outcome, particularly data from educational establishments to evidence what impact this might have had on attainment. The fact that these projects appear to have reignited a more general motivation for education/learning may be of particular interest, in addition to improvements in behaviour.

Qualifications and awards achieved

7.18   Our Bright Future has a final target of enabling 4,000 young people to gain environmental qualifications or awards e.g. OCN, NVQs, John Muir and DofE Awards as well as academic qualifications. Based on the number of qualifications or awards achieved to date across the portfolio (3,932 at December 2018), the programme is set to exceed this target significantly.

3,932 qualifications or awards gained by participants to the end of 2018

7.19   21 projects reported on qualifications gained and the majority stated that they were gained as a direct result of their Our Bright Future project. Qualifications gained related both to project-specific skills covering vocations and interest areas (e.g. construction, marine life, food hygiene, cycle maintenance) as well as broader awards recognising multiple and transferable skills (e.g. John Muir, Duke of Edinburgh, First Aid). Nationally recognised qualifications gained included AQA, Lantra, OCN London, City and Guilds and SQA. A small number of projects had also developed their own certifications (e.g. Beach Rangers Academy Bronze Award developed by Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Cornwall College Newquay for the Your Shore project).

7.20   A further breakdown of qualifications and awards gained (Table 7.1) shows positively that the majority of awards and qualifications are accredited (around 80%) and John Muir awards account for over 30% of the total.

Table 7.1 Qualifications and awards gained through Our Bright Future projects		
Type of qualification or awards	**Number gained**	**Percentage**
Accredited awards/qualifications e.g. AQA, SQA, OCN, ASDAN, Lantra, City and Guilds	1536	39.1%
John Muir Awards	1239	31.5%
DofE	438	11.1%
First Aid	131	3.3%
Unknown award/qualification	257	6.5%
Unaccredited awards e.g. Beach Rangers	331	8.4%
TOTAL	3932	

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP using annual report data submitted by project managers

7.21   Awards and qualifications achieved, particularly accredited qualifications, are a strong indicator of the skills and knowledge gained by participants across the portfolio of projects. The data suggests the lifetime target of 4,000 has nearly been reached at the mid-term stage. This is partly because some projects did not anticipate offering accredited awards or qualifications at the outset, but began offering them as a result of project development and cross project learning. At this point, the programme could look at individual project targets and revise programme targets.

Increased employability and drive to secure employment

7.22   Gaining knowledge, related skills and confidence was described as having further positive impacts in terms of young people's employability and future prospects. Project managers commented that participants' learning had *"broadened their horizons", "helped them stand out from the crowd", "feel successful in life", "better understand their strengths and capabilities"* and that it *"creates a sense of pride".*

7.23   The extent to which this has led young people to secure employment and other opportunities is subsequently assessed however in order to attribute this to projects, it is important to consider how the knowledge and skills gained have contributed towards increasing young people's employability. The following case study extract provides an example of how a project has supported participants to improve their employability and transition into working environment.

Case Study Extract: Next Generation of Fife's Environmental Champions and Workforce (Falkland Stewardship Trust)
The project provides a 3-stage pathway approach to improving young people's knowledge, skills and employability. The beginner level offers sessions on a land-based skills and rural skills academy with subsequent levels going on to offer apprenticeships and practical support and mentoring for entrepreneurial projects.

Prior to joining the project, one participant had no previous knowledge of the rural sector, was disengaged with school, in need of further support, and without alternative education or training plans. They engaged with the project's first level on a weekly basis for about a year. Through the scheme they learnt practical skills, particularly in the area of woodwork, which they now practise in their spare time. The experience has provided knowledge of general etiquette in a working environment, and has given the young person increased confidence and employability skills that they will use in their future career plans.

Most participants interviewed felt their engagement with the programme came at the right time in that they had no concrete alternative career options or plans, and did not know what to do next. All of last year's cohort on the apprenticeship programme are now in further employment, further education or setting up their own business*.*

7.24 Based on comments and reports from project managers and participants, it is evident that engagement with projects has supported young people's employability (as perceived by themselves and project managers) in a variety of ways, as shown by Figure 7.3 and the following quotes.

> *"UpRisers have also communicated that without the support and guidance of the programme and those that they have met on the programme, they would not have gone for the positions and jobs that they did. There is a strong sentiment that having done the programme, UpRisers feel more accomplished and more able to challenge their own barriers towards gaining new employment or training." Annual Report, 2017*

> *"I will always keep my eye out for opportunities in environmental institutions and organisations across the country, and I have a much greater appreciation of my power when it comes to political decisions about the environment" Project participant, Outcomes Flower*

Figure 7.3 Increased employability as a result of participation in projects

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP based on consultations with project managers and participants

Young people entering into education, training or employment

7.25 The Our Bright Future programme target is for 894 young people to enter into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships as a result of engagement in projects. This programme target is the sum of the targets set by eight of the projects within the portfolio, although some other projects within the portfolio have provided data in response to the corresponding questions in the annual reports.

7.26 The data indicates that very good progress has been made towards this target with 758 young people having entered an apprenticeship, paid training, volunteering or employment by the end of 2018, as shown in Table 7.2. However, of this total, just 252 have been achieved by those projects for which this was originally set as a target. Appendix 7.2 provides a full account of each project's target and progress to date.

758 young people have entered an apprenticeship, paid training, volunteering or employment

Table 7.2 Employment destination of young people		
Destination of young people	**Number of participants reported to have secured outcome March 2016-2018**	**Number of projects for which data was provided (and reported an outcome)**
Going on to start an apprenticeship or paid training	122	15 projects (reported as an outcome by 13)
Going on to start volunteering	337	18 projects (reported as an outcome by 16)
Going on to start employment	299	18 projects (reported as an outcome by 16)
Total participants going on to start an apprenticeship, paid training, employment or volunteering.	**758**	

7.27 Many projects reported that they are unable to monitor the onward journeys of participants after they have left the project (e.g. because they never planned to do so or asked participants to consent to this when they joined). Some also followed up with participants but were only able to secure contact with a small sample of participants. The totals are therefore not necessarily representative of the true numbers of young people going on to secure education, training or employment. It is also difficult to attribute this impact to a project alone as multiple other factors are likely to have played a role.

7.28 It is also important to remember that not all projects collected this data and that some are working with those aged 11 for whom progression to employment or apprenticeships will not happen for several years. Across the 15 projects which reported data when asked, a total of 117 participants have gone on to start an apprenticeship or paid training following their involvement with Our Bright Future. There is very limited evidence to reinforce these reports or demonstrate it is a widely experienced impact of the programme, and to what extent this is directly attributable to the programme.

7.29 However, there are a few examples to show how Our Bright Future has directly supported young people into education or training. For example:

- one participant who was studying animal care at college, went on to be awarded a scholarship for a summer training courses in outdoor training as a result of their involvement in a project and residential course. As a result of this, they have also since secured a job with PGL Travel.
- a youth representative for one of the projects who, after dropping out of sixth form was experiencing mental health problems, joined the project's heritage woodland course and engaged with some of their exchange visits with other Our Bright Future projects. The participant was subsequently invited to study for a Level 3 in Design with the lead partner

who was able to write the course with the support of Our Bright Future funding. From there, she has gone on to access a Foundation Degree course and will be the first participant of the organisation to progress to university.

7.30   In all, 12 projects were developed with targets relevant to employability overall (i.e. for participants entering internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships [8] *or* starting entrepreneurial projects [5]). Based on reporting from 18 projects, overall 283 participants have entered employment following participation in Our Bright Future projects.

7.31   The types of paid employment roles young people have gone on to secure are varied and, positively, many are within organisations/roles with an emphasis on the environment and sustainability. Examples of employment gained are provided in Table 7.3. One project observed that the jobs their participants were gaining tended to be part-time and zero hours contracts. However, the list of example roles shown would suggest that this is not the case across the programme.

Table 7.3 Opportunities secured following participation in Our Bright Future projects	
Example organisation	**Example Roles**
- Energy policy consultancy - Marine Stewardship Council 10:10 - Youth Homeless Shelter - Civil Service Fast Stream - Bank of America - UpRising - Arup - Carbon Literacy Project - Halton Borough Council Environmental Agency - Severn Trent - Galliford Try - IBM - Social Mobility Foundation - Mott MacDonald - Tees Valley Wildlife Trust - Yorkshire Water - Haycock & Jay - Yorkshire Wildlife Trust - TCV - Peak District National Park - Mind - Northern Upland Conservation Advisers - Marine Conservation Society - Cornwall Wildlife Trust - Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust	- Accounts executive - Communications assistant / officer - Campaigns intern - A communications officer within a CSR team - Researcher - Network Controller - Programme Administrator - Graduate Engineer - Industrial Ecosystem Analyst - Active Travel Team trainer - Water Catchment Officer - Environmental Consultant - Farm Support Worker - Peatland Restoration Assistant - Assistant Reserves Officer - Living Seas Assistant - Surveyor - Learning assistant and yard staff member - Conservation Adviser - People Engagement Officer - Fitness Instructor - NUS Green Impact Award - Stone Masonry Apprenticeship - Ranger with John Muir Trust - National Park Ranger

7.32   While many project managers referred to their participants going on to work in the green sector, there were also reports that participants have secured work outside the sector. However, some continue to use the skills, knowledge and interest they developed through their participation in Our Bright Future. For example, Youth in Nature's project manager reported that a participant had begun an apprenticeship at a children's nursery and was receiving support from the project to create an outdoor area for learning about nature.

7.33   It is not possible to attribute all these employment impacts entirely to the Our Bright Future programme. When asked to what extent positions were gained as a result of the project, 14 of the 16 projects which reported jobs gained provided some comment. Of the 14, four stated that all the positions reported were gained as a direct result of their project (corresponding with 33 young

people) and a further four stated that their project played a fundamental role in the roles gained. These reports were largely based on statements from participants themselves. For example, at the end of 2017, Green Leaders reported that 16 young people (almost one fifth of participants) indicated that they were in full or part-time employment (Annual Report 2017). Of these participants, 10 reported that it was 'completely' as a result of their participation and four 'mostly' because of it. This would suggest the programme has played an important role in the employment destinations of some young people, although this would benefit from further examination to verify such claims.

7.34   Project managers also gave examples of individuals attributing their professional progression to participating in projects. For example, a participant of The Environment Now was quoted as saying that the project provided real evidence of their scientific credibility and ambition and that this had enabled them to secure a role as an Environmental Ecologist and Lecturer at Nottingham University.

7.35   One project manager also stated that their project had provided the setup costs to enable participants to initiate their business. Other project managers commented on providing references for participants and described individual participant situations before and after their engagement as evidence that the project had played a role in them gaining employment.

7.36   Furthermore, organisations leading and partnering on Our Bright Future projects have gone on to employ some participants themselves and this was felt to provide evidence which would allow attribution of this impact to projects. This is partly as a result of young people demonstrating their suitability for positions through their engagement in projects. For example, Middlesbrough Environment City and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust have gone on to employ two of One Planet Pioneers' apprentices (Annual Report 2017).

7.37   In other cases, positions have been created by organisations directly as a result of their Our Bright Future projects. For example, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust created two entry level conservation assistant positions after acknowledging the previous lack of opportunities at this level and for young people. Blackburne House also created an additional two positions as part of their BEE You project, allowing them to employ two participants (who have achieved their teaching qualifications) as beekeeping tutors.

7.38   Project reports provide further indications of the scale of the numbers of participants going into employment. Falkland Stewardship Trust indicated that of the 2017-2018 cohort of 12 apprentices: nine went on to secure further employment, of which all but one was in the rural sector and one went into further education and set up his own business in the sector. Impact Arts reported that of 11 young people completing the Creative Pathways Glasgow programme, five went on to employment, one progressed to college and one progressed to further training.

7.39   It would be useful to investigate further the role which Our Bright Future overall has had in terms of career decisions and employment, but this is something that would be most beneficial to administer as follow up research. If projects are struggling to follow up consistently with participants then it may be worth the programme considering if it can undertake this.

Young people establishing businesses or social enterprises

7.40   The programme target is for 400 young people to start entrepreneurial projects as part of Our Bright Future. The programme's original target was set based on five projects' individual targets. According to project reports the following have been achieved against this target so far:

50 businesses started
as a result of six projects

164 social enterprises started
as a result of six projects

7.41   In total therefore, 214 entrepreneurial projects have been established as a result of Our Bright Future. This suggests good progress towards the target at this mid-term stage. Businesses were based around forestry, leather and wooden carved products, nature inspired and stained pottery and pens from locally sourced or recycled wood and a nature-based magazine. Additionally, two learners on the BEE You project have gone on to purchase their own hives to sell honey (Project manager interview, 2017). The Environment Now's project manager reported that one their participants had received "some major contracts and offers" for their 3d printer filament produced from recycled goods (Project manager interview, 2017).

7.42   Within the social enterprise total, 126 were reported by just 2 projects: Student Eats (Student Enterprise for Local Food) and Spaces for Change. The 67 Student Eats social enterprises comprise farmers' markets, food co-ops and food preserving enterprises. 53 of the 67 were deemed successful having completed their training and traded, though 9 were no longer operational due to staff and student changes.

7.43   Other social enterprises are based around growing and selling produce including chillies and microgreens, other food and flowers. One enterprise comprises a collaboration between Milestones and Student Eats and involves Wiltshire College students selling apple juice, preserves and cakes to the local community.

7.44   It is clear that, in some cases, these experiences have enabled participants to gain entrepreneurial skills and confidence that will support them in their future professional lives and careers. The following quotes demonstrate how projects have supported participants to improve their business knowledge and confidence while the case study extract provides examples of how this has supported young people into entrepreneurship and employment.

> *"I will understand the difficulties of running your own business/project. I will have the confidence to do it again however." Project participant Outcomes Flower*

> *"I understand how to carve out a niche, valuable career for myself to fit my interests and abilities as well as to benefit the environment" Project participant Outcomes Flower*

Case Study Extract: The Environment Now (The National Youth Agency)
The Environment Now project offers funding to groups of young people aged 17 - 24 to develop sustainable digital solutions to pressing environmental challenges. Following participation in the project, some participants are developing start-ups and seeking more start-up funding while others are gaining jobs or experience in the green economy, academia or conservation domains. For example, one participant is expanding the project to different cities within the UK. Another is thinking of scaling-up the digital product and is consulting with the local council to seek funding and introduce the product as a service.

Several participants also mentioned that involvement in The Environment Now project has changed their future aspirations. One participant begun his work on a digital product just to explore an idea but following the conclusion of his project has now decided to launch his own company and develop the product further.

The impact of developing skills and experience was described by participants as instrumental for their future as young entrepreneurs. Both personal and professional development were also mentioned as outcomes of networking, learning about business, managing conflicts in project management and fundraising. These were considered to support further progression of their project ideas.

7.45   Our Bright Future is moving positively towards its target for entrepreneurial projects started. It would be useful to monitor and follow up on these social enterprises after a year of operation to assess whether they were sustained over a longer time period.

Conclusions: Skills, knowledge and employability

There have been some notable achievements in terms of programme targets relating to qualifications and employment. Some targets have almost been surpassed already at the mid-term stage whilst the remainder look likely to be achieved if progress continues. Key achievements are:

- Almost 4,000 qualifications or awards gained by participants, around 80% of which are accredited.
- 758 young people have entered into employment, training, and volunteering. Of these, 283 have gained paid employment and many of the roles appear to be in the environmental/sustainability sector.
- 214 entrepreneurial projects started (50 businesses and 164 enterprises).

There is a wealth of qualitative evidence from project managers, participants and others to indicate that young people have gained a range of new skills through participating in Our Bright Future projects. These skills are both specific to environmental topics, and more general soft and transferable skills. However, there is currently no indicator to assess whether the corresponding target has been met. There are also further limitations in the data which should be recognised.

- Project reports of skills and knowledge gained by young people rely on self-assessment by participants themselves, based largely on small sample sizes and are referenced in this report without an awareness of the specific questions asked or context of the surveying. Administered by a small number of individual projects, each survey is also different and cannot be scaled up to provide a programme-wide indication of skills gained.
- Further evidence of participants gaining skills, knowledge and increasing their motivation to learn is also based on qualitative evidence gathered from project managers, support workers and family members. This is based on semi-structured conversations with individuals on certain projects and can also not be considered to represent a programme-wide outcome.

Awards and qualifications achieved, particularly accredited qualifications, are a strong indicator of skills and knowledge gained by participants across the portfolio. The number of qualifications gained (as reported by projects) suggests the corresponding target has almost been met. Around 80% of these are accredited, and the John Muir Award accounts for over 30%.

Being outdoors, and being in an environment which is different from a normal classroom environment appears to have resulted in improved motivation to learn and the behaviour of participants on some projects. It has also been observed to reignite a more general motivation for learning in addition to improvements in the behaviour of some young people.

Over half the projects in the portfolio have reported participants gaining employment, totalling 283 jobs so far. However, it is hard to tell to what extent positions gained are directly attributable to participation in Our Bright Future projects.

Recommendations: Skills, knowledge and employability

It would be worth the programme team considering whether the target for skills and knowledge gained could be assessed for the remainder of the programme, potentially through using a sample of participants. Ways to strengthen evidence in this area should be sought and further research could consider whether volunteering and social action in the natural environment supports different skills to other types of social action, or supports similar skills but to greater or lesser extents.

With almost 4,000 qualifications or awards gained, the programme may wish to look at individual project targets and revise programme targets accordingly.
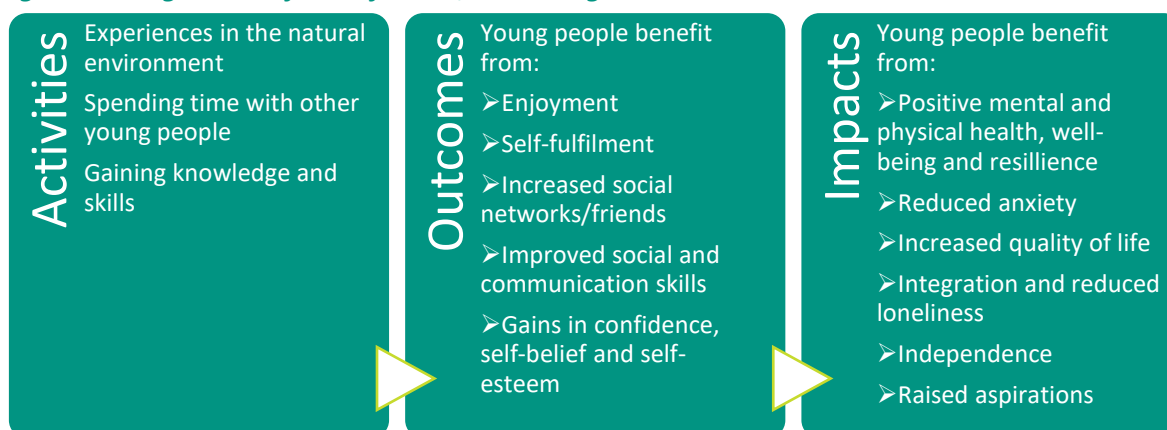
It would be useful to investigate further the role which Our Bright Future overall has had in terms of career decisions and employment, but this is something that would be most beneficial to administer as follow up survey or other research. Many projects have suggested that this would be difficult to administer due to capacity, therefore the programme may wish to undertake this as a separate and targeted piece of research across all programme alumni.

Our Bright Future is moving positively towards its target for entrepreneurial projects started. It would be useful to monitor and follow up on these businesses and social enterprises after a year of operation to assess whether they were sustained over a longer time period.

Confidence, well-being and mental health

7.46 Figure 7.4 shows how activities undertaken by Our Bright Future projects are collectively expected to result in improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health for participants. This logic model is based on evidence (presented in the Our Bright Future Baseline and Context Report) which shows that spending time outside, engaging with others and participating in volunteering and social action have social benefits and contribute towards improved well-being and positive mental health[42],[43],[44].

Figure 7.4: Logic model for confidence, well-being and mental health

Activities
- Experiences in the natural environment
- Spending time with other young people
- Gaining knowledge and skills

Outcomes
Young people benefit from:
- Enjoyment
- Self-fulfilment
- Increased social networks/friends
- Improved social and communication skills
- Gains in confidence, self-belief and self-esteem

Impacts
Young people benefit from:
- Positive mental and physical health, well-being and resilience
- Reduced anxiety
- Increased quality of life
- Integration and reduced loneliness
- Independence
- Raised aspirations

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

7.47 Evidence of the outcomes and impacts identified in these logic models is collated and explored in the following subsection, grouped by: increased confidence and self-esteem; increased social networks; and mental health and well-being improvements.

7.48 Due to the variety of projects, delivery and engagement methods, it has not been possible for all projects to collect consistent and comparable monitoring data on participant confidence, well-being

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[42] Kabisch, N., Qureshi, S. and Haase, D., 2015. Human-environment interactions in urban green spaces – a systematic review of contemporary issues and prospects for future research. EIA Review, 50. pp.25-34.

[43] Bragg, R., Wood, C., Barton., & Pretty, J., 2015. Wellbeing benefits from natural environments rich in Wildlife. Essex: University of Essex for The Wildlife Trusts.

[44] Fujiwara, D., Oroyemi, P. and McKinnon, E., 2013. Wellbeing and civil society: Estimating the value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data. London. Cabinet Office. The Department or Work and Pensions.

and mental health. Instead, as part of annual reporting, all project managers are asked to provide evidence about how their project has helped to improve the well-being of young people and details of the methods and tools used to collect it. Appendix 7.1 provides a summary of responses which indicates that approximately half of all projects reported an improvement in the well-being of participants.

7.49   However, the data is limited in quality and there remain large gaps. In all, 15 projects reported using surveys to monitor participant well-being, however, some results and sample sizes have not been reported and some sample sizes for follow-up surveys are limited. Meanwhile seven project managers based their responses to the annual report question entirely on anecdotal feedback, the main source of which is quotes from participants. More widely, project managers have consistently reported in interviews and case study visits that they have observed improvements in the mental health and well-being of young people in person, in their individual learning plans and in feedback from parents, teachers and social workers. Although this is valuable evidence, it is therefore difficult to comment on the scale of well-being improvements across the portfolio.
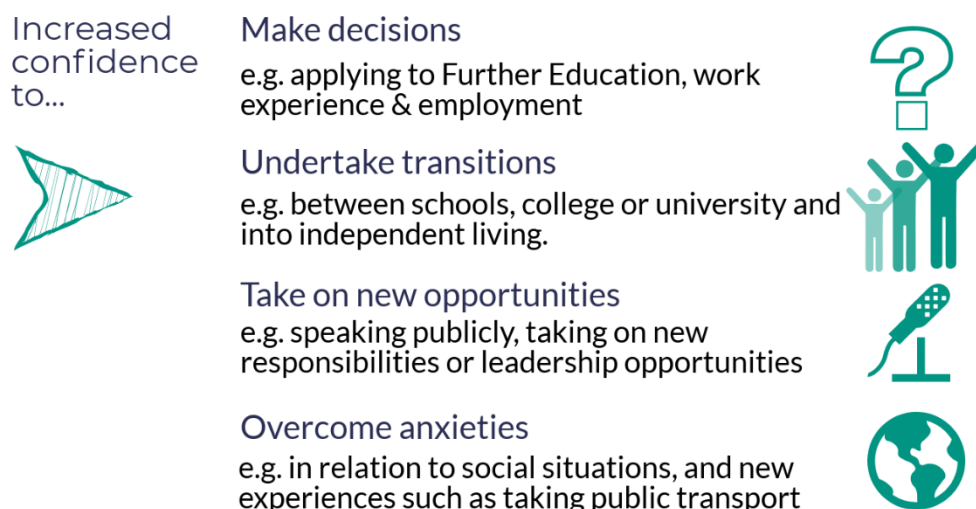
Increased confidence and self-esteem

7.50   There is some survey data and extensive anecdotal reports from project managers, participants and their parents that participation in Our Bright Future projects has helped young people to gain self-confidence and self-esteem. When asked whether their project had resulted improvements in confidence or self-esteem, 21 projects provided evidence that this was true for at least some of their participants. Seven projects did not provide a response to this question while others neglected to provide the results of their surveys and therefore it is possible that the number is higher.

7.51   The activities which have notably contributed towards this outcome are:

- activities which involve peer to peer support, team work and participants being encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and challenge themselves;
- activities which provide new or recognise existing knowledge and skills, in particular problem solving (within a safe environment for failure underpinned by mutual trust);
- being trusted with tools;
- presenting in front of an audience; experiencing a work environment;
- being given autonomy and the opportunity to use initiative;
- meeting new people, including individuals from different backgrounds, or different ages and those in policy influencing roles;
- staying away from home as part of residentials and taking responsibility for themselves and gaining greater independence; and
- leading and facilitating group work and sessions.

7.52   Based on monitoring reports, interviews with project managers and case study visits, it is clear that increased confidence and self-esteem have impacted on young people's wider lives in a variety of ways, as shown in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5 Impacts of improvements in confidence for participants

Increased confidence to...

Make decisions
e.g. applying to Further Education, work experience & employment

Undertake transitions
e.g. between schools, college or university and into independent living.

Take on new opportunities
e.g. speaking publicly, taking on new responsibilities or leadership opportunities

Overcome anxieties
e.g. in relation to social situations, and new experiences such as taking public transport

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

7.53   An increase in confidence was also widely discussed alongside young people experiencing improved mental health and well-being. Based on project managers' observations and their use of quotes and comments from participants, teachers, parents, focus groups and surveys, it is clear that corresponding impacts for participants have varied depending on each participant's self-confidence when they first engaged with a project. Some participants were experiencing social anxiety and poor mental health when they began their involvement. For such individuals, increases in self-confidence have led participants to improve their social skills and interactions, make friends and improve their outlook and positivity.

> *"I am not a loner anymore. It has helped me overcome social anxiety and I'm not going to let anyone to bully me again." Project participant in Annual Report 2017*

7.54   Self-confidence has clearly been an important outcome, specifically for those who were struggling in mainstream education. Providing an alternative learning environment has supported participants to increase their confidence through gaining skills and knowledge and realising what they can achieve. For example, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust project manager commented that they had worked with a 17-year-old who had not achieved academically and had low confidence. Working with members of staff, his confidence grew from being able to answer the phone to subsequently leading his own project, bringing together the community to improve a local stream (Project manager interview 2018).

7.55   In addition, uniquely to Vision England, participants had greatly increased their confidence and self-belief through meeting and learning from others with visual impairments. The residential had encouraged many to discover new skills and reduce their anxiety around trying new things with one participant commenting that, as a result of the project, they would "*try not to be too nervous when trying something new" (Project participant, Outcomes Flower).* Participants had consequently become more independent, for example, going to a shop, travelling by bus independently and making their own hot drinks.

7.56   For other participants across the programme, based on reports from project managers, there are examples of increased confidence leading participants to a variety of achievements, including securing employment and feeling empowered to influence change. Many participants have reportedly commented that they would not have sought such opportunities without the confidence they developed through an Our Bright Future project.

> *"Another London student only arrived in the UK from Ghana in the summer of 2016, and was nervous of public speaking because of his strong Ghanaian accent. In March he stood in front of 35 people at a college assembly and told a very moving story about why he cares about climate change. In the summer of 2017, he went on to win a prize in public speaking and helped to recruit new students at a fresher's fair and sharing his story in a taster session."* Annual Report 2017

> *"I get myself involved and I put myself out there because I have more confidence to actually do that. I know that my voice can be heard and that people want to hear it, and all thanks to Grassroots Challenge."* Project participant in Case Study: Grassroots Challenge

7.57   The My World My Home project carried out a survey of its 2017/18 and 2018/19 cohort and found the number of participants who reported feeling confident talking to leaders in their school/college about issues that affect the school/college or their local area increased from 68% at the baseline (31 respondents) to 90% at the follow-up (though importantly, a much smaller sample, just 11 young people, responded to the follow-up). Similarly, those reporting feeling confident talking to organisations in their local area (e.g. media, council, charities) increased from 52% at the baseline to 90% at the follow-up.

7.58   Overall, there appears to be a wealth of evidence from different sources (some anecdotal, some more robustly collected via baseline and follow-up surveys) which indicates that increased confidence and self-esteem is a significant outcome of many Our Bright Future projects and for many participants. In some cases, the confidence and self-esteem gained have been pre-requisites for further impacts, such as employability and empowerment. The evidence is starting to point to what works, and for whom but there needs to be further and more consistently robust data gathered to draw clear conclusions for the programme as a whole. The current evidence does however provide a number of useful insights into the activities that have led to increased confidence, and these could be explored and shared further to help inform policy and practice.

Increased social networks

7.59   It is clear that meeting people and young people expanding their social networks has been key to some of their improvements in mental health and well-being. Many participants present at case study visits commented on valuing the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends which was a key motivator for participating in projects. Young people going through transitions in their life, e.g. attending a new place of study or moving to a new area, particularly reported benefitting from opportunities to meet new people, described as a "lifeline" by one young person who was struggling to make friends.

> *"15 young people from across Northern Ireland and who didn't know each other before hand came together for five days to take part in wildlife and conservation activities combined with outdoor pursuits and rural crafts. At the end of the week one young person's feedback was "thank you for turning a group of strangers in to a group of friends and for making wildlife and the environment so much fun"."* Annual Report 2017

7.60   When asked if their project had strengthened young people's social networks (within the Annual Report), 22 project managers provided evidence to demonstrate this. Project managers referenced quotes from teachers, parents, participants themselves and their project diaries as evidence of strengthened social networks. A couple of projects also described how participants had set up Facebook and WhatsApp groups to keep in touch with each other. Some project managers indicated that participants have benefitted from meeting like-minded young people and valued establishing connections with others interested in the environment.

7.61   In bringing together young people with vision impairments, Vision England is one project where participants commented on meeting like-minded people. Some commented that they had rarely met

anyone with similar challenges to themselves (see the following case study extract about Vision England).

Case study Extract: Vision England (formerly RNIB and FSC, now Sense and FSC)

Sense and FSC are working in partnership to deliver a residential programme for young people with sight loss with three residential breaks taking place throughout the year. Activities include climbing, canoeing, wildlife walks, camping and conservation tasks with the aim of developing participants'' self-confidence, independence and skills. The majority of participants were the only students in their school with a vision impairment and the opportunity to socialise with others facing similar challenges has led to the development of strong friendships and reduced isolation.

Following the August residential, the majority of participants recognised that their self-confidence had improved as a result of new friendships they had gained. In the absence of the residential, some participants said that they would have spent half term at home and wouldn't have had the opportunity to socialise with others.

The participants had valued the opportunity to explore a range of new activities and the majority had gained more independence from taking part in the residential:

"At home our parents do so much for us. We can't socialise or get involved in these kinds of activities in the same way" (VE participant).

The experience of meeting other similar young people and participating in activities which increase their independence has impacted positively on participants' mental health.

7.62   Comments from project managers and participants also indicate some young people have benefitted from socialising with people they would not otherwise normally have spoken to (e.g. in school). In these cases, some projects have broken down barriers and allowed young people from different backgrounds, ages and life experiences to mix and learn more about one another. One project reported that it was breaking down geographical barriers by bringing together young people from areas associated with different gangs and territories.

7.63   Participants interviewed as part of one case study visit also commented that participating in the project had allowed them to feel like they belong and connected them to feel part of their local community. They also linked this with improved mental health and well-being. Managers of two different projects also reported that the work they had undertaken with community groups had assisted in building inter-generational relationships between younger and older people.

7.64   Evidence from across the portfolio suggests that the opportunity to meet new people is an important motivator for participation and has multiple benefits. Evidence from across the portfolio reinforces findings from the 13 case studies, which concluded that bringing young people together with other young people and external stakeholders has been a key success factor, in terms of:

- Improving young people's enjoyment, engagement and commitment to projects;
- Helping young people to feel less isolated by building informal networks, and self-confidence;
- Inspiring young people by giving them opportunities to meet decision makers and people outside of their established networks;
- Showing young people that they are part of 'something bigger' or a wider movement which motivates them to take environmental action.

Mental health and well-being improvements

7.65   Quarterly and annual reports submitted by projects, as well as interviews with project managers and case study visits suggest that improvements to mental health and well-being have been observed widely across the programme and by large proportions of cohorts within individual projects. In the 2018 Annual Reports, 13 project managers selected that their project had led to participants gaining knowledge on '*How to manage mental health e.g. techniques for maintaining good mental health'*. The evidence base from across sources indicates that a variety of factors within projects have supported young people to feel calm, less stressed and more relaxed, as shown in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6 Aspects of projects helping young people to feel relaxed

Engagement with animals

Being outside in open green spaces & exposed to the elements

Physical work & activity which increases fitness & aids sleep

Stability & structure (i.e. regular sessions & progression) & sense of purpose

Relaxed & friendly learning environment (contrasted to traditional education)

Meeting like-minded people, developing positive relationships with staff & feeling part of a community

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

7.66 Results from the Outcomes Flower analysis (see: Annex 1) provide some indication of how widespread well-being outcomes are across the portfolio of projects. The results from 455 participants (from 26 projects) indicate very positive progression in two of the questions contributing to well-being. Respondents were asked to what extent they felt relaxed and confident before participating (reported retrospectively on reflection) and after participating.

Before participating in an Our Bright Future project

49% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt relaxed.

41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in themselves.

After participating in an Our Bright Future project

79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt relaxed.

80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in themselves.

7.67 31% of young people also said they did not feel close to others before the project, which dropped to below 8% afterwards.

7.68 Seven projects originally set out to improve the health and well-being of participants and a couple have mentioned seeking referrals from relevant health services. Project managers said these individuals can be some of the most challenging to engage due to their tendency to have anxieties relating to leaving their home and meeting new people. It was also observed that these individuals with poor mental health often have the most to gain through participation.

> *"K [participant] has severe issues around her anxiety and confidence, but despite this K has been a solid member of the group, attending sessions and building up a portfolio to go towards her D Of E Gold Award. Before the project K wasn't leaving the house, had no future plans and was very isolated. K is now engaging with more support professionals, is brighter and happier in herself, has more confidence and is now in the process of applying to College to do A Levels!"*
> *Annual Report 2017*

7.69   Project managers reported that, for some participants, engaging with projects has helped to relieve stress related to school and college (in particular deadlines and exams). Some projects have included alternative education provision which has offered young people with identified needs the opportunity to take time away from the classroom and their anxieties and negative experiences of academic study, large groups of students and experiences of bullying. Project managers reported that teachers had observed differences in participants' mental and physical health as a result of their engagement in projects. This included improvements in young people's behaviour, social interactions, anxiety levels and emotional self-control.

> *"I really look forward to working at x Estate, sometimes it's hard at home and I get angry and frustrated! I come here and working outside on this project helps me. It makes my week better." Project participant in Quarterly Report 2017*

> *"I love feeling the wind in my face, it clears away all the bad things in my head and fills it with nice things." Project participant (Year 10 student) in Quarterly Report 2017*

7.70   A few project managers commented specifically that small and nurturing environments enabled some young people to thrive and grow in confidence. This was particularly the case for individuals with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), emotional and social difficulties and anxiety.

> *"Out here we can be ourselves and actually learn more, but in the classroom because everyone's always talking you don't always get a chance to listen." Project participant in Our Wild Coast Case Study*

7.71   Milestones provides a good example of how engagement with the outdoors has contributed to improving participants' mental health and well-being.

Case Study Extract: Milestones (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust)
The social aspect of Milestones and spending time in small groups (compared to their classrooms) was a key aspect of young people feeling relaxed and happy.

"It's really nice, because it's made us really mingle with people, we wouldn't really talk to…out here we can be ourselves and actually learn more, but in the classroom because everyone's always talking you don't always get a chance to listen." (Lower secondary school pupil)

"At home and school, it can be stressful but being out here it's all calm and it takes away the stress" (Lower secondary school pupil)

The social elements of Milestones are complemented by the quiet environment and natural setting of the Trust's reserves. Participants contrasted feeling good and "free" in the natural environment at Milestones with feeling uncomfortable in a classroom and surrounded by electronics.

"I find going out in the natural environment relaxing. I feel happy to be together with nature. I will try and be outside more." (College student)

7.72   A teaching assistant commented that improvements to well-being were also being supported by the physical activity undertaken by participants at the project. This was thought to be particularly beneficial for those individuals who dislike physical education in school, showing them other ways to keep active. As evidence of improvements in well-being, some members of a school group were reportedly making fewer visits to student support services.

7.73   Many project managers linked improvements in mental health and well-being to wider outcomes and impacts for young people, as discussed in this section. This included increased self-confidence, social and other skills and independence and progression into employment and education. In many cases, poor mental health was reported to have acted as a barrier to young people achieving prior to their participation. Examples were given of improvements in well-being and associated confidence leading participants to gain qualifications, secure voluntary and paid positions. An example is provided in the subsequent case study extract.

Final reflections

7.74 The evidence would suggest that in some cases, skills, knowledge and employability are closely linked with increased confidence, well-being and mental health, and that there are multiple ways in which young people benefit from participating in Our Bright Future projects. Each individual's journey is different, influenced in part by their starting point. The outcomes and impacts are difficult to isolate and it appears that, in many cases, they are closely interlinked. Although this may only be a partial understanding at present, Figure 7.7 highlights some of the determining factors which appear to lead to increased employability and positive mental health through the programme.

Figure 7.7 Outcomes and impacts of participation in projects

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Conclusions: Confidence, well-being and mental health

Although well-being was not referenced in the programme's original outcomes, there is a wealth of qualitative evidence to show some projects are supporting participants to improve their overall confidence, well-being and mental health. This reinforces theories presented in the Baseline and Context Report on the benefits of engagement with the natural environment and in social action. The report also acknowledged that the rationale for projects was in part linked to the prevalence of mental health problems and anxiety in young people.

These outcomes are less tangible and often difficult to evidence. Yet there seems to be widespread accounts (most of which are anecdotal but some more robustly evidenced through before and after surveys administered by projects) from different sources of evidence that many participants have demonstrated improvements in these areas. This is further strengthened by the Outcomes Flower survey data collected in 2018.

The setting and design of projects has, in particular, supported participants to improve their mental health and well-being, through for example, being outside, engaging with nature and wildlife, undertaking physical work and the stability and structured offered by regular engagement. Providing alternative learning environments in a friendly and relaxed environment has particularly helped some participants to better realise their potential and improve their mental health.

The improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health gained through projects have encouraged and supported some participants to take up opportunities they would not otherwise have done, taking on new roles, transitioning into education, employment and independent living.

Recommendations: Confidence, well-being and mental health

In general, stronger evidence relating to improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health would benefit the programme, particularly in terms of sharing successes and lessons about what works. Potential options include:

a) A programme wide primary research study complementing and building upon the survey data from the Outcomes Flower, or, alternatively, in-depth primary research with a sample of projects. Using recognised and widely used survey tools (such as those detailed in Ockenden and Stuart, 2014[45]) would provide greater rigour and trust in results. It may also allow for comparison with wider, national studies or other interventions.

b) Many projects are undertaking surveys to collect this data, yet the way that this is shared and reported could be improved, particularly being explicit about the limitations of the survey and reporting base numbers (i.e. how many people were asked, and who responded).

There are a number of useful insights into the activities that have led to increased confidence, and these could be explored and shared further amongst the programme and wider sector.

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[45] Ockenden, N. and Stuart, J. (2014) Review of evidence on the outcomes of youth volunteering, social action and leadership, Institute for Volunteering Research, https://thirdsectorimpact.eu/site/assets/uploads/page/documents-for-researchers/TSI_impact-report_sports-leaders-literature-review-dec-2014.pdf

OUTCOME 2: THE OUR BRIGHT FUTURE PROGRAMME HAS POSITIVE IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- The Our Bright Future programme is supporting a wide range of terrestrial and marine habitats, community spaces and groups.

- A sample of participants demonstrate increased awareness, more positive attitudes and intentions to conserve the environment as a result of their involvement in projects. It remains difficult to ascertain to what extent changed attitudes and intentions have resulted in actual behaviour change.

- Working within communities is allowing participants to mix with different people from a variety of backgrounds and ages. There are some reports that this has led to more positive perceptions of young people and other social groups.

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"*I have learnt about a variety of ways in which individuals and communities are able to live more sustainably. This has encouraged me to live in a more sustainable way and to aim to find a 'green' career*"

Project Participant

8. PROGRAMME OUTCOME 2: ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

> OUTCOME 2: The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities.
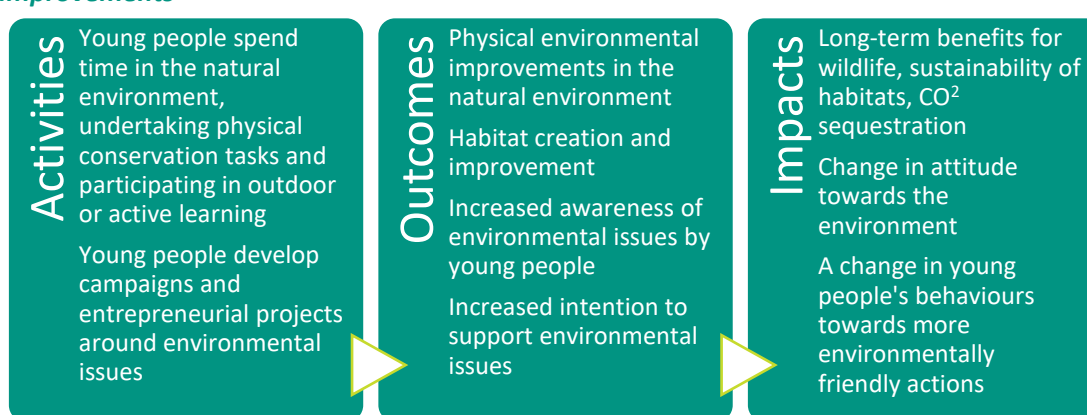
8.1 This chapter presents outcomes and impacts relevant to the programme's second outcome stated above. The chapter is divided into two main sections:

- Direct and indirect environmental improvements;
- Benefits for communities.

Direct and indirect environmental improvements

8.2 The logic model shown in Figure 8.1. explains how the programme expects to lead to direct environmental improvements and pro-environmental behaviours.

Figure 8.1: Logic Model of direct and indirect (behaviour change) environmental improvements

Activities
Young people spend time in the natural environment, undertaking physical conservation tasks and participating in outdoor or active learning

Young people develop campaigns and entrepreneurial projects around environmental issues

Outcomes
Physical environmental improvements in the natural environment

Habitat creation and improvement

Increased awareness of environmental issues by young people

Increased intention to support environmental issues

Impacts
Long-term benefits for wildlife, sustainability of habitats, CO_2 sequestration

Change in attitude towards the environment

A change in young people's behaviours towards more environmentally friendly actions

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

8.3 In part owing to the large number of environmentally focused organisations leading projects, a key focus for the portfolio is on practical conservation tasks. It is expected that these will lead to a variety of environmental improvements e.g. to habitats and conservation areas. It is also expected that young people's engagement will lead to indirect improvements for the environment. It is thought that young people engaging with nature at a young age are more likely to have higher pro-environmental attitudes and values which lead to pro-environmental behaviours. This has been empirically tested in academic literature[46],[47],[48] (Shaw et al., 2013;) as explored in the Evaluation Baseline and Context report (2017, page 20).

Improvements to the natural environment

8.4 Direct improvements to the natural environment are defined and evaluated by projects as:

- Improvements or creations of different types of habitats, such as grassland, deciduous woodland, river catchments;
- Physical environmental improvements or creation activities, such as building paths, litter removal, planting trees.

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[46] Otto, S. and Pensini, P. 2017. Nature-based environmental education of children: Environmental knowledge and connectedness to nature, together, are related to ecological behaviour. Global Environmental Change. 47, pp.88-94
[47] Rosa, C.D., Profice, C.C. and Collado, S. 2018. Nature Experiences and Adults' Self-Reported Pro-environmental Behaviors: The Role of Connectedness to Nature and Childhood Nature Experiences. Frontiers in Psychology. 9, pp.1055
[48] Shaw, A., Miller, K. and Wescott, G. 2013. Wildlife Gardening and Connectedness to Nature: Engaging the Unengaged. Environmental Values. 22, pp.483-50

8.5   Quantitative data from quarterly and annual reporting confirms that projects are conserving a wide range of terrestrial and marine habitats as set out in the evaluation framework. Figure 8.2 shows the conservation work undertaken by projects in named habitats, as reported by project managers.

Figure 8.2 Habitat types supported by the Our Bright Future programme
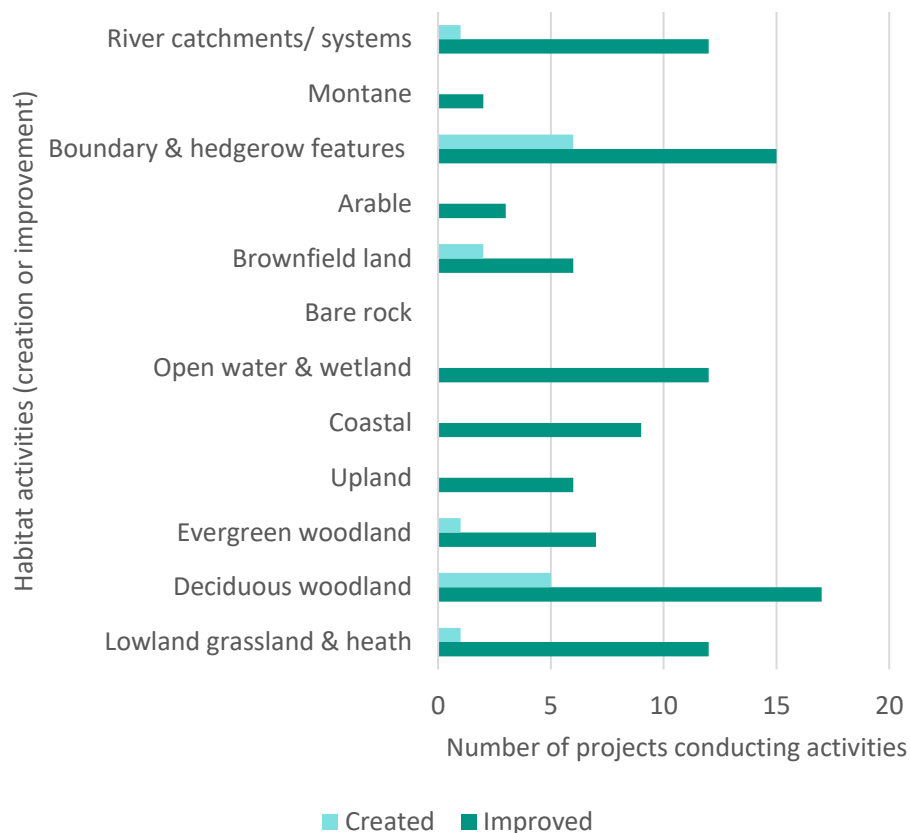
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP, Base= 28 projects

8.6   Figure 8.2 reveals that the programme is helping to conserve numerous landscapes across the UK, and is thus supportive of a wide range of conservation priorities. The responses indicate 25 projects are undertaking some form of physical environmental improvements. 21 projects reported improving habitats while just eight reported creating habitats. Pruning and clearing vegetation (22 projects) and planting activities (18 projects) were commonly undertaken activities in 2018 (see Appendix 8.1). Other aspects of site improvement that were commonly reported include providing food or shelter for specific species (such as bees, birds, bats, and hedgehogs), and actions for climate change adaptation.

8.7   Furthermore, 12 projects have also undertaken improvement work at natural and archaeological heritage sites including cemeteries, churches, hillforts (evidenced by Annual Reports). The majority (11) of these projects have focused on clearing vegetation, while half have undertaken restoration or repair work and improvement to access. One project also undertook an archaeological dig. Outcomes resulting from this work, described by project managers, related largely to those aforementioned including e.g. improved habitats for pollinating insects and birds, though three projects also described improved access.

8.8   As part of annual reporting, project managers were asked to rate the extent to which defined environmental improvement activities had been successful in achieving the outcomes intended. 22 project managers responded in relation to the *improvement* of existing habitats, all of whom rated project work as 'successful' (12 'very successful'). Activities referenced included planting, litter picking, installation of bird, bat and bug boxes and removal of invasive species.

8.9   When asked the same question in relation to *creation* of habitats, 18 out of the 20 projects managers who responded reported activities as successful. Just 2 project managers reported that activities had been 'not very successful', commenting only that there had been no outcomes of this work. 18 project managers rated these activities as 'successful' or 'very successful'. When asked about outcomes resulting from this work, responses focused on the activities themselves including the creation of a newt island and a sensory garden. There was however one observation of increased wildlife at a site. The final evaluation would be strengthened if all projects could provide further evidence of outcomes or impacts, supported by formal scientific measures where possible.

8.10   For example, the amount of area improved or created would provide a useful indicator. Our Wild Coast reported that over 2017 and 2018 the project improved and replanted habitats totalling 24.5 acres across the North Coast and Anglesey. The project manager directly attributed this to Our Bright Future by commenting that the programme has provided a significant contribution to tackle large conservation tasks (often required on an annual basis). Before the project began, the Trust did not have large groups of volunteers but the tasks do not require technical competency and are therefore easily undertaken by participants.

8.11   In addition to discrete improvement works, some projects have also undertaken whole site regeneration. There are several examples of projects turning derelict spaces into community gardens, as opposed to just clearing vegetation or carrying out discrete tasks. Quantitative data from quarterly and annual reporting indicates that six projects are improving landscapes that are brownfield land. As this is a more significant change to the natural environment than individual actions, it is expected to support a wider range of ecosystem services. Supporting ecosystem services is not directly measured in the quantitative data collected by projects, but is evident in qualitative excerpts from quarterly and annual reporting (see following excerpt):

> *"Young people supported by Barking and Dagenham College have been hard at work at Beam Parklands recently, supporting the ranger team in giving the site a thorough makeover. As part of their work experience, they were at the park over a number of weeks, carrying out a number of practical tasks. They tackled invasive bramble, removed bulrush and Himalayan balsam from the ponds and Wantz stream, installed new bird and bat boxes, and cut back areas of dense scrub" 2017 Quarter 4 Reports*

Enhanced resource efficiency

8.12   Resource efficiency is defined and evaluated by projects as:

- Reduced carbon consumption and reduced energy usage;
- Reduced water consumption;
- Reduced material consumption and/or waste generated.

8.13   There is anecdotal evidence from quarterly and annual reporting that efforts to reduce plastic/ litter, carbon, energy, food and water consumption form a part of project activities. For example, in the case of water consumption, several projects have installed water rainwater catchment systems and water butts across sites (2018 Annual Reports):

> *"At the E4cology Centre they have created an irrigation system utilising the Onsite Lake. Plumbed in a mud kitchen using and IBC filled with rainwater"*

> *"Approx. 600lt of rainwater saved and used on site in Lewisham"*

8.14   Projects report any material and carbon savings through quarterly and annual reports. Whilst it is difficult to amalgamate the cumulative impact of carbon savings, projects are reducing a sizeable amount of material usage (for example food waste, plastic bottles, construction materials, all by weight) equivalent to 411 tonnes diverted from landfill.

Change in young people's attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, and environmental behaviour change

8.15 Increased awareness of environmental issues is evident across multiple case studies, with two projects (From Farm to Fork and Our Wild Coast) strongly reporting such an outcome. This is illustrated by the subsequent quote from a family member of a participant and the case study extract.

> *"She's loved it. She's more aware of wildlife conservation and beach pollution and also, she's very aware of some of the issues of the new nuclear power station. It's developed her interest in what's going on." Grandparent of participant interviewed as part of Our Wild Coast Case Study 2018*

Case Study Extract: From Farm to Fork (FoodCycle and Feedback)

Anecdotal evidence from project managers and the volunteers themselves clearly shows that participants' behaviours have become more pro-environmental through engagement with the project. A number of volunteers commented that through taking part they learnt about the "shocking" scale of waste and this has further motivated them to take action on environmental issues including working towards a career in this field.

H [participant], aged 22, has been involved in the project for two months during which she had attended a number of meetings and two gleans. She found the project really insightful and learnt a lot about environmental problems and things that contribute to waste. She also found being part of a group really motivational for working on these types of issues and it had reportedly changed her perspective. Through being part of the group, she reflected that she had become more confident talking about environmental issues with her friends. The project has made her keen to continue being involved in this field of work. She had not yet been to University but felt inspired now to do a degree course that could help her find work and be more influential in the food waste sector.

Meanwhile, C [participant], aged 21, was involved with the project in Liverpool and volunteered most weeks with the FoodCycle kitchen for over a year. Working on the project changed Colin's food habits. He reported that it had encouraged him to be more resourceful and mindful of the environment.

8.16 Beyond simply awareness, there is some evidence to suggest a change in attitudes towards the environment. This is also evident in responses to the Outcomes Flower survey. As part of the survey, participants were asked the extent to which they care about the environment, feel they can make a difference to the environment and enjoy being outside. They were asked firstly to reflect on how they felt before participating and secondly to consider how they felt at the time, having participated in a project. Completed by 455 young people, 26% of respondents retrospectively stated that they agreed with all three before participating in Our Bright Future. This increased to 73% stating that they agreed after participating. This shows that the majority of respondents reflected that they had substantially more positive attitudes towards the environment after participation in the programme.

8.17 The results show that more respondents felt strongly that they could make a difference to the environment after participating in their project. This suggests a change in their locus of control and perceived 'self-efficacy' which have been closely linked (although no causal link confirmed) with pro-

environmental behaviour by recent studies (as referenced in a recent evidence review conducted by Defra on environmental volunteering[49]).

8.18   The following activities and delivery were described by project managers and delivery staff at site visits as working particularly well in changing participants' attitudes towards, and developing an appreciation for the environment.

- Simple and tangible activities (e.g. beach cleans, removal of invasive species, use of food waste) allow participants to understand the scale of environmental issues and the difference individuals can make to the environment, and encourage further positive behaviours.
- Bringing groups of young people together to tackle and discuss environmental problems helps them to feel less isolated and part of a wider movement, which can give them hope and motivation in their pro-environmental endeavours.
- Activities that generate both social and environmental outcomes create an interest and appeal to different motivations and interests of a diverse range of people.
- Providing warmth and food through activities (e.g. foraging and cooking on campfires) often allow young people to feel more comfortable outdoors and relate to it better.
- Fostering links between young people and their local environment's links to the past, culture, food, as an economic asset and with opportunities for them in the future.
- 'Hooking' young people with a *"high octane, physical activity that involves some stretching out of comfort zones but also with a visual impact"* (Project manager interview, 2018)*, e.g. coasteering, snorkelling and bush craft.
- Encouraging friendly competition between groups during, for example, practical conservation tasks. One participant reinforced this, remarking "If you do it in a huge group, a competition, who can find the most rubbish, it's quite fun".
- Longer-term engagement appears to be important in reinforcing messages and behaviours and encouraging participants to become advocates.

8.19   While there are examples of projects highlighting raised awareness of the environment and related problems (e.g. food waste) and a change in attitude, many of the examples provided by project managers and case studies have not been able to demonstrate whether this has led to confirmed behaviour change.

8.20   There is some indication of behaviour change from the Outcomes Flower qualitative responses. Participants were asked a future-leaning open question as part of the Outcomes Flower; '*What will you do differently as a result of being involved in the project?* After the qualitative responses were analysed and coded, the results showed that 28% of participants reported intending to, or already had, changed their behaviour towards the environment as a result of their participation in projects. As the question is framed around what participants plan to do, it is difficult to isolate which answers indicate behaviour change young people are already doing, as participants answers are not precise as to when and how they are or will act differently. There is nonetheless an indication that a sizeable number of young people have the intention to become more environmentally conscious.

8.21   Figure 8.3 shows the breakdown of responses coded as environmental behaviour change. The most commonly mentioned behaviours related to reducing, recycling or reusing behaviour (51% of mentions), followed by preventing littering (22% of mentions).

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[49] Defra (2019) Research to understand environmental volunteering amongst young people, http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=20053&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=environmental%20volunteering&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description

Figure 8.3 Behaviour changes undertaken by participants as a result of their involvement in Our Bright Future projects

Reducing, reusing & recycling   Preventing littering   Planting & gardening   Reducing food waste

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

8.22   The following case study extract provides examples of the change in attitudes and behaviours participants reported when interviewed as part of site visits.

> **Case Study Extract: Our Wild Coast (North Wales Wildlife Trust)**
> In many cases, the knowledge gained by participants through the project extends to awareness of environmental issues. Specifically, in relation to the beach clean attended, participants reported being much more aware of the detrimental impact of plastic to the environment and wildlife and reported taking actions at home to reduce their own personal contribution to the problem.
>
> *"I thought actually with landfill, it won't degrade, it's changed my way of thinking, put everything in the recycling and not the bin."*
>
> *"It's given me more knowledge to be careful about rubbish, it makes you think twice before you put it in the bin, you think how can I recycle this so it doesn't go in the rubbish."*
>
> Family members of participants described how the project had taught young people numerous skills and knowledge and on occasions had shared this with them e.g. different local plants which are edible. Participants also described sharing what they had learned with their friends when they returned to beaches they had previously cleaned.

8.23   Therefore, the programme is not only having a direct impact on reduced resource consumption, but also indirectly, through young people reducing their own impact and material footprint. The behaviour change is further significant for the following reasons:

8.24   **1. Cascading or 'domino' impacts**: there is strong evidence across case studies, project reporting, and project interviews that young people are discussing issues and influencing peers, their local community, and family:

> *"Some of this change is already evident with young people reporting that their schools have continued to encourage other students to think about the environment and to do more recycling, walking to school, or not using plastic which is expected to have a ripple effect as they discuss this with their families, friends etc. Additionally, the established environmental groups by young people in schools have continued to be active following the conclusion of their individual projects" Bright Green Future Case Study, 2018*

8.25   **2. Long-term impacts**: the behaviours that are commonly reported, such as recycling, reducing litter, and reducing food waste, are everyday actions. In promoting such actions, Our Bright Future may have influenced a potentially high-frequency behaviour. Though speculative, this could therefore support a high cumulative impact for the environment.

8.26   **3. Changing the behaviour of 'hard to reach' groups**: There is evidence that the portfolio has changed the behaviour of young people who would not otherwise engage in environmental issues. Project managers anecdotally reflect that the Our Bright Future activities are a new experience for some young people, and that they had not previously had an interest in environmental issues.

However, it is not possible to assess the proportion of young people engaged who did not have a previous interest.

"One pupil in particular, who had a very negative view of the environment and the need to look after it, really benefitted from the program. By the end, he was one of the most engaged students" Annual Report, 2017

"I didn't care that much before [about the environment] – now if someone drops litter, I tell them to pick it up, or if someone is damaging a tree, I tell them to stop. I wouldn't have done that before." Adult: "...and have you done that?" YP: "Yeah!" Conversation cited between a participant and adult by a project manager in their Annual Report, 2017

"We focused on reaching out to young people in hostels this year, and encouraging the residents to plan and design their own spaces. Senior staff and project workers gave unanimous feedback on how their clients were engaging more and spending more time outdoors. We also saw a positive increase in young people enrolling on the OCN course as a result" 2017 Annual Reports

8.27   In conclusion, the evidence suggests that some Our Bright Future participants have begun a transition towards greater pro-environmental behaviours, namely in relation to waste, as a result of increased awareness of environmental issues and a change in attitudes. However, there is not yet evidence of how widespread or long-term this behaviour change might be.

8.28   An understanding of the process involved in valuing the environment can be taken from Simon Thurley's Heritage Cycle theory[50]. The theory suggests that enjoyment of heritage leads to a desire to understand it, which in turn leads to valuing of it and a want to care for it – and so the cycle continues. Applying the model to the environment (in place of heritage), participants reporting a better understanding and enjoyment of the environment could be considered to have begun the journey towards valuing and caring for it. As such, behaviour change might be expected to follow in time. The original Heritage Cycle diagram has been adapted in Figure 8.4 to represent how this might apply to Our Bright Future participants relationship with the natural environment.

Figure 8.4: Adaptation of Simon Thurley's Heritage cycle to understanding and valuing of the natural environment
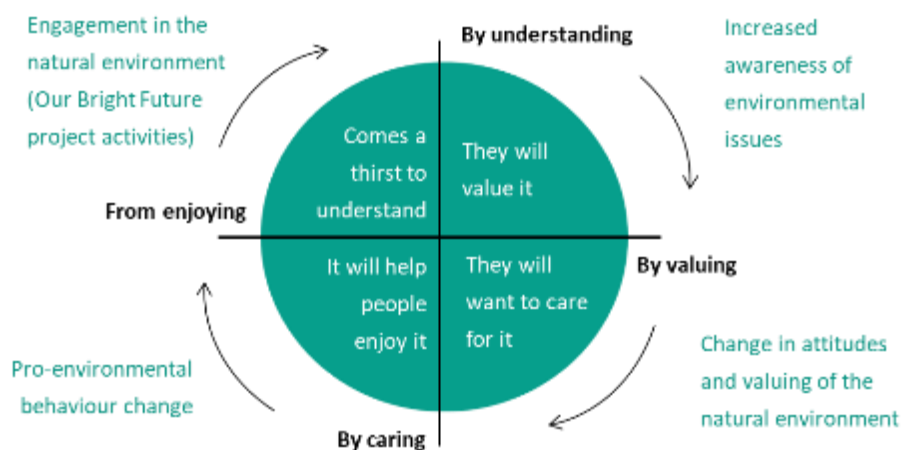
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP adapted from Thurley, S. (2005) Into the future. Our strategy for 2005-2010. In: Conservation Bulletin [English Heritage], 2005 (49).

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[50] Simon Thurley, Into the future. Our strategy for 2005-2010. In: *Conservation Bulletin* [English Heritage], 2005 (49).

Conclusions: Direct and indirect environmental improvements

The Our Bright Future programme is supporting a wide range of terrestrial and marine habitats, through a variety of conservation tasks. The evidence for physical environmental improvements is largely anecdotal, but some projects have conducted more formal evaluation approaches such as surveying and site monitoring. Given that evidence for environmental change takes time to observe, more robust evidence is expected at the end of the programme although some impacts may still not be seen within this timeframe.

There is anecdotal primary evidence from a sample of participants to demonstrate increased awareness, more positive attitudes and intentions of young people to conserve the environment as a result of their involvement in projects. This is supported by wider anecdotal evidence provided by projects. There is also evidence of so-called 'hard to reach groups' of young people caring about the environment, having not considered it previously, as well as examples of young people sharing their new gained enthusiasm for, and knowledge about the environment and conservation with peers and family members.

It remains difficult to ascertain to what extent changed attitudes and intentions have resulted in actual behaviour change and how long this behaviour will be sustained at this stage. Applying theory on the valuing of heritage to the natural environment, it is possible that participants enjoying, understanding and valuing the environment will subsequently develop a greater desire to care for it.

Recommendations: Direct and indirect environmental improvements

The final evaluation would be strengthened if all projects can support assessments of physical environmental improvements with measurable or scientific evidence, for example through conducting surveying and monitoring; developing case studies of environmental change and recording changes as part of wider site management plans.

It would be beneficial for projects to follow-up on the change in attitudes reported by young people by gathering data on the extent to which this has led to actual pro-environmental behaviour change. It would be most valuable if this could be followed up at various intervals after a participant's first engagement in order to assess whether any pro-environmental behaviour change is sustained over the long-term.

Additionally, the next iteration of the Outcomes Flower survey of participants should be rephrased to capture what participants have *already* done differently as a result of projects as opposed to the previous version which asked what they *would* do differently. This will allow for stronger conclusions on actual behaviour change as opposed to merely intentions.

Some key aspects of project activities have been identified as working well in fostering appreciation of the natural environment. Projects which have yet to use such approaches could take inspiration from them in order to encourage further development of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

Benefits for communities

8.29   The following section examines whether activities undertaken as part of Our Bright Future projects have led to wider benefits for the communities in which these activities occur e.g. increased use of community spaces, improved community cohesion. The logic model shown in Figure 8.5 theorises the expected outcomes and impacts for communities that might occur through Our Bright Future programme activities. The model draws on the objectives of individual projects as well as wider theory which indicates that youth volunteering and social action can help to facilitate social

connectedness and foster positive attitudes and understanding of other people through interaction with others from different backgrounds[51].

Figure 8.5. Logic model for community benefits

| Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
Activities in local communities Activities involving local communities	Improved community spaces Community awareness Community engagement (use of spaces) Changed (more positive) perceptions of young people	Better case for spaces Increased care for the environment Increased pro-environmental behaviours Improved community cohesion

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Improvements to community spaces

8.30   A community space is defined by the programme evaluation in quarterly reporting as any space that the public or community groups, residents or volunteers can use (either all of the time, or some of the time) e.g. park, nature reserve, woodland, playground, sports fields, school spaces, community gardens, allotments, or any other public space.

8.31   Figure 8.6 illustrates that the programme has improved or created a wide range of different community spaces. This is more often natural or green space, such as gardens (n=223) and nature reserves (n=270), but also includes built environment features such as community buildings (n=55) or religious spaces (n=33). The significance of this is that Our Bright Future projects are positively benefiting many users of different community spaces. There appears to be a general trend from quarterly and annual reports that more work has been undertaken in urban than rural spaces, which may reflect the geographical location of projects.

Figure 8.6 Total number of community spaces improved by the programme
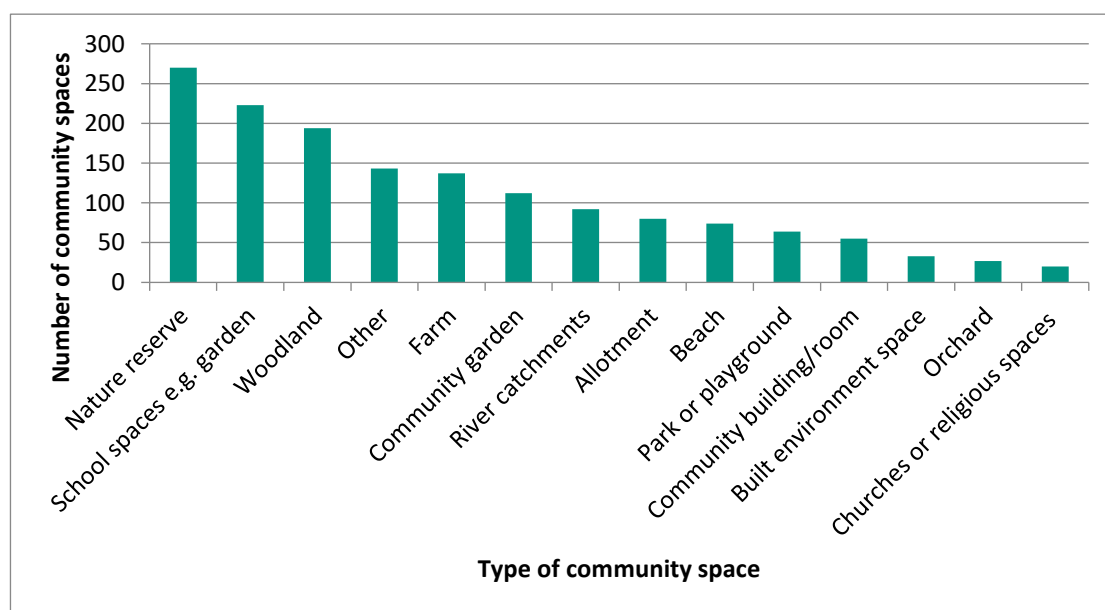
Source: ERS Ltd CEP (from 2018 Annual reporting by projects)

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[51] Ockenden, N. and Stuart, J. (2014) Review of evidence on the outcomes of youth volunteering, social action and leadership, Institute for Volunteering Research, https://thirdsectorimpact.eu/site/assets/uploads/page/documents-for-researchers/TSI_impact-report_sports-leaders-literature-review-dec-2014.pdf

8.32   Collectively, a total of 1,520 spaces have been recorded by projects as created or improved by the Our Bright Future programme. The programme had a target to support 450 community spaces over the course of the programme, and so has already greatly exceeded the indicator for this outcome. This demonstrates the scale of the impact of the programme on local community spaces.

8.33   Quarterly and annual reporting, and interviews with project managers, revealed that many project activities were jointly carried out alongside existing community groups. Table 8.1 details the number of projects that engaged with different types of community groups in 2018.

Table 8.1: Number of projects engaging with community group types		
Types of community group worked with this quarter	Number of projects 2018	Proportion (%) of projects
Schools, FE, HE institutions	27	87.1%
Youth groups (e.g. Scouts, Guides, Youth Clubs)	19	61.3%
Older people's groups	8	25.8%
Local geographic community (i.e. general public in local area)	24	77.4%
Housing association residents	13	41.9%
Online communities	9	29.0%
Interest groups and clubs	14	45.2%
Vulnerable people's groups (e.g. support groups, disabled people's groups, mental health groups, homeless people's groups)	19	61.3%
Voluntary or community groups (e.g. resident's associations)	18	58.1%

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP collated Quarterly Report data submitted by project managers

8.34   Table 8.1 indicates that a large number of projects are engaging with different types of community groups. This has outcomes for both the young people and communities involved, in terms of engaging with different members of the community (see following section on community cohesion). Whilst positive, it also reveals that community spaces are already being supported by initiatives outside of Our Bright Future. It is therefore difficult to conclude:

> a) whether the change in community spaces is solely attributable to Our Bright Future; and
>
> b) whether the outcomes observed would have occurred anyway as a result of existing social groups and projects.

8.35   However, qualitative evidence from project reporting suggests that the additional support lent by the portfolio has meant that, despite funding cuts, the third sector is able to reach further community spaces. Therefore, the Our Bright Future programme is contributing to the collective improvement of community spaces.

Increased community cohesion

8.36   The Evaluation Baseline and Context report recognised that the programme could contribute towards community cohesion in terms of the following outcomes:

- Increased social capital;
- Increased social inclusion (through meeting new people);
- Marginalised citizens enabled to reintegrate into society via development of skills and knowledge.

8.37   Across the (limited) evidence available, there are indications of increased community cohesion resulting from projects in terms of increased understanding, a change in perception of community members, and increased ties towards the community.

8.38 The following case study extract provides examples of how the From Farm to Fork project has supported improvements in community cohesion through bringing participants together with members of local communities.

Case Study Extract: From Farm to Fork (FoodCycle and Feedback)
A collaboration between FoodCycle and Feedback, From Farm to Fork offers young people opportunities to participate in activities across the food supply chain. The young people harvest produce with Feedback that would otherwise have been wasted on farms. They also help to prepare and host communal meals through FoodCycle with food donated from supermarkets and gleaned by Feedback that would otherwise have been wasted.

There is evidence, both anecdotally and from surveys with guests at FoodCycle meals, that the project has led to wider benefits to the communities in which it occurs. The FoodCycle meals bring together diverse groups of people and help reduce social isolation. C [participant] commented that through the project he has met people from different backgrounds, interacting with members of the community he wouldn't have normally. He has gained an appreciation for other people's needs and situations and it has changed his perception of people with mental health or drug issues.

"It's so nice to see…so many people [from the community] are benefitting so much from it" Volunteer at FoodCycle's Birmingham Hub

In addition, Feedback often collaborates with other organisations to try to include a diverse mix of young people in the project. At a recent glean in Embercombe they invited young people from The Turning Tides Project, a CIC that works with people with learning disabilities.

"The opportunity to bring some of the guys gleaning was one to not miss as it's outside, peaceful and in the community. We get to talk to other people and they get to talk to us. We contributed to something bigger and that's important. It was a beautiful day and it was brilliant to be involved such a good project." A representative from The Turning Tides CIC

H [participant in Feedback's gleaning] has also met a lot of people she wouldn't normally have had the chance to interact with and it has made her feel part of a community. This has had a big impact on her well-being. She feels much happier and more positive than before she started volunteering with Feedback.

8.39 Wider evidence on this outcome is mainly anecdotal or from informal (verbal) evaluation methods. For example, a few projects state in quarterly and annual reporting and project manager interviews that passers-by would stop and positively complement Our Bright Future activities. A similarly, positive reaction (by members of the local community, in terms of positive perceptions of young people, or gratitude for work done in community spaces) is evident in local communication channels such as newsletters. Instances of more formal evaluations are less frequent; one project conducted written surveys with 50 residents who had exposure to project activities, of which 40 reported increased community cohesion and increased community engagement and awareness of the environment. Additionally, a project manager interview indicated that one project is tracking changes in perceptions over time, but that it has been a difficult outcome to measure. Overall data is sparse relating to community cohesion, which limits the robustness with which the evaluation can draw conclusions about outcomes.

Changed perception of young people and other social groups:

8.40 The most notable outcome for communities reported by projects in the quarterly and annual reports was a more positive perception of young people by the community.

"Previously they saw young people as troublemakers but they are now seeing positive environmental changes made" (Project manager interview, 2017)

"They completed work on the site of the community centre – this brought in lots of people to see what was happening and connected them more deeply within the community" (Project manager interview, 2017)

"Community working across the generations is helping to raise the opinion of some of the older volunteers have about young people in a positive way" (Quarterly Report, 2017)

8.41   An expected consequence of this is that spaces are more likely to be maintained, allowing community spaces supported by Our Bright Future to develop in the long-term. For example, one project reported a local space with a history of vandalism had not been vandalised since work was undertaken by an Our Bright Future project. It appears that the physical alteration of spaces has more often led to changes in the perception of spaces as opposed to less tangible examples of community cohesion.

8.42   There is also evidence of more positive perceptions of different social groups arising as a result of Our Bright Future projects. These include a change in perceptions of vulnerable groups such as those with a history of drug use or mental health issues. Therefore, as a result of Our Bright Future activities, more positive narratives of social groups are being developed.

> *"Often there is a stigma attached to the YMCA: it is seen as a horrible place for horrible people. Local people don't want to get involved. By coming to events when orchards are launched, local people see amazing work and that changes the community's perspective. We've had really nice feedback" Project manager interview, 2017.*

Increased intergenerational and intra-generational ties

8.43   As can be assumed from Table 8.1, young people are engaging with their peers, other social groups, and other generations. For example, eight projects were recorded as working with older people's groups in 2018. Quarterly and annual reports by projects focus principally on increased ties with elderly generations, but also citizens of different cultural backgrounds, younger children, refugees, other volunteering groups, local businesses, local councillors, and veterans. Projects also reported increased ties within generations, as young people mix with different social groups, demographics, and from different parts of the UK.

8.44   There is also evidence that young people have increased knowledge and understanding of the community, in terms of its constituents. The following excerpt from a project participant suggests a tentative outcome could be an increased 'community spirit' by young people;

> *"It reminds you that there's all sorts of people out there who need help. It's really eye opening I think to get to see so many people who are struggling and how the little kids were having the time of their lives, it's so nice to see that you've put this on for free and so many people are benefitting so much from it. It just makes you think, brings you back a bit" Project participant, From Farm to Fork Case Study 2018*

Increased community awareness of and engagement in the environment

Community awareness of the environment

8.45   There is sparse evidence from project reporting and project manager interviews that local communities have an increased awareness of the environment as a result of projects. This has typically been framed in terms of awareness of environmental impacts, and behaviour change, from everyday habits (such as food shopping). One project manager reported a farmer improving their environmental practices for the benefit of wildlife, while another project manager reported members of the community replicating in their own garden the work of an Our Bright Future project.

> *"The Local Authority started sowing wild flower seeds in areas of the city (on grass verges). Some people have now sown wildlife flowers on the community wildlife garden (as they had seen other) people doing this an (some people then did this in their own garden, which showed a change in culture). There are small scale impacts" Project manager interview 2018*

8.46   As noted by project managers, there is increasing public environmental awareness beyond Our Bright Future. This makes it difficult to isolate the contribution of Our Bright Future to increased community awareness of environmental issues.

8.47   The scale of community engagement can be compartmentalised three-way: indirect, incidental, and intentional interaction with the environment (as compartmentalised by Keniger et al., 2013[52]). All three forms of engagement are evident across the portfolio.

8.48   **Indirect engagement:** project reports (quarterly, annual and project manager interviews) cite examples where members of the local community were hearing about Our Bright Future outdoor activities, and thus the natural environment, through local communication channels (such as local and national media). As a result of gaining recognition for its community work in a local paper, one project manager reported that partners had gained confidence in the young people's ability to undertake bigger local projects in future.

8.49   **Incidental engagement:** a principle output of Our Bright Future projects is new/improved access to nature (for example via footpaths) that the local community can use. This includes widening access to the environment for different social groups (for example one project further developed disability access on a site).

8.50   Over the last two years there have been observations from project managers directly (and indirectly through reports from community members) of increased use of spaces improved by projects (two project managers reported this in Q4 2018). Multiple project managers drew on quotes from local people, (made to them on site, from surveys and letters written to them) to demonstrate that the communities within which they were working had expressed appreciation for the improvements undertaken by projects.

8.51   **Intentional engagement:** Quarterly and annual reporting reveals citizens are using Our Bright Future regenerated spaces e.g. professionals using spaces close to their work for lunch breaks, local residents using a kitchen to grow their own produce, and several instances of schools using newly developed spaces for educational visits. The significance of this is that greater community engagement in the environment, as a result of the programme, supports education and knowledge transfer of the wider community.

8.52   One project had installed an art piece in a busy park to challenge members of the community to think about nature and their own impact on local wildlife. The project undertook a survey of local members of the public and provided quotes from individuals to indicate that it had been successful in leading local people to think about wildlife in their community.

8.53   There are very varied and individual examples of how work in communities is having consequent impacts for participants and local people. One project manager reported reductions in anti-social behaviour and littering as a result of improvements to an urban garden. The same project manager, commented that they had also observed some self-policing of spaces by groups of young people at project sites within the community while other projects commented that they were beginning to see communities take ownership of spaces after they had been improved.

Conclusions: Benefits for communities

To date, projects have supported 1,520 community spaces, far exceeding the programme's original lifetime target. The types of community spaces are wide-ranging, including both green and grey infrastructure. Consequently, the activities of Our Bright Future are positively benefiting many users of different community spaces. As most projects across the programme are working in some form alongside other community groups (such as schools, youth groups), it is difficult to rule out that these improvements would not have happened anyway without the Our Bright Future programme. However, it is anecdotally evident that the programme is extending the reach and positive impact on community spaces within the wider third sector.

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[52] Keniger, L.E., Gaston, K.J., Irvine, K.N. and Fuller, R.A. 2013. What are the benefits of interacting with nature? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 10, pp.913-935

There is anecdotal evidence that projects are supporting community cohesion. Community cohesion was understood and described by project managers in terms of more positive perceptions of young people and other social groups and increased connectedness to the wider community for young people. The expected impact of increased community cohesion is that there is increased community spirit and spaces are more likely to be respected, but there are only a few documented examples to date that this is the case.

The programme has recorded anecdotal examples of increased community awareness of environmental issues. As this sits within a wave of wider public interest in environmental issues, it is unfortunately again difficult to attribute increased community awareness to Our Bright Future. The programme is leading to increased indirect (through local communication channels), incidental (passing through spaces improved by projects), and intentional (a new use of space improved by projects) engagement of the community to the environment.

Recommendations: Benefits for communities

The target number of community spaces could be revised in light of achievement.

Evidence relating to community impacts is largely anecdotal at present, and if the impact on communities is a priority for the programme, there may be benefit in supporting projects to collect data in a more robust and consistent manner. It appears however, that this is a secondary outcome for the majority of projects, after the primary outcomes sought for young people. Given the need to improve data collection in other focal areas, particularly related to the Policy Asks, community impacts might therefore be considered a correspondingly lesser priority in terms of programme data collection. It should be emphasised that projects may however wish to collect more detailed evidence if this will support future funding applications.

OUTCOME 3: THE OUR BRIGHT FUTURE PROGRAMME HAS INFLUENCED CHANGE AND CREATED A LEGACY

- There has been a lot of activity at both a project and programme level intended to engage key influencers and decision makers, and most of this activity has focused on raising awareness of the programme or projects.
- Projects have been more successful in engaging with political influencers, while at the programme level engagement has focused on NGOs, voluntary and community sector organisations and the public sector.
- Some projects have mobilised participating young people to campaign successfully for specific local changes.
- At the programme level the key activity has focused on the co-creation of three 'Policy Asks' with projects and participating young people.
- At the mid-term, there is some evidence of outcomes in relation to changes in policy and practice, such as providing input to consultations or policy level discussions, but evidence of impacts is limited.

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9. PROGRAMME OUTCOME 3: INFLUENCING CHANGE

> ### OUTCOME 3: The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy

9.1 This chapter evaluates whether outcomes and impacts have been achieved in relation to Outcome 3. The chapter has been divided into two sections:

- Projects influencing changes in policy and practice;
- Programme influencing changes in policy and practice.

9.2 The programme has identified that there are opportunities to influence policy at a project level, most often through project staff and young people from individual projects directly engaging with decision makers. This is the focus of the first part of the chapter.

9.3 The programme also aims to influence policy at a programme level (i.e. collective influence of the portfolio, strategic influence of the programme and the creation of evidence to influence policy and decision making) most of which is linked to the activities of the Policy Function. This is the focus of the second part of the chapter.

9.4 The chapter finally discusses overall conclusions related to Outcome 3. Outcome 3 includes a reference to legacy. While legacy in terms of policy influence is considered as part of the wider analysis referred to above, the broader legacy of Our Bright Future is discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 11).

Projects influencing changes in policy and practice

9.5 Figure 9.1 illustrates how, theoretically, project activities connect with key influencers (see Appendix 9.1 for examples), raise awareness of their project and the programme, and develop evidence that demonstrates the importance and value of the programme. The model shows how these might lead to changes in policy and practice related to young people and the environment.

Figure 9.1: Logic model for projects influencing changes in policy and practice

Activities
- Projects engaging directly with influencers
- Projects participating in meetings and events
- Projects supporting young people to engage with influencers
- Projects demonstrating-by-doing

Outcomes
- Key influencers informed of the Programme and of the value from engaging young people in the environment
- Broader awareness of the projects and Programme among relevant organisations
- A body of evidence is developed demonstrating approaches and successes

Impacts
- Influencers consider their knowledge of the Programme in making decisions
- Policy documents or practice is changed
- More funding is available for youth-led environmental action
- Approaches used in the Programme are replicated more widely

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

9.6 The following discussion examines this logic model to determine if, and how projects are influencing change by first setting out available evidence on project activities and then exploring the extent to which outcomes and impacts have been observed.

Project policy influencing activities

9.7 From the evidence available, it is clear that projects have sought to influence change in policy and practice through a variety of activities at different scales. Based on project quarterly and annual reporting, and an 'Influence Log'[53] maintained by the programme Policy and Campaigns Manager

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[53] Due to staff changes in the programme team data provided by the PCM are only available for the period July 2017 – December 2018, so the data in this chapter omits the period between programme launch (March 2016) and June 2017.

(PCM), the types of activity undertaken by projects, with indicative examples are presented in Figure 9.2.

Figure 9.2 Examples of project activities to change policy and practice

Engaging Influencers

Engaging directly with local & national influencers and decision makers

e.g. through meetings and sit visits with, for example, MPs or senior civil servants from the UK and devolved administration departments.

Supporting and encouraging young people to engage

with local and national influencers and take part in campaigning e.g. through preparing petitions.

Sharing good practice

Engaging other organisations to change practices

by demonstrating what works well and showing, for example, that youth-led environmental projects are possible.

Developing and holding training days or taster sessions

with staff from local organisations for example, giving local NHS staff first-hand experience of eco-therapy.

Connecting

Connecting people and organisations to encourage learning and practice sharing

both within the portfolio (i.e. with other projects) and externally (i.e. with partner organisations who may not have worked together before).

Working with others to develop new approaches and materials

e.g. course materials for visually impaired students.

Campaigning and consulting

Developing or supporting local and regional campaigns

e.g. a regional campaign to encourage businesses and public organisations to provide free water bottle refilling.

Coordinating responses from young people to official consultations

e.g. facilitating a workshop for young people to gather opinions on the Mayor of London's Environmental Strategy.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

9.8   In their quarterly and annual reporting, project managers were asked to categorise engagement with key influencers by a list of typologies, e.g. MP, NGO etc. (see Appendix 9.1 for examples). Political influencers included politicians, MPs, AMs, mayors and councillors (e.g. Nicola Sturgeon, Amelia Womack); while other categories included NGO and VCS organisations (e.g. local Guides and Scouts,

the National Trust, Surfers Against Sewerage); influencers from within the public sector (e.g. Defra, Environment Agency); decision makers from within partner organisations and private sector influencers.

9.9   Figure 9.3 shows the extent to which each main category of key influencer has been engaged by the projects and directly by the young people themselves. In total 142 influencers were reported to have been engaged with by projects between January 2017 and the end of December 2018. 87 influencers were reported to have been engaged with directly by the young people themselves. In some cases, these were the same as those engaged by the project but in many cases they were different[54].

9.10   The data shows that political influencers are by far the largest category engaged with by both projects and young people. This category is a particularly large proportion (77%) of the overall number of influencers engaged by young people and is largely comprised of MPs. The second largest category is NGO/VCS organisations, followed by the public sector.

9.11   The proportion of reported engagement with internal staff/partners is perhaps an underestimation. The data appears to relate only to meetings and specific, organised engagement activities rather than day-to-day communications and awareness raising which may also be resulting in changes to internal policies and practice. It should additionally be noted that there may be engagement with influencers from young people on projects that is not captured by project staff.

Figure 9.3: Key influencers reported to have been engaged with by projects and young people (January 2017– December 2018)
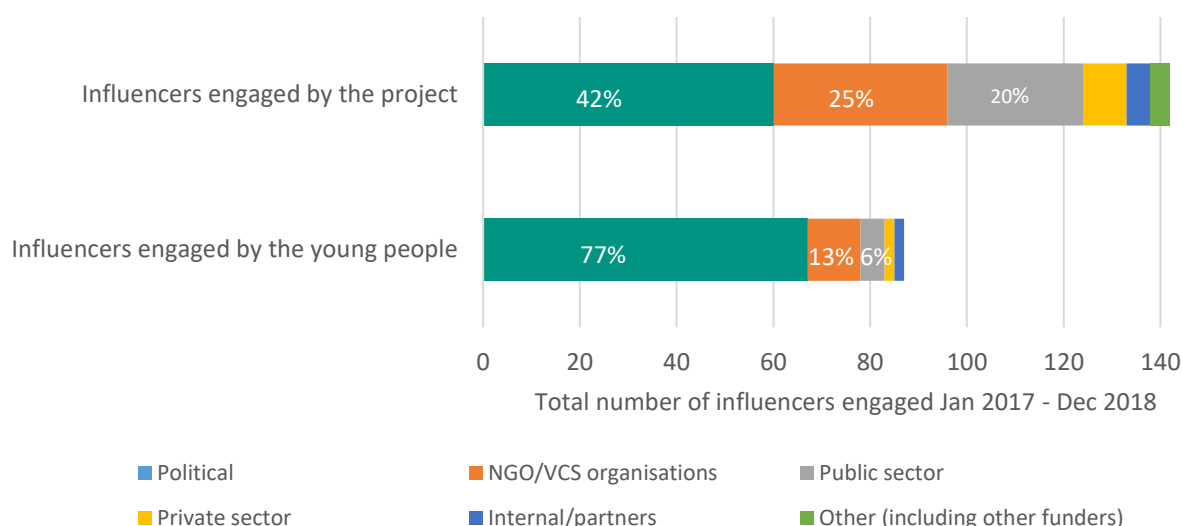
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP based on Quarterly Reports

9.12   Programme targets/objectives relating to this are qualitative in nature and therefore there are no specific targets for influencer types and activities to engage decision makers, nor specific indicators of the expected outcomes of engaging influencers. Given the strong programme emphasis on influencing policy and practice, considering the evidence now available, questions for the programme at this stage might be:

- Are there opportunities to engage more and/or a wider range of influencers? (with an understanding that some projects have specific objectives to engage key influencers, whereas for others it may be more 'ad hoc'.)
- Could projects look again at their objectives and set some (or more ambitious) goals for engaging with key influencers, knowing what is now possible?

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[54] Due to the ways in which this was reported by the 31 projects, it is not possible to identify with certainty, how many influencers were double counted (reported in both categories).

- Where might the greatest influence or opportunities to have influence come from (e.g. is it by engaging public sector, political or NGOs)? How can projects be best supported to increase engagement in these areas?
- What outcomes are expected from engagement with key influencers?

9.13   The participation of projects in programme advocacy activities (activities and events organised at the programme level to raise awareness of the programme) also provides an indication of how projects have sought to influence change. For example, working with the PCM to promote Our Bright Future; showcasing the project as part of the portfolio; meeting key influencers to discuss the wider Our Bright Future programme; and attending or hosting events to promote the programme.

9.14   Figure 9.4, based on data from project quarterly reporting for the period January 2017 – December 2018, shows the number of projects reporting in each period that they have engaged with programme advocacy activities and had site visits from key influencers (see Appendix 9.1 for examples of influencers). These data show that engagement peaked in late 2017 and remained fairly consistent until late 2018.

9.15   Programme advocacy activities were defined in the project quarterly reporting as including: working with the PCM to develop the Our Bright Future advocacy activity; working with the PCM to promote the Our Bright Future programme; showcasing a project as part of the Our Bright Future portfolio; meeting with cross sector, local or national key influencers or decision makers to discuss projects and the wider Our Bright Future programme ambitions; influencing the internal policies or practices of your organisation, partners or other organisations based on learning from the programme/portfolio; attending or hosting any events to promote the Our Bright Future programme.

Figure 9.4: Project engagement with programme advocacy and key influencer site visits (January 2017 – December 2018)
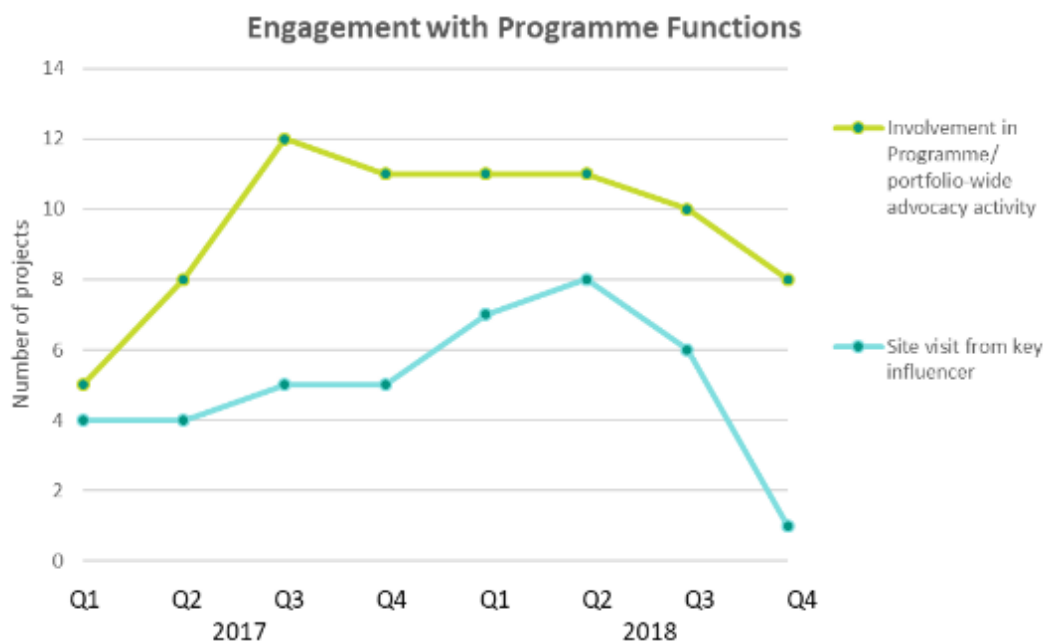
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP using quarterly report data

9.16   Given this wide definition of programme advocacy, much higher numbers of projects reporting such engagement might have been expected (as shown in Figure 9.4, 12 projects being the maximum in any one quarter). Unlike for SLI, there are no targets for project engagement with the Policy Function so it is difficult to say whether this is as expected or sufficient to achieve programme aims.

9.17   Additionally, the engagement with programme advocacy is perhaps higher than project manager reports would suggest. Towards the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019, all projects were

engaged with the Policy Function in some way as part of the development of the programme's Policy Asks through SLI workshops (on policy influencing/campaigning) and the planned Parliamentary event. All projects received supporting materials, invited their local MPs and supported their participants to invite MPs.

9.18   The number of key influencer site visits to projects has varied from eight in the second quarter of 2018 to 1 in the fourth quarter of 2018. This may indicate seasonal variations e.g. project work on sites being more active in spring and summer months, although the fourth quarter of 2017 showed a higher number. This will be explored when a longer time-series of data is available (i.e. if same pattern occurs in 2019 and 2020).

Evidence of outcomes and emerging impacts

9.19   Attributing change in policy and practice to specific engagement activities is difficult, as many other influencing factors exist at any one time. Decisions relating to policy and practice are made for a variety of reasons and in response to diverse pressures and priorities. The outcomes presented here are based on project reporting through quarterly reports and interviews held as part of the evaluation.

9.20   Looking across reported outcomes there is clear evidence that projects are actively engaging with a wide range of influencers, decision makers and organisations, as well as supporting participating young people to lead campaigns and engage themselves with decision makers. Engagement has been at a local and site-specific scale (e.g. in schools, with local councillors) but also with national influencers including politicians and senior representatives from England government departments and the devolved administrations.

9.21   Those projects that have reported on this (i.e. ten of 31 projects reported against this question in Quarter 4 of 2018) generally state that 'awareness raising' is the main outcome of their engagement activities. It should be noted that there is not a clear definition of 'awareness raising' so this may relate to different types of intended outcome depending on project interpretations. As a result, there is little evidence at this mid-term point of impacts in terms of specific changes in policy or practice resulting directly from project activities. However, some specific local practice changes have been seen, and projects have reported that practice changes developed or adopted as part of Our Bright Future activities have raised interest outside of the programme and that there is some evidence that these practices are being adopted more widely.

9.22   Projects have reported some notable successes in terms of outcomes from their engagement activities at both a national scale and locally. Table 9.1 presents selected examples of national influence taken from quarterly reports and interviews with project managers.

Table 9.1 Examples of national and regional project outcomes	
Encouraging political discussion and debate	Impact Arts reported that their engagement had led to the tabling of an early day motion in the Scottish Parliament to praise the work done by young people.
Changes within project organisations	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust reported that their awareness raising through Tomorrow's Natural Leader's project had led to an organisation-wide change in approach to recruitment for conservation jobs. It was recognised that there are generally no 'entry level' jobs as most roles require a minimum of two years' experience. Jobs are now listed without the experience requirement, which opens up employment opportunities to more young people.

Changing practices and approaches within external organisations	MyPlace, run by the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside (which focuses on ecotherapy) reported that they have influenced approaches in combined health authorities in their area, leading to wider interest in and potential uptake of the approach. Putting Down Roots for Young People, run by St Mungo's reported that they have worked with the Open College Network (OCN) to make changes to coursework policy, including enabling young people with lower literacy to submit answers vocally using 'Text Talk' rather than in writing. The Vision England project, run by Sense (formerly RNIB) and FSC in partnership with the Field Studies Council (FSC) reported that the FSC has taken on a number of recommendation of actions to facilitate the participation of vision impaired young people in activities.
Developing campaigns	Your Shore Beach Rangers, run by Cornwall Wildlife Trust has worked with local organisations to launch ReFill Cornwall to encourage businesses and other organisation to provide facilities for refilling water bottles, to help reduce plastic waste[55].
Producing petitions and submitting responses to official consultations	My World My Home run by Friends of the Earth Trust encouraged participating young people to engage with, and form part of a group handing in a petition at No.10 Downing Street. This resulted in a formal letter from the Environment Minister.

9.23   In addition to outcomes at a regional and national level, there are numerous examples of small scale, locally specific changes to policy and practice. The case study below illustrates the kinds of outcomes of this nature.

> **Case study extract: My World My Home, Friends of the Earth (FOE)**
> 'My World My Home' run by FOE in partnership with the NUS encourages students to develop a community campaigning project about an environmental issue. The project overall has had a number of specific successes in changing policies and practices, mostly within educational establishments (e.g. colleges). Examples of key achievements include:
>
> **Young people gaining commitment from local councils to make policy or practice changes**. Engaging with the local council, participants succeeded in developing an alliance of schools and colleges so that they could lead other institutions to reduce their carbon footprint by 5%. A local councillor also agreed to work with young people to achieve a clean air zone around their college, supported by a petition of 500 signatures.
>
> **Young people influencing changes in practice in schools and other institutions,** as a result of campaigning by young people, e.g. getting commitment from the Head of Catering to reduce plastic usage/waste.
>
> **Young people encouraging changes in institutional governance** based on young people's campaigning, for example college students campaigning for a Green Ambassador to be included in Student Union elections

9.24   Given the diversity of these engagement and influencing activities and outcomes it is not possible to report on a 'cumulative' change in policy or practice outcome across the portfolio. However, the evidence at the mid-term point indicates that projects are actively seeking to influence change within their organisations and among partners and key influencers and decision-makers locally and nationally.

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[55] https://www.cornwallrcc.org.uk/cornwalls-communities-join-the-refill-revolution/

Conclusions: Projects influencing changes in policy and practice

Evidence at the mid-term point indicates that projects are actively seeking to influence change within their organisations and among partners, key influencers and decision-makers locally and nationally.

Awareness raising has been the main focus of project policy engagement activities at this stage. Projects have reported on some specific, localised outcomes, with many of these being quite practical in nature, such as young people, through their involvement in a project, engaging with and asking for changes such as in environmental practices in a school or their local area.

Project staff and young people have engaged with a variety of key influencers. The majority have been political influencers (MPs/MSP/Welsh AM/NI MLA, local councillors, etc.) followed by NGO/VCS organisations and public sector influencers (local authority, governmental departments, schools, health services etc.).

According to the evidence available, it appears that projects have had good success in initiating dialogue with political influencers, which may well reflect that local MPs, councillors and mayors are interested in, and can relate to the activities of projects in their areas. This may be a useful learning point: that political influence is perhaps more effective locally.

Projects influencing changes in practice has generally focussed on quite specific things, such as recycling facilities in schools, suggesting that influencing practice projects may be best place to deliver this. At present, these changes are ad-hoc (i.e. driven by the projects) rather than stemming from any programme wide strategy.

The amount of engagement with programme advocacy activities and site visitors from key influencers appears to be tailing off after being fairly consistent since 2017. However, these have only be reported by less than half of all projects.

It should be noted that not all projects are reporting evidence of influencing policy and practice – approximately 21 projects up until January 2019 (through Quarterly Reports). It would be useful if all reported, even if simply to confirm that no interactions took place during that quarter. This would ensure that there is a full picture of activity.

Recommendations: Projects influencing changes in policy and practice

Given the strong programme emphasis on influencing policy and practice as a key strategy for programme's legacy, Our Bright Future could explore whether it is feasible to set indicators and possibly targets relating to engaging policy influencers, using the mid-term data as a baseline of what is achievable. Of particular interest might be the extent to which local projects can, possibly more immediately, engage political influencers.

The programme should continue to monitor engagement from projects in advocacy activities and site visits from key influencers, and explore any barriers to ensure that momentum is not lost.

A wealth of practical examples of changes to practice at a project level exist. While some of these have already been shared through, for example, SLI events, these could be further shared amongst projects (and wider sector) through the development of case studies or a practical guide.

A programme indicator related to influencing policy and practice includes the *creation and use of evidence* for this outcome. In addition to practical examples, further consideration could also be given to the extent to which evidence is already being collected and/or used by projects to influence policy and practice and whether this can be coordinated by the programme (e.g. PCM). This might include requiring projects to gather evidence relevant to the three key Policy Asks (see Box 9.1) that can be used to support project and programme level advocacy and influencing.
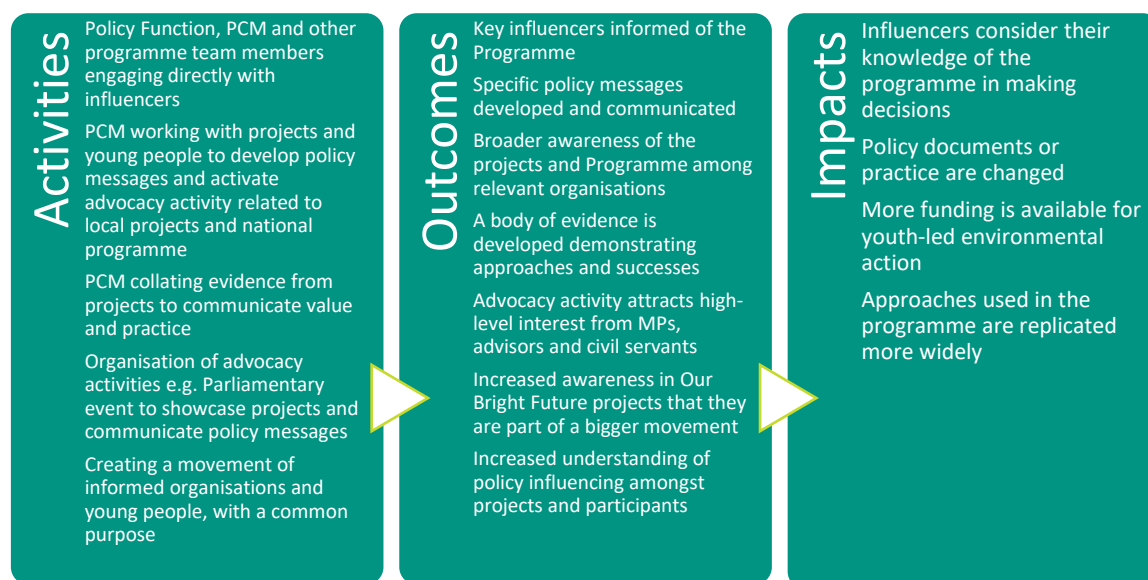
Programme influencing policy and practice

9.25   This second half of the chapter provides a review of programme-level efforts to influence policy and practice. The outcomes underpinning rationale and structure (i.e. Policy Function) are first outlined, followed by an overview and examples of activities and presentation of currently available evidence of outcomes and impacts. A subsection within the activities section provides information on the programme's Parliamentary event held in March 2019, an integral part of the programme's influencing strategy.

Underpinning rationale and structure

9.26   Figure 9.5 illustrates how, theoretically, programme level activities might lead to changes in policy and practice, namely activities to: raise awareness of Our Bright Future, develop policy messages, connect with key influencers and develop evidence that demonstrates the value of the programme. These are anticipated to be changes in policy and practice related to young people and the environment, and how such initiatives are supported in future (financially and through policy priorities).

Figure 9.5: Logic model programme influencing changes in policy and practice

Activities
- Policy Function, PCM and other programme team members engaging directly with influencers
- PCM working with projects and young people to develop policy messages and activate advocacy activity related to local projects and national programme
- PCM collating evidence from projects to communicate value and practice
- Organisation of advocacy activities e.g. Parliamentary event to showcase projects and communicate policy messages
- Creating a movement of informed organisations and young people, with a common purpose

Outcomes
- Key influencers informed of the Programme
- Specific policy messages developed and communicated
- Broader awareness of the projects and Programme among relevant organisations
- A body of evidence is developed demonstrating approaches and successes
- Advocacy activity attracts high-level interest from MPs, advisors and civil servants
- Increased awareness in Our Bright Future projects that they are part of a bigger movement
- Increased understanding of policy influencing amongst projects and participants

Impacts
- Influencers consider their knowledge of the programme in making decisions
- Policy documents or practice are changed
- More funding is available for youth-led environmental action
- Approaches used in the programme are replicated more widely
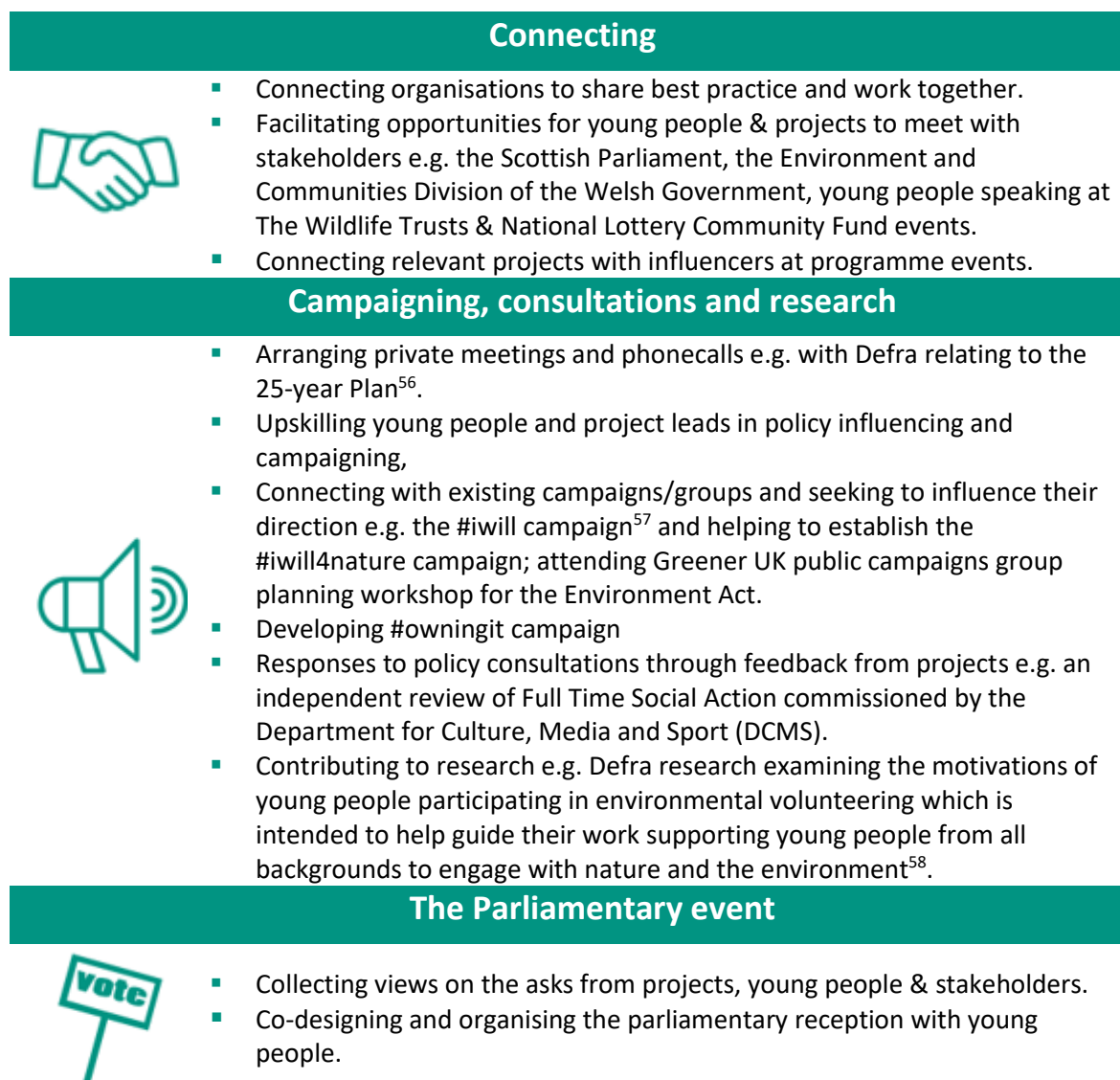
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

9.27   A large part of the programme's aim to influence policy and practice is fulfilled by the Policy Function which is overseen by a Policy and Campaigns Manager (PCM). The PCM's role is to develop a Policy Influence and Advocacy Strategy and liaise with policy and decision makers. The manager has also provided support and practical tools for campaigning and policy influencing to support the portfolio through regional workshops, which were valued by organisations with limited or no experience of campaigning.

9.28   The PCM has also overseen the establishment of a high-level Advocacy Advisory Group for the programme, to include CEOs from all partner organisations and two to three young people involved in projects. The Group is intended to provide *'strategic input to help guide, refine and support our [the programme] policy approach and to consider how it might be integrated with the policy approaches of the partner organisations and their wider networks'*. This Advisory Group is expected to meet at least once a year for the remainder of the programme. The Group met for the first time in October 2018, and made recommendations in relation to the focus and direction of policy influencing and advocacy for the programme, as well as on how, in practice to progress work in relation to the three Policy Asks (described later in this chapter).

9.29   The PCM has maintained an 'Influence Log' every quarter since the third quarter of 2017 (July-September 2017) which lists programme engagement and advocacy activities and provides information on who has been engaged, in which ways and what the outcomes were and/or follow up is planned. There is limited evidence related to programme influencing policy prior to July 2017 due to staff changes in the programme team. None-the-less there is clear evidence that the PCM and wider programme team have engaged widely internally, between programme partners and projects, and externally, engaging with a range of influencers and stakeholders.

9.30   Examples of programme influencing activities are included in Figure 9.6.

Figure 9.6 Example programme influencing activities

Connecting

- Connecting organisations to share best practice and work together.
- Facilitating opportunities for young people & projects to meet with stakeholders e.g. the Scottish Parliament, the Environment and Communities Division of the Welsh Government, young people speaking at The Wildlife Trusts & National Lottery Community Fund events.
- Connecting relevant projects with influencers at programme events.

Campaigning, consultations and research

- Arranging private meetings and phonecalls e.g. with Defra relating to the 25-year Plan[56].
- Upskilling young people and project leads in policy influencing and campaigning,
- Connecting with existing campaigns/groups and seeking to influence their direction e.g. the #iwill campaign[57] and helping to establish the #iwill4nature campaign; attending Greener UK public campaigns group planning workshop for the Environment Act.
- Developing #owningit campaign
- Responses to policy consultations through feedback from projects e.g. an independent review of Full Time Social Action commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).
- Contributing to research e.g. Defra research examining the motivations of young people participating in environmental volunteering which is intended to help guide their work supporting young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and the environment[58].

The Parliamentary event

- Collecting views on the asks from projects, young people & stakeholders.
- Co-designing and organising the parliamentary reception with young people.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP based on PCM records

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[56] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan
[57] https://www.iwill.org.uk/environment/
[58]
http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=20053&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=environmental%20volunteering&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description

9.31   The Influence Log data provided by the PCM indicates that over the period July 2017 – December 2018 the PCM reported a total of 79 separate activities related to engagement with key influencers (including some activities by members of the Steering Group). Figure 9.7 presents the range, and varying level of engagement with different categories of influencers. It shows that NGOs and VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) organisations are the most frequently engaged with, with 40% of all engagement focused on influencers in this sector. This possibly reflects engagement by the PCM with organisations working in the same sectors as programme partner organisations. The second highest category is the Public sector (27%), which includes engagement with civil servants, government departmental representatives and advisors. The other category which has seen considerable focus is Internal and Partner influencers (19%). This suggests that the programme team has been actively seeking to engage with and develop relationships with other partner organisations in the context of the Our Bright Future programme.

9.32   While, from these data, the Political category has no specific examples of influencers engaged with, this is reflective of the categories used for this analysis: political influencers are considered to include only MPs and their equivalent in devolved administrations, local councillors and mayors. This does not suggest that the PCM and programme team have not sought to influence at the national policy level. As noted, direct engagement has been made with, for example, Defra in relation to preparation of the 25 Year Environment Plan and policy consultations run by other UK government departments. In addition, a key area of engagement not reflected in the Influence Log has been contact with MPs (via email) to invite them to the Parliamentary event (described subsequently) and to share information about the three Policy Asks. In total: all 650 MPs were invited to the event and nearly 90 responses were received: 45 MPs replied to confirm attendance; four stated that they might attend and 38 stated that they could not attend.

9.33   Comparing these data on influencers engaged with at the programme level with those by projects (see Figure 9.3), reveals significant differences in the relative focus of influencing activity. At the programme level NGOs and VCS organisations and engagement with partners represent 59% of all engagement activity compared to just 25% of reported engagement activity by projects. At the same time, aside the PCM engagement in context of the Parliamentary event, it appears from these data that projects have engaged more frequently with political influencers (42% of all project engagement compared to 0% for the programme). This reflects the successes that projects have had in engaging with local politicians (MPs, mayors and councillors), who are perhaps motivated by projects happening in their area. As noted, this difference in the level of 'political' influencers engaged also reflects the definition used, which included civil servants and government advisors within the public sector category. It does not imply that there was in reality no political influencing at the programme level.

Figure 9.7: Key influencers engaged with by the programme team (%; July 2017 – December 2018)
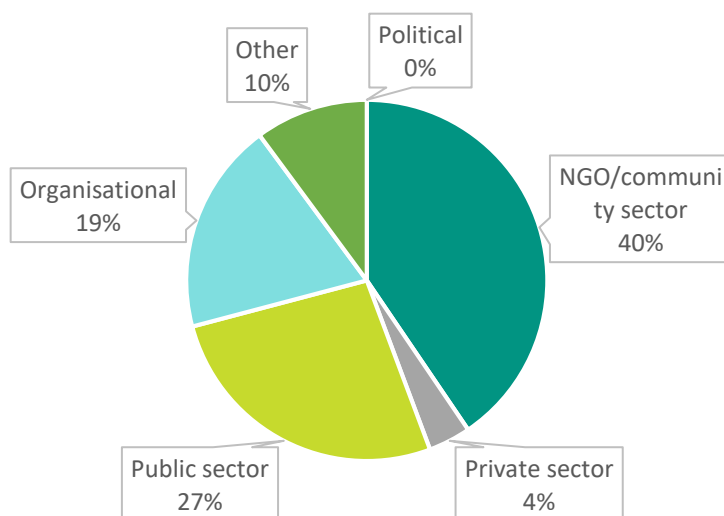
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP using PCM influence logs

9.35   As noted in the previous section, engagement at the political level appears to work best at a local scale (presumably because MPs are interested in what is happening in their constituency, and due to direct engagement with local councillors, mayors etc. about issues that resonate locally). However, up to this point there has been little coordination by the programme of influencing activity around an agreed set of policy priorities. Rather, the PCM has focused on a bottom-up approach and consulted with young people and others involved in projects and the programme to develop a set of three key Policy Asks. However, these have only emerged in the second half of 2018 and are being used to frame programme level policy activity (especially the Parliamentary event in March 2019) rather than framing portfolio-wide influencing and advocacy.

The Parliamentary event

9.36   An Our Bright Future focused Parliamentary event held in March 2019 and organised by the PCM represents a key area of policy influencing activity at the programme level. The event was framed by three key changes that young people want to see. These were developed through a series of eight events across the UK to collect more than 700 ideas from around 300 people involved in the programme (including it is understood at least 150 young people from across all projects). The events were based on the question *'if you could change one thing for you and the environment, what would this be?'*. This process culminated in the creation of *three key changes young people want to see* (see Figure 9.8 and Textbox 9.1).

Figure 9.8: Our Bright Future Policy Asks

Source: The Wildlife Trusts

Textbox 9.1 Three key changes young people want to see

Ask 1: More time spent learning in and about nature

We call for Government to produce guidance to schools stating that at least an hour of lesson time per day should be spent outdoors.

Ask 2: Support to get into environmental jobs

We call for Government to fund a new Future Jobs scheme that would allow the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers.

Ask 3: Government, employers, businesses, schools and charities to pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment

We call on Government to create space for young people to be heard and play an active role in society. Therefore, we urge Government to:

- *appoint a Minister for Youth, to coordinate government work to support young people and help them engage with politics*
- *introduce a youth advisory board in every Government Department*
- *remove barriers to youth engagement, for example by increasing accessibility of consultations (e.g. plain English and reduce length)*

9.37   Considering these three key changes in the context of the programme's vision, outcomes and key challenges (as set out on the Our Bright Future website), there is good resonance between the three Policy Asks and some of the challenges the programme is seeking to address. In particular challenges related to young people not feeling empowered to lead or make change in relation to the environment, which could be addressed partially by being more able to secure employment in the sector. Another key challenge is young people being particularly affected by mental health issues, which time spent in nature is known to be beneficial in addressing.

9.38   The Policy Asks are directly relevant to the programme Outcome 1 related to equipping young people with skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change, but less relevant to the other outcomes. This reflects the fact that these are Policy Asks related to changes young people

wish to see, whereas the programme vision and Outcomes reflect the broader focus of the programme (e.g. on communities, environmental improvements and partnership working).

9.39   Members of the programme team and programme stakeholders agreed that the campaign had engaged well with young people in order to generate ideas, albeit these had been "*polished by the staff members*" (Youth representative). While this was considered a good example of young people taking the lead, it was acknowledged that there is a need to improve their knowledge and awareness of policy before they can make informed decisions. Some projects have found it difficult to engage participants in this part of the programme due to their age and varying learning abilities.

9.40   However, despite the policy direction being applauded for its participatory approach, a few consultees felt that being so driven by young people might have led to unclear and challenging Policy Asks.

> *"When I look at the list of Policy Asks, it's interesting but not sure it's the right way to have our voices heard. You don't necessarily go after the most important thing but the most likely thing that will get done by taking a more stage by stage approach… It should be about questioning what things could you get purchase on…how do you help young people think in more sophisticated fashion to guide their asks?" Programme stakeholder interview, 2018*

9.41   Before the Parliamentary event took place, there had been requests for more updates about the Policy Function as well as "*more tangible policy aims*" (Internal programme stakeholder) and on topical issues such as plastics. Concerns had been expressed that, while the work undertaken had been positive, it may not be strong enough to influence policy and may be overshadowed by political issues and other campaigns (e.g. #iwill). There was confidence however that if all the projects came together on a single issue, the programme "could make a real impact".

> *"confident that if all of the Our Bright Future projects united behind a single clear message or ask then we could achieve something amazing" Project manager interview, 2018*

9.42   Textbox 9.2 details some of the preparation for the Parliamentary event and what took place on the day.

Textbox 9.2 Our Bright Future Parliamentary event

As a key activity to raise awareness of the programme, and in particular of the three key Policy Asks, a Parliamentary event was held in Westminster on 5th March 2019.

Before the event, the PCM involved young people in the preparations. A workshop was organised in October 2018 to capture young people's expectations and ideas for the event and many ideas were taken forward, including a nature-related dress code for the event and the goody bag. In addition, a working group was set up to oversee the planning and delivery of the event and three young people were part of this group. Young people also played a key role in the event itself, delivering presentations and actively engaging with MPs and other participants to discuss the Policy Asks and showcase their projects.

49 young people from 29 (out of 31) Our Bright Future projects participated in the event, and approximately 50 MPs attended and spoke with young people and projects about the programme and the Policy Asks.

During and following the event there was a notable increase in social-media activity related to the programme. Caroline Lucas MP also mentioned the programme and Policy Asks on the Today programme on Radio 4 on 6th March 2019. Some young people were also offered a placement or the opportunity to speak at future events by MPs present at the event.

In a follow-up survey conducted by the PCM and completed by 15 projects which participated, the following were reported:

- 10 of the 15 projects had invited their local MP to the event. Six of the 10 MPs invited by projects attended the event.
- There was Northern Ireland business occurring in the commons and therefore unfortunately no Northern Irish members attended.
- 9 projects reported that they had followed up with their MPs -mostly by contacting them or inviting them to visit the project.

9.43   The most notable highlights of the Parliamentary event, reported by project managers in the follow up survey were (in order of how frequently they were mentioned):

- The speeches, particularly the ones made by the young people;
- The opportunity to talk directly with MPs;
- The impact that talking directly to MPs had on the young people who attended;
- Young people being able to share with MPs about the change that Our Bright Future has made for them, e.g. overcoming anxiety or other issues.

9.44   Feedback received about the event from project staff and young people suggested that it was well received by all. More widely, those consulted for the evaluation felt that the success of the Policy Function would remain to be seen and would largely be tested following the Parliamentary event itself. A programme stakeholder acknowledged that the success will not be in what happens on the day, but rather, what outcomes and impacts derive from the event.

Evidence of outcomes and emerging impacts

9.45   As noted in relation to project outcomes and impacts, attributing changes in policy and practice is difficult due to the range of other factors that influence policy decisions and constrain or facilitate changes in practice. However, from reporting provided by the PCM, it is evident that some outcomes have been achieved.

9.46   Two key achievements at this stage have been the collaborative creation of 'Policy Asks', as discussed previously, and the development of the #owningit campaign, which was also developed in partnership with young people involved in the programme. The #owning campaign was launched in the autumn of 2017 to give young people a platform to communicate and engage with the programme. The campaign was designed to raise awareness of the fact that young people's futures are bound up in the future environment. A campaign toolkit was developed by Our Bright Future projects and members of the Youth Forum and intended to enable organisations, projects and young people within and outside Our Bright Future take part in the campaign.

9.47   At present wider outcomes have primarily consisted of building relationships and raising awareness. The strategic aim of programme 'awareness raising' is not specified in the documentation provided by the PCM. However, it is assumed that it is intended to encourage potential future funding and policy support for programme related activities and to encourage influencers to look-up or engage in Our Bright Future project/s that may be of interest to them. Their interest may be because they are local to them (e.g. as a local MP) or working in that area of interest (e.g. education, conservation).

9.48   Wider examples and categories of outcomes achieved at the programme level at the mid-term are presented in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2 Wider examples of programme influence outcomes	
Parliamentary event	Outcomes following the event include an MP mentioning one of the Policy Asks in an interview on BBC Radio; and increased social media attention to the programme and the Policy Asks.
Profile and awareness raising	A discussion with a representative of the Innovative Delivery Team of the Environment and Rural Affairs department of the Welsh Government led to direct contact between the Welsh Government representative and programme projects in Wales.

Evidence sharing	Evidence from the programme was shared and used in an event organised by Step Up to Serve[59] at the beginning of March 2018 to help define the #iwill campaign in 2019. The PCM also reported that discussions with Defra civil servants, and the sharing of evidence collected by The Wildlife Trusts from Our Bright Future projects, influenced the Defra 25 Year Environment Plan's focus on young people.
New relationships	The Campaign Coordinator at The Wildlife Trusts established a connection between the PCM and the Head of Education and Development at the Prince's Trust.
Organisational change	Share Learn Improve events organised by the programme have changed project and organisational practice, for example new facilitation styles in working with young people and culture change which places greater importance on the involvement of young people.
Advocacy/aware ness raising by key influencers	Environmental blogger Zach Haynes[60], BBC Springwatch Unsprung Hero at the UK Blogger Awards 2016 wrote a blog about Our Bright Future.
Cross-sector changes	The National Union of Students (NUS) became involved in environmental campaigning and The Wildlife Trusts became more youth focused.
Influencing new programme delivery	The programme was reportedly influential in some of the consortium members securing the delivery role of the Nature Friendly Schools (NFS) project, one of three projects within the Children and Nature Programme (a flagship of the 25 Year Plan). Partners have subsequently helped NFS to shape its delivery, processes for sharing learning, online learning portal and Our Bright Future was frequently referred to in set up meetings.

Reflections on the Policy Function

9.49   The departure of the previous PCM from the programme was considered by project managers and programme stakeholders to have slowed progress, and particularly relationship building. Programme stakeholders also felt that it might have been beneficial to articulate aspirations earlier on in the programme so that they could have been used as the basis for collecting evidence to communicate externally. However, others felt that, until the evidence is available, it is not possible to identify which policies the programme should be targeting.

9.50   The consensus amongst the programme team was that the policy element of the programme was always going to take time due to the variety of organisations and young people (starting from different levels of understanding) involved in co-designing a narrative. There is also a recognised need for lead-in time to identify stakeholders and build relationships. One programme stakeholder also suggested that the policy work should be weighted towards the end of the programme once evidence is established. However, if concerns raised at this stage regarding the quality of evidence are not addressed, this could be a potentially risky strategy.

9.51   Figure 9.9 represents one possible way to conceptualise the scope of potential policy influence which may help to understand where to target efforts going forward (i.e. where programme and project resource can be most effectively directed).

9.52   Firstly, both projects and the programme should clarify their spheres of control; influence; and concern. Activities within the sphere of control can be carried out directly, and 'attribution' can be

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[59] https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/step-up-to-serve/
[60] https://yearofnature.blogspot.com/ and https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/blog/zach-haynes/zachs-story-sharing-his-love-wildlife

clearly measured, whereas further along the scale it may only be possible to evidence where these activities have made a 'contribution' as one of many factors.

9.53   Secondly, identifying the key stakeholders within the central step, the sphere of influence (i.e. those which projects and the programme have greater access to and influence over), would be useful to understand where to focus efforts across the remainder of the programme. For example, this chapter has identified through the available evidence that project influencing occurs on a more 'ad hoc' basis (e.g. changes to school practice and policy) and this could inform design of specific activities known to work well for influencing this group. This ensures resource is focused on where influence can be achieved, observed, and measured. Finally, evidence of this influence can then contribute the wider conversation in the projects' sphere of concern.

Figure 9.9: The three spheres of control and their relationship to policy influence

Source: Adapted by ERS based on a diagram by Tsuim Hearn and Young (2014)[61].

9.54   At the mid-term stage, the programme now has a better understanding of the types of engagement, and potential influence that is possible and has been successfully achieved, by projects and the programme. This represents a good opportunity to consider potential indicators, and possibly targets for influence on policy and practice for the remainder of the programme. Indicators should ideally take into account the concepts of attribution and contribution as described in Figure 9.9 to ensure that it is clear the extent to which the programme and projects were responsible for the change.

Conclusions: Programme influencing policy and practice

Involving all projects and participants in the development of 'Policy Asks' has taken time but the process is considered to have engaged young people well.

To date, the programme has embarked on influencing activities such as launching the #owningit campaign, the collaborative creation of the three key Policy Asks, direct liaison with key influencers, inviting influencers to attend events, connecting with existing groups and initiatives, such as the #iwill campaign, providing inputs into policy consultations and contributing to research.

At a programme level, most key influencers engaged have been those in NGO/VCS organisations and the public sector (which includes departmental representatives e.g. Defra). Data reported by the PCM (influence log) indicated that a few political influencers (e.g. MPs) had been directly engaged with before the Parliamentary event. In the build up to, and during the Parliamentary event in March 2019, a larger number were engaged in some way, including all 650 MPs being invited, resulting in 90 responses.

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[61] ODI Working Paper 395, Monitoring and evaluation of policy and advocacy, Josephine Tsui, Simon Hearn, and John Young (2014). Available at: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8928.pdf

The Parliamentary event was considered a success in terms of the number of MPs who attended. However, it will be important that the programme measures the success of the event by what happens as a result, and this must be carefully monitored.

At this stage, evidence suggests that policy activities have resulted in: the agreement of three defined Policy Asks, and their use in framing the Parliamentary event; developing new lines of communications with relevant organisations; raising awareness of the programme; blogs/vlogs from influential bloggers; evidence shared with relevant initiatives; and reported influence of Defra policy. It is worth noting that the individuals and organisations which Our Bright Future wishes to influence are subject to many other lobbies, and that awareness raising is a good first step in this process.

Up to this point there has been little coordination by the programme of influencing activity around an agreed set of policy priorities. Activities across the portfolio have been driven by the projects rather than by any programme level strategy. However, there are now three agreed Policy Asks which could form the basis of a wider influencing strategy at a project level.

Recommendations: Programme influencing policy and practice

A more proactive approach to private sector and corporate engagement may be beneficial. This is suggested given that a key aim of the programme relates to employment of young people in the environment sector. Additionally, funding for internships, apprenticeships, training etc. is likely to be a consideration for many young people, especially from more vulnerable backgrounds.

Consideration could be given to using the Policy Asks to frame and coordinate project influencing activity at the local level, which may cumulatively have greater potential for influencing change.

Attribution of influence, especially linking activities and campaigns to specific changes in policy or practice can be difficult. However, it is recommended that the programme team seek to understand as far as possible how effective influencing and campaigning has been. For example, re-engaging with influencers would allow them to explain in what ways their knowledge of the programme and evidence shared has led to changes in their decision-making or areas of policy and practice for which they have responsibility. Some suggested areas where additional monitoring and/or information gathering are recommended include:

- **The #owningit campaign** which launched in the autumn of 2017 and intended: to give young people a platform to communicate and engage with the programme; to raise awareness of the fact that young people's future is bound up in the future environment; and, to provide a platform for organisations, projects and young people within and outside Our Bright Future take part in the campaign. Some form of impact measurement (e.g. extent to which Our Bright Future projects and organisation or individuals outside the programme are using the owningit hashtag) is needed to understand if this campaign has had the intended effect.

- **The Policy Asks**, and in particular the extent to which they gain traction with MPs or other potential advocates and influencers. By contacting MPs who participated in the event 6 months / 1 year afterwards (i.e. autumn 2019 / spring 2020), evidence could be gathered on the extent and ways in which the Policy Asks have been useful for them or have influenced their decision making in relation to young people and the environment.

As noted in relation to project influencing, a programme indicator related to Outcome 3 refers to the *creation and use of evidence* for this outcome. At present there is no clear coordination of evidence creation and collection at the programme level, except in relation to specific contributions to consultations or research. The extent to which evidence creation across the portfolio can be coordinated by the programme (e.g. PCM) could be further considered, for example by requiring projects to gather evidence relevant to the three Policy Asks (see Textbox 9.1 on p101) that can be used to support project and programme level advocacy and influencing.

THE OUR BRIGHT FUTURE PROGRAMME UTILISES AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND A YOUTH-LED APPROACH, LEADING TO STRONGER OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT.
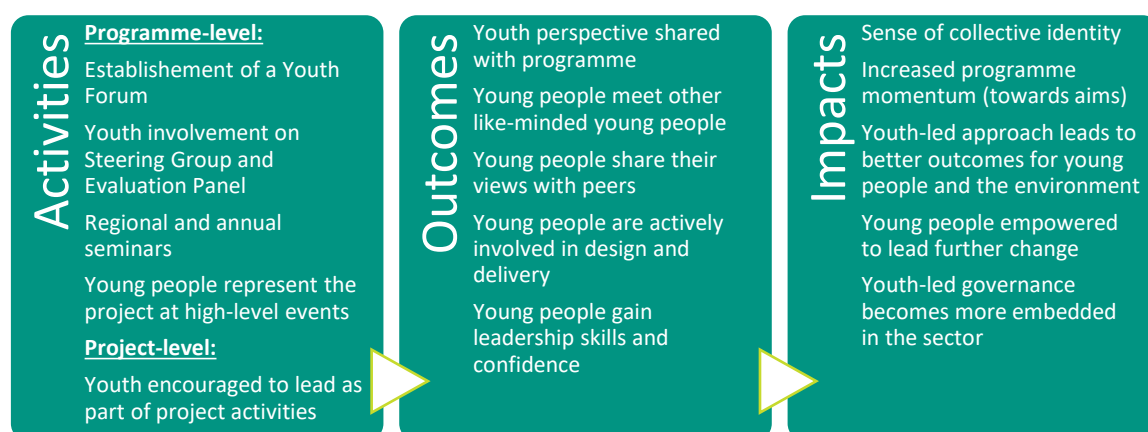
- Involving young people in leading project activities has been successful in benefiting them in terms of increased confidence, empowerment and advocacy.

- The involvement of young people in the programme has also had personal benefits for those involved but there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate that it has impacted on the programme direction at present.

- The consortium and portfolio approaches have added value to set of projects through facilitating knowledge exchange, influencing and relationship development between organisations, and importantly, between sectors (youth and environmental). There are indications that this may lead to new, more formal collaborations in future.

@Uprising

@Feedback

10.   PROGRAMME OUTCOME 4: PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND YOUTH LED APPROACH

> The Our Bright Future programme utilises an effective partnership working and a youth-led approach, leading to stronger outcomes for young people and the environment.

10.1   This chapter examines Outcome 4, namely, outcomes and impacts related to partnership working and a youth-led approach. In order to draw conclusions against this outcome, this chapter is separated into two sections covering:

- Youth led approach;
- Partnership working.

10.2   The chapter first discusses evidence of whether youth-led activities lead to better outcomes, followed by discussion of evidence of the benefits of partnership working, before drawing overall conclusions against Outcome 4.

Youth led approach

10.3   Figure 10.1 illustrates how, theoretically, actively involving young people in the design and delivery of project activities is expected lead to better outcomes. Our Bright Future and its projects have designed measures that are intended to help actively involve young people. These are listed in the Activities column. These actions are expected to lead to immediate outcomes and longer-term impacts for young people, and ultimately for the environment.

Figure 10.1: Logic model of the Youth-led approach

Activities

Programme-level:

Establishment of a Youth Forum

Youth involvement on Steering Group and Evaluation Panel

Regional and annual seminars

Young people represent the project at high-level events

Project-level:

Youth encouraged to lead as part of project activities

Outcomes

Youth perspective shared with programme

Young people meet other like-minded young people

Young people share their views with peers

Young people are actively involved in design and delivery

Young people gain leadership skills and confidence

Impacts

Sense of collective identity

Increased programme momentum (towards aims)

Youth-led approach leads to better outcomes for young people and the environment

Young people empowered to lead further change

Youth-led governance becomes more embedded in the sector

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

The Youth Function

10.4   Figure 10.2 illustrates the mechanisms through which the programme is seeking to involve young people, through what is referred to as the Youth Function. Until late 2018, vInspired was contracted to deliver the Youth Function which offers opportunities for young people to gain skills, improve their CV and meet other young people from across the UK. The Youth Function supports the involvement of young people at all levels of the programme including on the Steering Group, Evaluation Panel and programme Youth Forum.
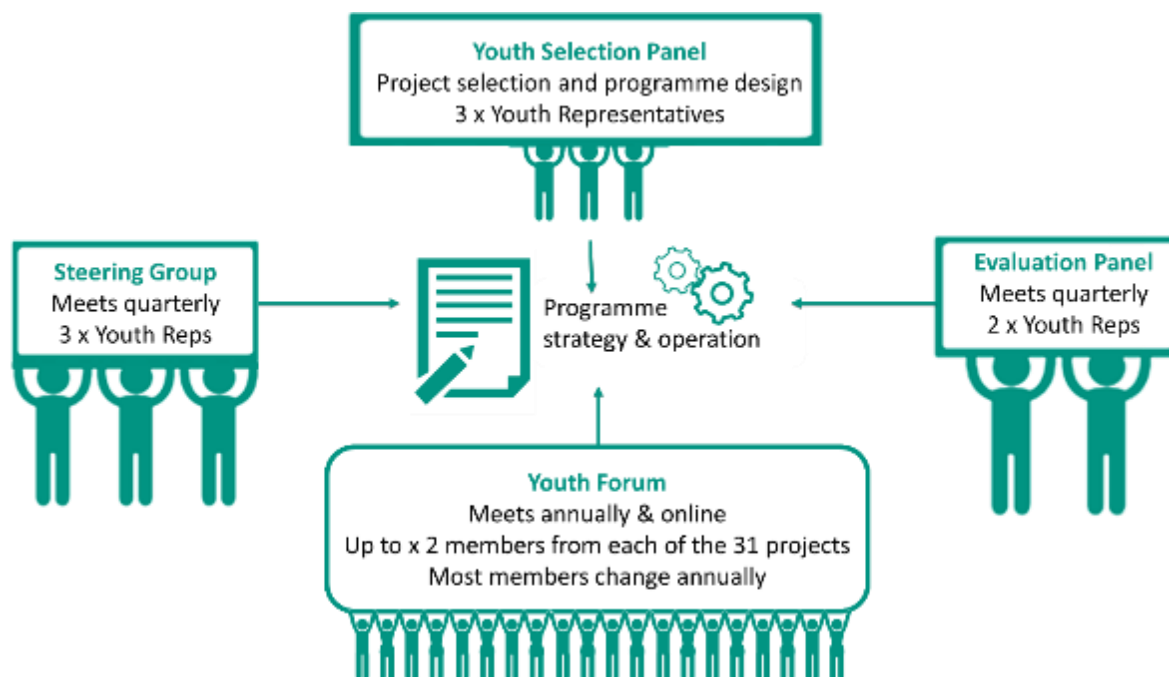
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

10.5   The Youth Forum (the main part of the Youth Function) brings together representatives from across the portfolio of projects and meets annually in person but maintains regular contact throughout the year using an online forum. Membership of the Forum changes every year. The Forum provides project participants with opportunities to meet other likeminded young people from across the UK and to discuss ideas and steer the direction of the programme. The campaign '*it's #OurBrightFuture and we're #OwningIt*' was designed by the Youth Forum in 2017.

10.6   Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, Youth Forum members increased from 28 to 50, with 21% of members retained from the previous year (membership of the Forum is generally limited to two years to maximise the number of young people able to access the opportunity). Attendance at Youth Forum meetings and Annual Programme Seminars (four of which were held between 2016 and 2018) ranged from nine to 31 forum members. At any one time there are up to five youth representatives, acting on the programme Steering Group and/or Evaluation Panel, all of whom have been previous Youth Forum members. Two young people have acted as representatives since 2016, otherwise tenures are 1-2 years.

Feedback and improvements to the Youth Function

10.7   There is a general consensus that the existence of a Youth Forum is positive for the programme. The annual face to face Youth Forum events are particularly successful in terms of engaging and inspiring the Youth Forum members. Members of the Youth Forum have also contributed towards the programme's social media posts through providing blogs and Instagram takeovers.

10.8   The Youth Forum is described by young people involved as a welcoming and comfortable space, despite many being initially nervous about taking part. A highlight for many involved in Our Bright Future has been seeing the Youth Forum presenting and working together at the Annual Programme Seminar attended by staff representatives from all projects. This gives the projects a sense of the scale and reach of the programme, and the power of bringing young people together.

10.9   Despite being viewed as a positive part of Our Bright Future, and deemed entirely necessary, there have been a number of challenges with the Youth Forum. Accessibility is the biggest issue reported by projects. The problem many projects face is that the young people they work with are

experiencing multiple challenges (e.g. anxiety, lack of self-confidence), and the format and nature of the Youth Forum is not appropriate for them.

"Due to the vulnerable young people we work with and the nature of how we work with them it has been very challenging to embed the Our Bright Future bigger picture into the work we do with the young people. Consequently, we don't feel we have been able to prepare any of the young people we work to a point where they can positively engage in the Youth Forum and confidently represent the project." Quarterly report, 2018

10.10   In addition, many participants live in remote parts of the UK, or are too young to participate without chaperones making it logistically challenging for projects to enable their participants to attend. Many of these issues have been addressed by the programme team where possible, but generally there is a fear that the Youth Forum is not fully representative of the participants of the programme.

10.11   Another prominent issue reported by project managers, Youth Forum members and stakeholders is that the outcomes of the Youth Forum are not being communicated effectively to projects and their participants. Project managers mentioned that despite young people from their project being on the Youth Forum, they had very little idea of what was happening.

"As the project leads, we don't know what happens at these events. Therefore, we feel out of the loop. (In terms of) the wider cohort of participants, the Youth Forum doesn't disseminate information out more widely." Project manager interview, 2018

"Once you're in the group [Youth Forum Facebook group] everything is communicated very clearly. The Facebook group, the Green Room etc. but before you get to that point you haven't heard of it." Programme stakeholder interview, 2018

10.12   There are two explanations for this. Firstly, that the Youth Forum does not have a clear and effective dissemination plan to communicate with project managers and wider programme participants. Secondly, the set-up of many projects makes dissemination challenging, particularly those working across large regions where there is limited opportunity for participants to meet. One project has addressed this by organising a presentation from their Youth Forum members to their project youth panel, but not all projects have the structures in place to do this. Unless each project has some kind of youth forum or panel, the danger is that the Youth Forum will only benefit the one or two representatives from a project that are directly involved.

10.13   Another issue for projects has been encouraging young people to engage with the Youth Forum. Several projects reported that there had been a lack of interest or engagement from young people. They find it hard to explain what the Youth Forum is and how it can benefit them. A few projects mentioned that there is not a clear indication of what is expected of members, and that commitment can be difficult. Many young people struggle to commit to a project, let alone become involved in the Youth Forum.

10.14   The mode of communication for the Youth Forum is not considered ideal. Apart from the annual meeting and Annual Programme Seminar, the majority of communication on the Youth Forum is via Facebook. This was chosen after consulting with young people but it remains problematic for some members who cannot engage via Facebook. Having limited face to face meetings was felt to lead to a loss of momentum. In response to this, the programme has begun inviting forum members to attend regional SLI workshops and organised some additional meetings in 2018 (e.g. a workshop focused on co-producing the Parliamentary event).

10.15   In 2017 the Youth Forum devised and unveiled a campaign #owningit. Since then, feedback suggests that progress on the campaign #owningit is very unclear, and what is needed or expected of projects has not been clear. The perspective of project managers is that #owningit "*isn't a campaign they can*

get their teeth into" (Project manager, 2017), and that a campaign focused on a particular issue (e.g. reducing plastic) might be more effective.

> *"We'd like to campaign about something that's real, such as plastics. If the portfolio of projects campaigned on one real topic rather than the generic 'owning it' term, I feel we could make a real impact." Project manager interview, 2018*

10.16   In addition to the Youth Forum, there are youth representatives on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. Involving young people at a strategic level in the programme has been particularly beneficial for the programme, according to stakeholders, because it provides a vital youth perspective. The youth representatives generally feel comfortable contributing to Steering Group and Evaluation Panel meetings, especially if they can provide advice and ideas for aspects which are familiar to them, i.e. issues affecting young people.

10.17   However, in terms of youth representation, members of the Steering Group, Evaluation Panel and young people recognise there is still some work to be done in facilitating active and reflective engagement of young people. Some young people still see their involvement as tokenistic – i.e. if they were not present it would not impact on the meeting. There is no clear sense of what level of involvement is expected of young people, or what youth-led actually means for the programme.

> *"There is a lot of strategic talking at the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel, and being reflective is a difficult skillset, not to mention the confidence to speak and challenge. vInspired are doing some good work supporting the individuals. I think we could support them a lot more, I'm not sure whether we are truly youth led, we are youth involved, but are we youth led?" Programme stakeholder interview, 2017*

10.18   There has been a high turnover of youth representatives on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel which in many ways is expected, given the fluctuating commitments of young people working in a voluntary capacity over a long-term programme. Nevertheless, current representation is considered strong, particularly because most representatives are now from projects within the portfolio. Prior to this, they were acting independently of any projects and therefore had less of an understanding and connection with the programme. There is still an important question to answer though in terms of who these young people are representing: are they representatives of all participants/young people or are they representing their projects? This remains unclear and has important implications in terms of the role that they take and how they share information with the Youth Forum and other young people about what happens at a strategic level.

10.19   There is a sense that what the programme expected young people to achieve was ambitious. The mechanisms for engaging young people, although fully supported in principle, have been challenging to implement in reality. There are positive stories from those directly involved but an indication that there is a way to go before young people are able to take a lead. There is however, an acceptance that these things take time and that involving young people may not be straightforward. Positively, there are a number of suggestions about how this element of the programme can be improved which are outlined in this section.

10.20   On the basis of the evidence collected, it is suggested that communication and dissemination from the Youth Forum could be improved by:

- Taking the Youth Forum 'on tour' to meet more projects and explain what it does. This might help to encourage greater participation from other project participants and explain about Our Bright Future as a wider programme.
- Creating a dissemination plan or guidance to help Youth Forum members to communicate what is happening within the Youth Forum to other young people on their project.
- Sharing lessons and best practice amongst projects about setting up project level youth forums or panels, giving projects a better understanding of how this works in practice.

10.21 In addition, the Youth Forum could be made more accessible by:

- Providing a clearer indication of what the Youth Forum does, the practicalities of involvement, and what is expected of young people so that projects can confidently communicate this to participants.
- Coordinating site visits from the Youth Forum members or TWT to better understand the participants, the challenges they might face in engaging, and to help encourage others to get involved.
- Organising regional 'hubs' or 'roadshows' for the Youth Forum to help those who cannot travel, or who are anxious, to engage in some way.
- Providing support or ideas for projects to prepare vulnerable young people to participate in the Youth Forum.
- Considering how projects who cannot provide a Youth Forum member can be represented e.g. maybe a staff member could attend.

10.22 The participation of young people on Our Bright Future could:

- Be improved by providing greater clarity over the roles of youth representatives on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel (i.e. what youth-led means for the programme), and who they are representing.
- Benefit from visiting and learning from other projects which have successfully involved young people in decision making in order to share ideas and lessons about youth participation.

Outcomes of the youth-led approach

10.23 This section focuses on evidence of the extent to which the programme has succeeded in taking a youth-led approach. Outcomes to date are considered alongside the operation and activities of the Youth Function.

10.24 Members of the Youth Forum have been provided with ongoing opportunities to contribute towards the newsletter, social media and wider publicity and have produced blogs and undertaken social media "take-overs" (posting from the programme's Twitter and Instagram accounts). In addition, opportunities have been provided for young people to speak at high-level events (e.g. at The Wildlife Trusts Annual Conference and the Parliamentary event) and meet with decision makers (e.g. meetings with Welsh Government and Scottish Government) and influencers (e.g. the Fund to discuss future funding).

Outcomes for young people

10.25 Feedback, based on interviews with four youth representatives, indicates strong personal outcomes, most notably, increases in confidence. The opportunity to be involved with important decisions and information has been particularly impactful in contributing towards this benefit.

> *"Definitely grown exponentially in confidence… it's quite unusual for someone as young as we are to be given all these papers and read them and analyse them and think of the impact they'll have. Can't think of anything else in my life where I've been given the same opportunity." Youth representative interview, 2018*

10.26 Feedback on their roles has been gathered from wider Youth Forum members through a combination of programme-team administered surveys and direct feedback to ERS as part of attendance at one Youth Forum event. The feedback indicates that opportunities to meet and network with new people, find out more about other projects, and share their own work are particularly valued.

> *"Having so many young people all in one venue sharing, problem solving and collaborating together on how they can positively impact their own local, natural environments was particularly exciting." Youth Forum survey respondent, 2018*

10.27   Knowledge and understanding of decision-making processes were reported to result from such activities. This was also reported by members of a group of young people from projects working in Scotland that (along with the PCM) visited the Scottish Youth Parliament in 2018. These reports can be found in a blog post written by two of the participants, extracts of which are included below.

> **Blog Post Extract: Participants of Fife's Our Bright Future[62]**
> "Our recent visit to the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) in Edinburgh helped us gain a greater understanding about the SYP and the other projects that were represented at the visit. It was interesting to learn how it is run and how people are making a difference.
> We were welcomed on the day by SYP member Calum McArthur. We heard about how the SYP works and the campaigns that they get behind. This was also our opportunity to explain our involvement in the Our Bright Future Level Two programme based in Fife.
> We thoroughly enjoyed the experience of speaking on behalf of Our Bright Future as ambassadors for the programme. It was a good feeling knowing that the others that were present were using our knowledge as a means to improve their ways of working, should they need it, and how genuinely supportive everyone was."

10.28   The most recent Youth Forum meeting in February 2019 focused on preparation for the Parliamentary event. A feedback survey was undertaken by the programme team with attendees of the Youth Forum meeting. When asked specifically what they had learned or gained from the day, the majority of young people responded that they had gained knowledge, skills and confidence on how to talk to and influence MPs. Other themes included having gained new contacts and being inspired by the day's activities. Attendees were then asked how, if at all, the experiences of the day would help them in leading change or preparing for work. The majority of attendees expressed that they felt better equipped to make a change in some way. This included through an increase in confidence, more knowledge of parliamentary processes, and through skills developed (e.g. communication), and practical tools for preparing scripts and campaigns. Inspiration was again a clear theme, with examples including young people feeling 'refuelled', 'energised' and inspired to drive change.

10.29   When asked what they would do as a result of the day, young people gave a range of responses, most often citing plans to contact their MPs and seek to influence them. Some attitudinal changes were also reported, such as change in understanding of the political process. A few young people noted a desire to stay in touch with the contacts they had made. More broadly, in terms of being involved in the Our Bright Future Youth Forum and the benefits of being part of it, respondents most often reported gains in confidence.

> *"I have changed my feelings about my MP. I'm more motivated to come up with a convincing 10-minute pitch (to influence them)." Youth Forum survey respondent, 2019*

10.30   In interviews, project managers and Youth Forum members suggested outcomes from the Youth Function could be improved if learning could be shared with a wider cohort of young people involved in the programme. Suggestions included supporting projects to establish youth forums to disseminate information from the programme or organising youth representative visits to projects to talk about their role and engage other young people with the wider movement.

> *"Unless each Our Bright Future project have their own Youth Forum in place or a way filtering the learning down across the project, the Youth Forum may only benefit the two individuals that participated from the project." Project manager interview 2018*

Outcomes for Our Bright Future

10.31   Based on interview responses, it is clear that a youth-led approach is considered integral by the programme team and the input of youth representatives is highly valued. However, concerns from

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[62] Full post available at: http://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/2019/01/03/our-bright-future-visits-the-scottish-youth-parliament/

individual youth representatives and Steering Group members stated in interviews centred on whether the programme is "truly youth-led" or simply "youth involved". One youth representative said in an interview that involvement can at times seem tokenistic:

"I am still not clear with why young people are here other than tokenistic, illustrated by times I have not been able to attend but there is no impact on the operation of the meetings. Not a criticism, just a fact. What is the involvement of young people other than just sitting there in the meetings? There is nothing behind us as youth reps. We could convey (messages) to the young people in youth friendly role. Not clear of role on panel, not clear on who they / we are representing." Youth representative

10.32   As presented in ERS' baseline report, important aspects of participation in youth social action are leadership and empowerment. Various frameworks have been proposed to conceptualise empowerment in terms of the processes/steps involved (e.g. personal development, capacity building) and the outcomes that might be expected (e.g. increased understanding of the socio-political environment). Established methods for articulating 'levels' of youth participation include Hart's 'ladder', shown in Figure 10.3, which provides a framework for understanding different forms of participation.

Figure 10.3 Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation
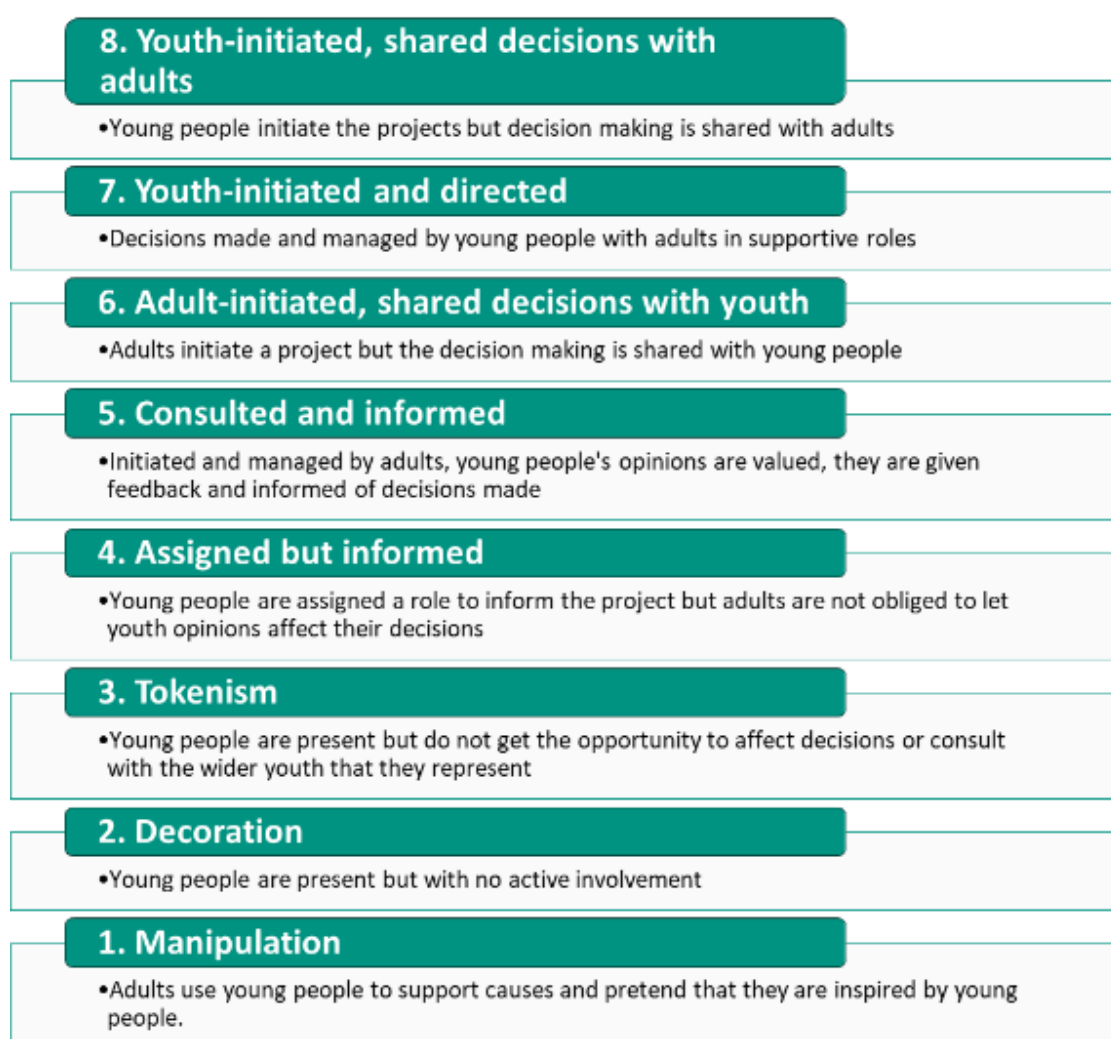
Source: Ladder of Youth Participation adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

10.33   While the *mechanisms* and steps put in place by the programme would seem to support effective participation (between six and eight on Hart's Ladder), this is at odds with the perceptions of some of the young people directly involved in terms of how influential they feel they have been in relation to the decision-making process.

10.34   The evidence about what impact youth involvement in the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel has had on the programme strategically and operationally is not clear. Over the first half of the programme, when asked about this in interviews, youth representatives were unable to provide examples of where they had influenced change through their contributions. This does not necessarily need to be considered a failure on the part of the programme. Programme stakeholders (including youth representatives) agree that the intention for involving young people is strong and integral to the programme. There are a number of things to consider here, and ideally to be discussed with the youth representatives:

- Is there a clear understanding amongst the programme stakeholders about what 'youth-led' means in practice? Should there be some clear indicators against which progress can be measured?
- Has the programme been too ambitious about what could be achieved in terms of 'youth leadership', particularly within the timeframe?
- Is the problem lack of evidence and impacts or a failure to record these impacts? If impacts have been observed, is it possible that young people were unaware that their actions had resulted in changes (a feedback failure)?
- Although there are mechanisms for participation/involvement, do there need to be clearer mechanisms to ensure that young people are able to affect change?

10.35   Nevertheless, the Youth Forum has, according to interviews with the programme team, been central to shaping campaigns which have been closely based on the ideas and contributions of young people. The programme team reported in interviews that they have used the Forum as a 'sounding board' and as advocates of the programme effectively on several occasions. This was mentioned specifically in relation to developing the programme Policy Asks. The Policy Asks are a set of three requests put to Government, which are based on the changes young people wanted to see in relation to the environment (see also Chapter 9 which evaluates Outcome 3 related to the programme's influencing policy and practice). The Youth Forum also co-designed the Parliamentary event.

Projects youth-led approaches

Youth boards/ panels

10.36   A programme team member reported in an interview that Our Bright Future has had an aspiration to 'lead by example' through the approach of having young people represented on boards. There are some clear indications that Our Bright Future has led to changes across the consortium and portfolio, in terms of how young people are involved within organisational decision-making. For example, the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust has instigated a youth board, another two Wildlife Trusts are in the process of developing youth boards, and Friends of the Earth now has a coordinator for young people and families which has been credited, in an interview, to the organisation's involvement in Our Bright Future.

10.37   Based on interviews with programme team and project managers, reported benefits of taking such approaches forward have included the injection of a fresh perspective, and the increased diversity of leadership.

> *"Traditionally conservation charities are not that diverse and it's really allowing us to be a bit more reflective; for example, our board of trustees has invited two reps from the project onto the board to give the view of young people. The board is mostly white, retired men so it's really positive to have young people there."*
> *Project manager interview, 2017*

10.38   Evidence from quarterly and annual reports and interviews also indicates that youth forums and boards have been set up across the portfolio of projects in response to involvement in the Our Bright Future programme. For example, Grassroots Challenge has set up a Youth Forum, which provides young people with responsibility and a role in relation to the project. Our Wild Coast also established a Youth Forum which provides opportunities for young people to steer and shape projects and programmes. In addition, the programme team recorded that the following projects have also pursued youth led approaches since becoming involved in Our Bright Future.

- **Creative Pathways Environmental Design (led by Impact Arts)** have recruited young people to sit on an organisation Steering Group.

- **Green Futures (led by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust)** have invited young trustees into the organisation and has established a project Youth Forum.

- **Avon and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts** have started a Youth Forum, that will feed into the Our Bright Future Youth Forum role.

- **Tomorrow's Natural Leaders (led by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)** have young people shadowing their board of trustees, have established a youth parliament to steer youth-led campaign activity and also have young people represented on all cross-cutting working groups. Each cohort of participants are further upskilled and empowered to design and deliver a completely youth-led outreach project.

- MyPlace (led by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside) have begun to work on a plan for a Youth Council/Youth Forum.

10.39   The list represents 'known' examples and is not necessarily exhaustive. Further, attribution of the changes to the programme has not been independently verified. Further information on The Grassroots Challenge's approach is provided in the subsequent case study extract.

> **Case Study Extract: The Grassroots Challenge (GRC) (Ulster Wildlife)**
> The GRC Youth Forum's focus is to provide young people with responsibility and a role in relation to the project. The participants felt that the GRC Youth Forum was youth led and provided an opportunity to support the ongoing development of project activities. The Youth Forum had fed into the selection of the venue, the agenda, the speakers to present during the event and the activities participants would be involved in. Participants felt that their ideas were heard and respected by the project team, and they felt that the input into the celebration event was coming from them as a group, rather than from the project team or other sources. The participants felt that the Youth Forum was empowering them (and other young people) to understand that they have the ability to lead environmental projects.

10.40   Additionally, one project manager said in an interview that the project has been approached by other organisations (external to the programme) who are keen to incorporate a "youth voice" within their own operations: *"Organisations are approaching us more and more wanting us to help them create a youth board or achieve that youth voice element."* This suggests a potential legacy opportunity for the programme.

10.41   The integration of youth forums and panels into project activities appears to be an important outcome of the programme's approach. Whilst there is less information on lessons or outcomes from this in practice, it is important that this is celebrated and shared to encourage wider influence and programme legacy after funding has ended. As mentioned in the previous Chapter, young people have been instrumental in the development and advocacy of the programme's Policy Asks.

> **Textbox 10.1: Involving young people in the Policy Asks**
> The programme's commitment to taking a youth-led approach included the generation of 'Policy Asks' to take to the Parliamentary event. Around half of the 300 people who contributed to the Policy Asks (as part of the PCMs research) were reportedly young people. In an interview, the PCM expressed a view that it is important to co-develop messages with a diverse range of young people and to have young people convey these messages directly to decision-makers. Primary research was carried out by the PCM to determine issues of importance to young people across the cohort. The PCM estimates that more than 700 ideas were collected from young people and youth workers during eight events

and youth-led research. In addition, a Parliamentary Working Group of Young People was established in preparation for the Parliamentary event.

10.42   It difficult to assess the longer-term impacts of involving young people in the policy influencing activities as the event has only just taken place at the time of writing. Project managers were however asked if they had observed any impacts for young people on the day. The 15 project managers which responded to the post-Parliamentary event survey, observed that the event had resulted in the following (in order of how frequently they were mentioned).

▪ Provided a new experience for many young people which had taken them outside of their comfort zone e.g. meeting and speaking to MPs for the first time and travelling to London. Many had been incredibly nervous about attending but in doing so had developed greater confidence.
▪ Inspired and motivated young people.
▪ Opened up the world of politics, made politics 'more real' and demonstrating to young people that they could potentially influence change. This seems to have been particularly empowering for those who attended.
▪ Given young people a sense of pride and achievement in their project/ the programme and feelings of solidarity with other young people on the programme.

"It was really good to be able to convey our passion for the environment and our personal view points to people who are able to make important decisions regarding these issues." (Young person, quoted by project manager in post-Parliamentary event survey 2019)

10.43   However, a small number of programme stakeholders and project managers interviewed stated that seeking to undertake an inclusive and representative consultation underpinned by the youth-led approach had been resource and time intensive. It was felt by some project managers that this had resulted in a long period of uncertainty about the influencing intentions of the programme, which may have affected the programme's ability to respond quickly to immediate issues and opportunities. One Evaluation Panel member stated in an interview that they perceived a risk, in that the opportune moment (i.e. 'now') to harness the collective momentum of the programme might pass by, and that opportunities to influence change might be missed.

Young people leading within projects

10.44   Based on evidence from project quarterly and annual reporting and interviews, the majority of projects have provided both formal and informal opportunities for young people to take the lead in project settings. Activities have included, for example, young people participating in a youth board, designing activities and inputting into event programmes, structured social action campaigns, or speaking publicly about their experiences and supporting younger members with practical tasks.

"It's been an incredible year! I wouldn't have thought that at my age (20) I'd be running events that were attended by hundreds of people, but I did that... I've also been interviewed on the radio about the dangers of beach litter and done a TV feature about natural flood management, and am really enjoying engaging with MPs about the EU Withdrawal Bill" (Project participant in an Annual Report, 2017)

10.45   One project manager said in an interview that greater levels of responsibility tend to lead to greater outcomes for young people such as gaining confidence and skills. On the one hand, interview feedback from project managers suggests that young people are ambitious and capable, often exceeding expectations in developing and delivering ideas. On the other hand, one project manager emphasised that there needs to be a balance of guidance and autonomy; two young people reportedly talked about being worried they would make the wrong decisions and that they *"didn't know all of the answers".*

10.46   Recognising this, most projects have needed to help participants gradually build their leadership skills in a supported environment. For example, UpRising's project manager learned the importance of carefully managing the transition to Social Action campaigns so that a sudden jump from 'participant' to 'leader' can be avoided. Other projects have used a mentoring approach, recognising the time needed to build up participants' skills and confidence prior to taking on more significant leadership responsibilities.

> *"It takes time for young people to build up the confidence, skills and desire to take the lead, this isn't something that can happen instantly. The amount of support required also shouldn't be underestimated. A mentoring approach works well for this, once young people are comfortable and happy with the situation, they are in the outcomes are phenomenal, we hope that some of our young people will become mentors for others within the programme as they progress." Project manager interview 2017*

10.47   These 'building blocks' and pre-cursors to effective action resonate with frameworks described in the baseline report. This is particularly relevant to a reworking of Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation by Treseder (1997)[63]. Treseder's model included the stipulation that young people will not necessarily be able to take an active role in directing projects immediately and that they require appropriate empowerment first, in order to fully participate.

10.48   Based on interviews with project managers, confidence is, again, a frequently mentioned outcome for young people as a result of them being given opportunities to lead. This can be used as a route towards developing leadership skills and aspirations, as well as to build skills, such as mentoring, public speaking, and project management.

10.49   Project managers also report that having the confidence to lead has provided young people with a desire to take on additional responsibility and opportunities. Across multiple evidence sources, confidence appears to be an important contributor to empowerment, a pre-requisite to young people taking further action, responsibility and developing their own projects. For example, project managers reported that project participants have mentioned being able to transfer skills gained on the project to: leading groups in their workplace; setting up an environmental club in school; and, launching their own campaigns.

Case Study Extract: My World, My Home (Friends of the Earth)
There is multiple evidence that young people feel so strongly empowered from the programme that they are getting involved in other advocacy work once My World My Home finishes: "*One student went to the NUS women's conference from her work bringing together NUS students to launch a campaign about taxes on sanitary products. So, her campaign spun out of campaigning for environmental issues. A desired outcome of this work is launching a new generation of activists*" (Project manager interview).

10.50   Increased confidence also appears, from case study and project manager interviews, to support young people to undertake advocacy and sharing learning with peers. Where young people have been given opportunities to share what they know with others, this has reportedly been positive in achieving wider engagement and generating commitment to take future environmental action, for example, litter picks or waste campaigns.

10.51   Figure 10.4 provides a basic explanation of what the data currently suggest in terms of linkages between knowledge and skills, opportunity to lead, confidence and empowerment and how this might eventually lead to action.

10.52   The diagram is simplistic and linear at present. With more data and exploration towards the end of the programme, it might be possible to provide a more detailed understanding of the building blocks observed. Further exploration will benefit from reviews of wider frameworks, notably the adapted

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[63] Treseder, P. (1997) Empowering children and young people training manual: promoting involvement in decision making, *in* Karsten, A. (2011). Different Models and Concepts of (Youth) Participation. Participation in Urban Climate Protection. www.academia.edu/2548314/Different_Models_and_Concepts_of_Youth_Participation

model of Hart's Ladder by Treseder (1994) which challenged the notion of a progressive hierarchy in developing participation and instead based it on five conditions, including support from a trusted independent person and access to those in power.

Figure 10.4 Conceptual framework for the links between knowledge, skills and action/advocacy
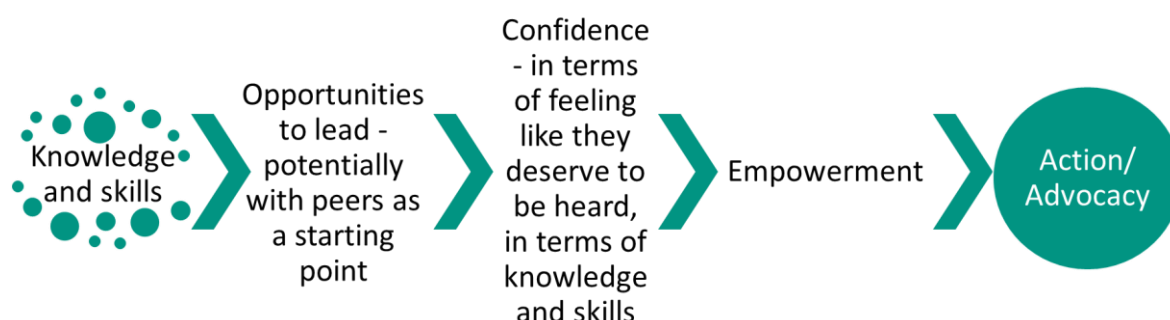
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

10.53   There are also several examples of young people who have participated in a project taking an active role in recruiting the next cohort, and this approach has been reported by projects as being very effective. The approach of 'youth leading youth' has been found to be positive for engagement, whether sharing a campaign or passing on knowledge of a practical task. This in part due to hearing from like-minded young people and having the opportunity to see the difference made.

> *"It's good because if you see other young people taking a stand, you can feel like in yourself, I have ideas about the environment too. (If) this person can stand up and say something, I can stand up too. It gets more and more people involved."*
> *Project participant interview, 2018*

> *"They are becoming advocates not only in this small group but now also have the confidence to share their knowledge and interests elsewhere through developing projects in school and their local communities and sharing them with their peers."*
> *Quarterly Report, 2018*

10.54   These are just a handful of numerous examples from across the portfolio. These examples illustrate that it is important first to equip young people with the skills and knowledge to lead, coupled with the opportunity for young people to apply these skills and knowledge in a leadership role, if they feel comfortable doing so. The most effective first 'stepping stone' is for a young person to share and engage their peers in some way, whether it be through mentoring or developing a new project or campaign. Several projects have reported that they have used alumni in future project delivery with positive results both for the alumni and new cohorts.

10.55   Based on discussions held during case study visits, leadership opportunities appear to be valued by many of the young people for providing them with a platform, helping them to feel like they deserve to be heard. Excerpts from the Uprising case study illustrate this, demonstrating how young people were motivated by the opportunity to gain leadership skills and felt this provided them with a platform to voice their opinions that they would not otherwise have had.

Case Study Extract: Environmental Leadership Programme (Uprising)
For one Uprising participant, the opportunity to develop leadership skills was a core part of what appealed to them about the programme. Participants felt that similar opportunities to lead and have a "voice" would have been lacking in the absence of the programme.

> *"It's more than just an environmental programme, it's youth-led, it gives you confidence, training, and the leadership part combined is a unique feature of the programme."*

Focus group attendees reported increased confidence and skills, wider networks, sector knowledge, and empowerment. Young people were asked to choose a place in the room which represented how they felt before and after taking part in the ELP and to *explain* the basis for their placement. There were multiple

examples of UpRisers initially placing themselves at the periphery of the room (before), but moving to take up their "seat at the table" or "place at the podium" and feeling equipped to make a change (after): *"(Before) I stood in the corner of the room behind a whiteboard. I was really nervous, I was having panic attacks, and I was in a bad place. (After) I'm now stood at the podium, in the front of the room. I feel like I deserve to be here. I'm more confident and ready to participate."*

Providing a diverse group of young people with a voice in the environmental sphere was perceived to ultimately lead to the generation of better policy, due to having a broader range of views represented. *"Young people don't have much of a voice in political, social, or economic situations. Not that we don't want to; we're not taught how."*

Young people leading campaigns and social action

10.56   Campaigns seem to represent a key opportunity to incorporate a youth-led approach, as noted at both a programme and project-level. Evidence from project manager interviews and quarterly and annual reporting suggests that enabling young people to design and drive campaigns provides them with a greater sense of ownership and engagement. This in turn leads to more positive outcomes, for example, more community-focused campaigns and increased sustainability and longevity of initiatives. A caveat to this is the importance of striking a balance between the level of support and autonomy.

> *"Projects that have linked to existing work have been quick to show positive outcomes, but those which have created their own activities have more ownership by young people." Quarterly Report, 2018*

10.57   Examples of youth-led campaign and social action activity are diverse and include: pop-up events highlighting marine wildlife on Welsh beaches; community food growing projects bringing together refugees and other members of the community; and, clean air campaigns.

10.58   Based on interviews with project managers, youth-led campaigns appear to show stronger outcomes (due to the sense of ownership developed) compared to campaigns which are 'handed' to young people. For example, this leads to increased participant engagement, enables students to take greater initiative in planning their project, and results in participants who are more motivated to overcome particular challenges as well as inspired to spread the word amongst friends, families and communities.

> *"We have waves of young people – the strongest outcomes are where people have had to lead a project themselves. They've started with not the environment as their first interest, but engaged in the youth side of the project. Having the right opportunity with the right local environment focus and local community benefit is achievable in that space of time. I would agree, if you can give ownership to young people they get the most out of it rather than laying out, for example, a youth volunteering day which would attract those already interested." Project manager interview 2018*

10.59   Defra's recent evidence-base on young people and environmental volunteering echoes some of the findings above across wider projects. These include: young volunteers appreciate being afforded influence on activities and a say in decisions in organisations or projects; gaining confidence is often an outcome for many young volunteers; and, that sense of self-efficacy (belief in ability to create change) is another reported outcome of environmental volunteering.

Conclusions: Youth-led approach

Engagement in the Youth Function has improved year on year.

The mechanisms for engaging young people, although fully supported in principle, have been challenging to implement in reality. Issues flagged by project managers include difficulties accessing the Youth Forum and a lack of communication about what happens at the Youth Forum.

Involvement in the Youth Forum has been beneficial for young people directly involved, but this only represents a small number of overall participants. If all participants are to benefit from being part of a wider movement and programme then consideration should be given as to how the benefits of the Youth Forum could be extended to a wider cohort.

Positively, there are a number of suggestions about how this element of the programme can be improved, including better communication about what happens on the Youth Forum, making the Youth Forum more accessible to more young people and providing greater clarity over the roles of youth representatives.

Programme level involvement of young people through the mechanisms described provides personal benefits for those involved, particularly confidence. To broaden the outcomes to a wider cohort there needs to be better dissemination/mechanisms for sharing and involving more young people.

Evidence of the ways young people's inclusion has impacted on the programme direction is lacking at present. Although young people are at the table, are they able to influence? And what type of 'influence' is expected of young people? This may be affected by some delivery challenges set out in Chapter 3, but it seems clear that there is currently no shared understanding of what 'youth-led' means for the programme.

One area where young people have reportedly had a significant influence is the Policy Asks and co-design of the Parliamentary event.

Project level involvement of young people has been perceived as more meaningful in some cases, perhaps as this is more achievable/practical. There is strong evidence that young people are leading activities, and that this is having very good outcomes for young people.

The main outcomes of opportunities to lead are confidence, which in turn can lead to empowerment and advocacy. Giving young people a voice helps them to realise that they deserve to be heard and involved. Youth empowerment seems to be the crucial factor in enabling people to lead.

Recommendations: Youth-led approach

The evaluation has highlighted opportunities to build upon and improve elements of the Youth Function. These should play a key role in informing the work of the Youth Function's new contractor. Key recommendations are:

- To improve accessibility to the Youth Forum and dissemination of information via members in order to improve its inclusivity and help all participants to better engage at a programme level;

- To further support youth representatives and provide greater clarity over their roles in order to enable them to actively contribute to the strategic direction of the programme and realise the programme's ambition for youth leadership.

From this point, it would be useful to assess what potential there is to extend the types of activities offered to the Youth Forum members to benefit a wider cohort of young people. i.e. the participants.

The evidence about what impact youth involvement in the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel has had on the programme strategically and operationally is not clear. There are a number of things to consider here, and ideally to be discussed with the youth representatives:

- Is there a clear understanding amongst the programme stakeholders about what 'youth-led' means in practice? Should there be some clear indicators against which progress can be measured?

Partnership approach

10.60   Figure 10.5 explains how, theoretically, organisations working in partnership might lead to better outcomes. For clarity, 'partnership-working' covers both added value of the 'consortium approach' (i.e. bringing organisations together to manage the programme), as well as the added value of the 'portfolio approach' (i.e. bringing organisations together under the Our Bright Future umbrella).
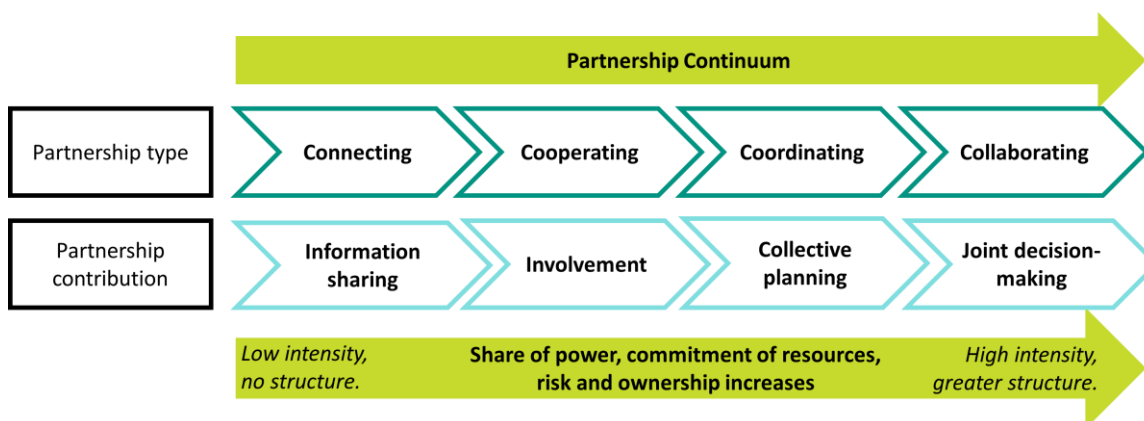
Figure 10.5: Logic model for partnership working

Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
Annual + regional seminars SLI events Green Room Project Exchange Visits Advocacy activities e.g. Parliamentary event working group	Sharing learning and best practice Sense of collective identity Relationship-building Profile and Reach	Collaboration and development opportunities, funding leveraged. Sharing of best practice leads to better outcomes for young people and the environment. Lasting networks built - amongst organisations and young people.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

10.61   It is worth understanding what is meant by partnership working in the context of the programme. Figure 10.6 outlines a suggested approach for understanding the ways in which partnership working can occur. There is not one definition of partnership working, rather a continuum upon which we can place the programme at this stage. Partnership working can be a 'connecting' or 'cooperating' relationship (sharing and supporting one another) or a collaborative relationship (making decisions together). The extent to which power, risks and ownership are shared increases from one end of the continuum to the other.

Figure 10.6: Continuum of partnership working

Partnership Continuum

Partnership type	Connecting	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating
Partnership contribution	Information sharing	Involvement	Collective planning	Joint decision-making

Low intensity, no structure. — **Share of power, commitment of resources, risk and ownership increases** — *High intensity, greater structure.*

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP, adapted from The Partnering Continuum, Brian O'Connell (2004)

10.62   Partnership working at various stages on the continuum is occurring on a variety of levels within the Our Bright Future programme, and is a direct result of the consortium and portfolio approach to the programme. Figure 10.7 illustrates the mechanisms by which partnership working is understood to have occurred within the programme.

Figure 10.7: Mechanisms for partnership working within the programme
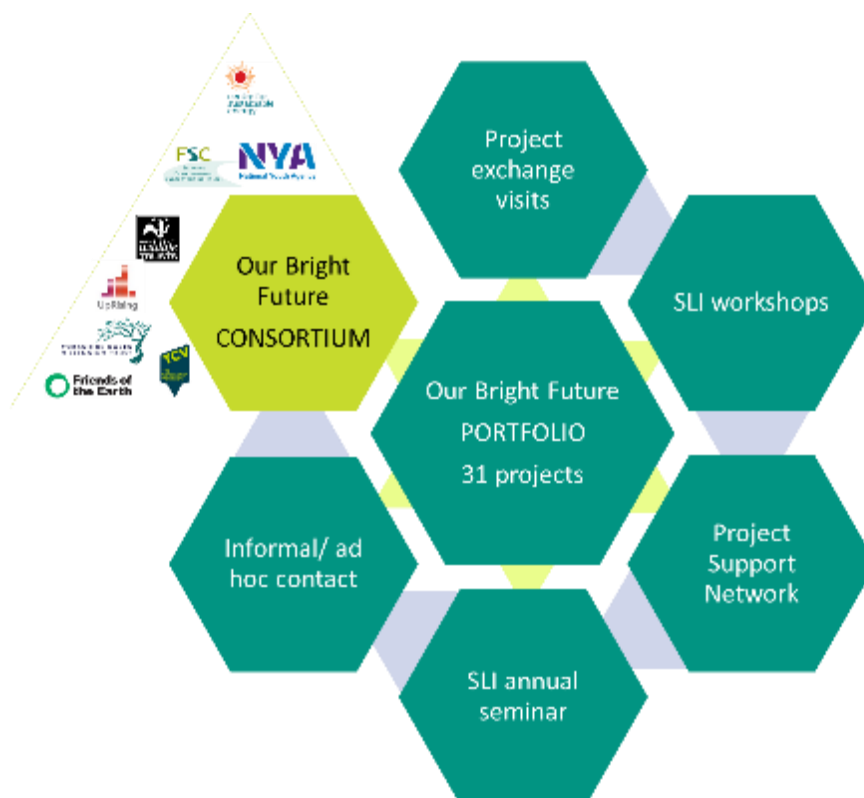
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

10.63 The evidence at the mid-term suggests that all of these mechanisms for encouraging partnership working have, in some way, resulted in outcomes for the programme, the portfolio and young people, and this is explored in the following sections.

Outcomes of the consortium approach

10.64 A consortium approach was proposed to ensure that the programme benefitted from a range of skills, expertise and experience. The consortium was also felt to provide greater reach both geographically and in terms of networks and influence in the third sector, business sector and with decision making bodies. There was no explicit definition of what type of partnership was expected from the consortium at the programme's inception. From reading the initial documents and the details of what each partner would contribute, it is likely that the partnership approach was designed to be 'coordinating' in that the range of organisations were expected to contribute expertise, knowledge and a wider network. Although some power would be shared amongst members, the risks would most likely be absorbed by TWT, and the other consortium partners are not financially implicated.

10.65 At this stage, there is some evidence that the consortium approach has had some benefits for the eight organisations involved, however, these are not necessarily felt equally. In an interview, one member of the consortium expressed that bringing these organisations together enhanced debate and allowed different members to learn from one another and challenge their existing systems. Across the consortium, it was felt most strongly that a key advantage was sharing good practice on youth engagement and environmental work. As set out in previous sections, there has also been influence on consortium members in adopting youth-led approaches within their own organisations.

10.66 Another advantage is that the consortium has provided an opportunity to engage senior organisation members in policy campaigning and advocacy, for example, through the CEO Advocacy Advisory Group. The focus of the first CEO Group meeting was on creating a strong legacy for the programme and on reinforcing the connection between nature and health and well-being. A limitation of this approach shared through interviews with CEOs and consortium members is the

somewhat limited ability to participate in such activities as their time is not funded as part of the programme.

10.67   There is less evidence on the impact of the consortium approach on programme design, delivery, and direction at this stage. Considering Figure 10.6 however, evidence seems to suggest that the partnership is currently at the 'cooperating' stage. Evidence shows that organisations are taking advisory roles (e.g. in terms of approach to campaigning, on operational matters such as safeguarding). There is some evidence of collective planning, but most tasks have been, necessarily, led by TWT.

10.68   An issue which has surfaced numerous times over the course of the evaluation, is that there is considered to be an unequal spread of power, risk, and ownership (and indeed involvement) caused by an imbalance in resource. This is due to only TWT and the Youth Function contractor's time being funded through the programme and has limited the involvement of other consortium members in some cases. Based on interviews with consortium members, additional factors considered to have constrained the outcomes of involvement have included: challenges conveying the benefits of involvement to members; and, some lack of clarity around shared, collective aim/(s) of the programme.

> *"The point of having a consortium is that one single organisation doesn't have all the skills, networks, etc. that are needed to achieve aims. So, a portfolio project should have a bigger impact. More needs to be done to realise ambitions."*
> *Programme team stakeholder*

10.69   This issue has been identified by the programme team and ideas sought to remedy it. Yet it is argued that to pay consortium members would result in a 'two-tier' system, whereby all members other than young people would be paid for their time, because of the difficulties in paying young people. The matter therefore remains unresolved.

The Share Learn Improve (SLI) Function

10.1   Partnership-working is supported by a number of programme and project activities, most of which come under the remit of the Share Learn Improve (SLI) Function. The SLI Function provides a variety of services to support learning and development across the portfolio. A dedicated SLI Coordinator is in place to broker inter-organisational learning and development. This is undertaken through various elements including an online social network and resource library (the Green Room) as well as Annual Programme Seminars, regional workshops and webinars.

10.2   The Green Room contains all programme-wide templates, good practice guides, as well as an events calendar and chat function. Over 2017 and 2018, engagement with the Green Room has varied between 22 and 28 projects for each quarter. Despite updates, some project managers continue to report that the Green Room is not user-friendly, commenting that it can be difficult to find discussions or extract information unless it is an update. Those projects which did use the Green Room commented that they found the documents and template useful, as well as the ability to share feedback with other projects. Across SLI, many consultees felt that the programme had encouraged honest sharing and had overcome the way that organisations can often feel protective of their own learning and policies.

10.3   Engagement with the Annual Programme Seminar and SLI workshops are greater than with webinars and often attract all 31 projects (see Appendix 3.3). These events were felt to be the elements of the programme which contributed most significantly to developing a collective sense of identity. They were also described as inclusive, helping to reduce isolation and were reassuring for both project staff and Youth Forum members in finding others with shared interests, passions and in similar roles. A couple of project managers and young people also commented that what they most valued from the Annual Programme Seminar was the opportunity to hear from Youth Forum members from different projects across the UK and from different backgrounds.

10.4   Numerous projects have developed relationships with other portfolio organisations through SLI events.

> *"Getting people altogether in one room has made a massive difference. You can see the spike in cross- project activity following the seminars. The workshops have worked well when we've been trying to get specific information out that's complicated or wants training rather than a guide." Programme team Interview 2018*

> *"We get the learning from the network. It's almost like counselling, when things aren't going as you expect, you find out about the experience on other projects and that they are experiencing similar challenges." Project manager interview 2018*

10.5   Several project managers commented that they struggle to engage with SLI and the Green Room due to multiple other demands on their time from the project and their organisation. Some specifically commented that this was because they had not been fully aware of what would be offered, and therefore had not allocated any staff time or funding to SLI within their original budgets.

10.6   At the beginning of the programme, one of the offerings of the SLI Function was a 'Critical Friend' which allowed projects to access advice from one of a set of appointed external individuals with relevant expertise e.g. recruitment, evaluation etc. The Critical Friend Function was underutilised, with fewer than 10 projects making use of it in both Quarters 1 and 2 of 2017 and only 1 project in Quarter 3. A review of the function was consequently undertaken and funds were reallocated. Projects can now act as a critical friend to other projects through the Project Support Network and are supported to do so with funding from the programme. This opportunity and funding continue to be underutilised. It is thought that this may be because projects were scaling up or replicating from past experience and so needed less support or because other SLI opportunities are providing this support (e.g. the Green Room and seminars).

10.7   Apart from reviewing take-up of the Project Support Network and minor changes to the Green Room, there is not much at this stage to suggest in terms of changes to the SLI. This is no doubt because there has been an effective and continuous process of consultation, reflection and action to respond to the needs of the portfolio and to address issues. The quarterly reporting by projects ensures a regular review of SLI offerings and feedback about events and resources are collected and used to improve delivery.

Outcomes of the portfolio approach and SLI Function

10.8   The portfolio approach was proposed because it was hoped that, by bringing together 31 projects under the Our Bright Future umbrella, they would have a greater impact than the collective impacts of the individual projects operating in isolation, therefore being 'greater than the sum of its parts'. The processes outlined in Figure 10.6 offered by the SLI Function were intended to be a major contributor to this, and where the programme could add value. The following sections outline evidence that there have been benefits from the portfolio approach.

10.9   Broadly, project managers highlighted that, whilst beneficial, finding time to engage with programme events and to build stronger links to other projects can be challenging. Some noted this was because it had not been made clear within the original specification that capacity should be ring-fenced for partnership activity, such as project exchange visits, alongside resource needed towards delivery. This is a key lesson for future programmes.

> *"The concept of working with other projects wasn't considered as an element when the original EOI was written. The project being part of a movement and working with other projects wasn't part of the original specification, this element has been built in since. We're pressed for delivering the project. We're all part time, and there are limitations to what we can do. If we'd have known, it would*

10.10 The main barrier to partnership working across the programme is time. It would have been beneficial to make expectations clearer at the outset (in terms of time required to engage with programme functions) so that projects could have planned accordingly.

Organisational learning

10.11 One of the main benefits of the portfolio to date has been bringing together youth and environment sector organisations, and the opportunities for organisations to share and learn from one another. This has enabled organisations to 'branch out' into new ways of working within a supportive environment, and, to help break down perceived barriers or silos between the sectors.

10.12 This type of learning has come about through annual and regional seminars, the Green Room, as well as individual conversations (informal support) and project exchange visits. Seeing different approaches in action has reportedly been valuable for project managers to expand their own repertoire of tools and knowledge of working with young people.

10.13 The broad range of experience and knowledge represented in the portfolio (both within and across sectors) is seen by project managers as a valuable resource and learning opportunity. There are many examples of outcomes resulting from the interaction of projects. These include, sharing of and improvement to internal policy documents (e.g. relating to health and safety and safeguarding) and sharing of best practice, including approaches to increasing accessibility, particularly for young people from under-represented groups or with additional needs.

> *"We've definitely benefitted from the expertise of other projects, and particularly those who have more experience of working with harder to reach young people or those who are less naturally inclined to want to be involved in projects such as ours. Project manager interview, 2018*

10.14 Furthermore, several project managers indicated that progress in new ways of working has been faster compared to projects trying out new ways of working in isolation, with projects inspired and given confidence to try new things which they otherwise may not have put into practice or known about. For example, this has included projects working with new target audiences, delivering activities in a different way, or trying out new approaches or systems such as delivery of accredited qualifications.

> *"We wouldn't have been able to learn about it so quickly. We wouldn't have adapted [the project] in the same way, with such an environmental focus or so quickly. Our understanding of the green economy and employment opportunities has changed. We have passed this on to our young people." Project manager interview 2017*

10.15 It is clear that the portfolio approach has encouraged and enabled projects to consider new ways of working and areas of focus, and there are examples of this experience steering wider organisational agendas. For example, the National Youth Agency, who had not worked on an environmentally-focused project prior to Our Bright Future, is actively incorporating environmental elements into future programmes and strategy.

Direct outcomes for young people

10.16 An outcome which is somewhat overlooked in the theoretical model in Figure 10.5, is the direct personal outcomes for young people as a result of participants engaging with other projects in the portfolio. Project exchange visits between projects in the portfolio appear to have been particularly valuable for young people.

10.17 Site visits have been observed by project managers to affect young people's personal development, particularly for disadvantaged young people. Site visits to other projects have offered young people

new experiences, for example one young person had never seen the sea prior to a project visit, another had never seen a mountain, and another group had never been on a plane.

> *"Like the lad that had never seen the sea before, we had a whole discussion on tides. He thought the sea could only go up and down if it rained." Project manager interview 2018*

> *"You don't leave or you're from a very deprived area, you take a step back and think, there's people outside. It's a big thought process for someone who lives in a very small world. I think it's really valuable. It's quite tricky because they're so different from each other which in one sense is the beauty of it." Programme stakeholder interview 2018*

10.18   In these examples, young people were observed by project managers to be motivated by knowing that they were part of a wider network or movement, and benefitting from widening their networks. However, project managers have reported that overall the collective nature of the programme has been difficult to convey to most young people participating in their projects, especially if they are not involved in any exchanges, visits or programme-wide events.

10.19   However, these benefits currently apply to only a small number of young people who have been able to attend project exchange visits, the Annual Programme Seminar and Parliamentary event. Given how powerful these experiences have been for a small number of participants, it may be worth considering how the programme could facilitate greater exchange and involvement of participants in site visits/exchanges and programme-wide events.

New partnerships and future relationships

10.20   The portfolio approach has been instrumental in the development of new relationships, some of which have already led to operational support between projects. There are examples of projects supporting one another through joint-delivery, cross-referrals between partners, and delivery of training to other projects in the portfolio. These have happened as a result of SLI events and intra-project visits, which were seen by project managers as valuable for two core reasons: creating a positive feeling of being part of larger movement; and sharing ideas and learning. Examples are subsequently described.

- One of Hill Holt Wood's Growing Up Green's (GUG) Youth Forum members supported another young person from Tomorrow's Natural Leaders (TNL) when he visited for a day of consultancy. The two young people worked together on a green-roofed bike shelter design that the TNL participant has been awarded funding for and he also received advice on developing his design concepts and practicing on software available at Hill Holt Wood.

- The Programme Manager from YDMT's Green Futures project has been supporting one of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Tomorrow's Natural Leaders with her project after meeting at the Youth Forum event. She was supported to apply for further funding through the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership and was successful. As part of the successful bid, YDMT is also facilitating the filming of a group of young people on an expedition, for use on the participant's website.

- Groundwork London was invited by a member of the NUS Sustainability team to talk at a meeting of the Greener Jobs Alliance. They used this to look at opportunities, share information and good practice.

10.21   In addition, a few projects are now beginning to discuss development opportunities which extend beyond immediate programme delivery. As a result of relationships formed through Our Bright Future, some organisations are in the first stages of forming partnerships with the intention of developing joint projects and bidding for funding. For example, Hill Holt Wood and NYA jointly applied for grant funding (Dream Fund – Postcode Lottery). Although they were not successful, this represented the start of further joint working, including a young person from Hill Holt Wood

applying for The Environment Now programme and successfully starting her project 'Operation Sawdust'.

10.22   Though a series of joint-funding bids have not yet come to fruition, it will be important to document any formal collaborations and projects in the next phase of the programme, which will be a key indicator of Our Bright Future's legacy.

10.23   There is also now evidence of formal working partnerships developing as a result of introductions through Our Bright Future. One example reported by the programme team was NUS developing a new relationship with Friends of the Earth, who were each launching national campaigns on plastics reduction. Despite having a history of working within different sectors and on different agendas, it was reportedly recognised that this shared focus might increase the momentum of the respective campaigns. Since then, the two organisations have begun working jointly on a number of initiatives including submitting a brief for the Welsh Baccalaureate to involve elements of the projects in the accreditation's community challenge section. NUS are further focusing on working more closely with The Wildlife Trusts on its Wilder Future campaign. Three projects located in close proximity to each other have also developed an ongoing relationship, with repeated visits by young people and reciprocal support at activities and events.

10.24   In addition, after an initially successful apple picking and pressing 'starter' project last year, in 2018, Wiltshire College was awarded £15,000 from Student Eats. This has allowed the college to scale up its work with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Milestones project and has allowed it to expand throughout other areas of the college.

10.25   Those who shared examples felt that these collaboration opportunities would not have existed in the absence of the programme. This is because it is thought that these organisations would not have come into contact with one another in everyday working; particularly those who operate in different sectors or with different geographical or age remits.

> *"It's really allowed organisations to work together that would otherwise not be anywhere near each other. It's been amazing in that way. Having the National Trust, The Wildlife Trust and Friends of the Earth in one room, you can't do that very often. There's cross-working spontaneously, lots of call out for collaboration which definitely wouldn't have happened without the programme." Programme team interview, 2018*

10.26   However, there is one note of caution. Although there are some strong examples of sharing and learning, this is not necessarily reflected equally across the portfolio. There are certain geographical areas and certain projects which are leading the way, but more needs to be understood about the projects that are not engaging as proactively and what has previously deterred or might encourage them to engage in future.

10.27   Also, despite indications of strong internal linkages between some projects, there is a distinct sense from project managers and stakeholder interviewees that the collective voice of the portfolio is not being maximised. A number of comments from project managers highlighted a desire to see more "shouting about" the programme and harnessing collective momentum for policy and influencing activity.

10.28   The connection between different organisations and sectors is a strong opportunity for the remainder of the programme in order to secure a legacy of joint-working. Early on in the programme, SLI offered regional meetings to try and encourage greater regional partnership working. As a result, a cluster of projects in the North of England developed a closer informal working relationship. At this point in the programme, and with Our Bright Future's legacy in mind, it may be a good opportunity to consider actions to support and encourage partnership working, and especially joint bid writing and project development.

10.29   It is useful at this point to discuss whether the portfolio approach has had any impacts, particularly for young people and the environment. After all, these are central to the aims of Our Bright Future and one of the key impacts from the theoretical logic model in Figure 10.5.

10.30   One area where there are likely to have been impacts for young people, although these are yet to be evidenced, is the incorporation of young people's voices within organisations. As mentioned in the previous section, a number of organisations have now set up forums and panels to provide formal roles for young people, in some cases at a board level, as a result of learning between youth and environment organisations. It will be important for the programme to monitor and celebrate any impacts as a result of increased youth participation within these organisations.

10.31   There is currently no evidence that the portfolio approach has had additional benefits for the environment. However, the outcomes of joint campaigns such as the one developed by NUS and Friends of the Earth, and any policy outcomes derived from the CEO Working Group should be monitored carefully to demonstrate achievements in terms of environmental policy influence, and potential environmental impacts as a result.

Conclusions: Partnership working

Most elements of the SLI Function are well used, particularly opportunities to engage face to face. These events have been most highly valued by projects and Youth Forum representatives, and have reportedly led to the greatest benefits in terms of relationship development and a sense of collective identity. The ability to share feedback with other projects has been valued and it is felt that SLI has created a space and opportunities for openness and honesty between organisations.

The majority of project managers who have engaged with the Green Room online forum and resource library have found the documents and templates provided valuable. However, there remain some criticisms that it can be difficult to use and find key pieces of information.

Project managers have engaged with SLI to different extents, some struggling to engage in part due to time and budget constraints. The programme has monitored and responded to engagement levels e.g. by reallocating funds from the underutilised Critical Friend, and should continue to do so, particularly in reference to the Project Support Network.

In designing and facilitating SLI activities, the programme team has responded and adapted well to the needs of projects.

The main outcomes of the consortium have been learning and knowledge exchange. There is also evidence of internal influence on member organisations in terms of ways of working (particularly around youth leadership) and strategy.

There is less evidence of how the consortium approach has steered the overall delivery or direction of the programme or its influence at this stage, however there are indications of some positive work in this direction.

Similarly, the main benefits for projects of being part of the portfolio have been learning (often practical ways of working), relationship-building within and between sectors, and opportunities for future joint-working.

The partnership approach has had direct benefits for young people. These have been derived through engaging with other projects and their participants. However, this is typically at a small scale through project exchange visits or programme wide events.

The programme appears to be adding value, creating something which is greater than the sum of its parts. This is primarily through inter-organisational learning, but there are strong indications that future joint projects will also emerge. The collective skills, experience and knowledge of how to support environmental activities for young people, which empower and upskill young people, must not be underestimated. The changes experienced by the organisations within the portfolio (e.g. environmental organisations engaging young people to a greater extent) have reportedly come

about much more rapidly than they would have without the programme. It is important that the programme recognises this as a key impact from Our Bright Future, and considers how this can be used in the development of the sector more widely.

Recommendations: Partnership working

In order to continue to optimise the value of the SLI Function, the programme team should remain responsive to feedback from projects. This includes providing opportunities to enable face to face engagement, given that these are considered the most useful and beneficial. Some attention could be given to improving the Green Room and reminding project managers where key documents can be found.

The up-take of the Project Support Network should be monitored. If the demand continues to be low for this element there may be opportunities to use the allocated funds to support other elements.

Although there are some strong examples of sharing and learning, this is not necessarily reflected equally across the portfolio. There are certain geographical areas, and certain projects which are leading the way, but more needs to be understood about why certain projects are not engaging as proactively, and what can be done to encourage their engagement.

A need has been identified to better harness opportunities to fully realise the collective voice of the portfolio and consortium, and the added value of the programme. One area in particular that could be supported further is the development of new partnerships, or supporting the development of embryonic/informal partnerships.

11. SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

11.1   This chapter presents current reflections on what the future and legacy of the Our Bright Future programme and portfolio might be. It examines existing plans and aspirations for the sustainability of projects from the perspective of those involved, as well as the longer-term legacy of Our Bright Future in terms of what might happen as a result of the relationships built, policy and practice changes and the engagement of young people. At this mid-term stage, evidence is largely limited to speculation on the part of projects, though there are a few examples of actions taken to ensure sustainability at the project level and visible legacy already. Sources of evidence primarily include project quarterly reporting, and interviews with project managers and the programme team held in 2018.

Long-term project sustainability

11.2   In 2018, project managers were asked during annual interviews what their plans were for the sustainability of their project beyond Our Bright Future funding and what they might expect the legacy of the programme to be. Some organisations have begun to think about the sustainability of their projects beyond Our Bright Future funding. In the 2018 interviews responses from project managers were largely aspirational and speculative with around a quarter of project managers suggesting they would seek further funding at some point in the future.

> *"The plan is to search for new funding streams to continue this." Project Manager Interview, 2018*

11.3   Project managers provided the following examples of how projects, or aspects of project activity could, or would, be sustained beyond the funding.

New contracts established:
- As a result of the MyPlace project, Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside Wildlife Trust was commissioned by the Lancashire Care Foundation Trust in 2017 for additional contracted eco-therapy work for the NHS. The project manager has recently submitted a business plan proposal for continued funding beyond 2020.
- Milestones have established a Care Farm as a financially self-sustaining legacy project. Funding is provided by Wiltshire Council for individual students to participate.

Commercialisation of project activities and their outputs:
- Five projects said that they are considering commercialising aspects of their project, though four of these had not formalised specific plans for this to support their project going forward at the time of interviewing. Some however were already selling produce created through their projects including chutneys, honey and timber products. The MyPlace project are currently considering the development of eco-therapy packages for company team days and chargeable activities for children outside of school; gift cards which could be purchased to cover project costs (e.g. for a pair of gloves for a participant); and legacy funding, where individuals bequeath funding in their will.

National roll-out across an organisation (scaling up):
- There are some examples of where lead organisations of projects are seeking opportunities to roll out elements of their project across their organisation nationally. For example, one project has presented a proposal to its chief executive to roll out the project in five further locations and has suggested that the volunteer work could also be extended across other local branches of the organisation.

Delegation of ownership and responsibility:
- Two project managers referred to the aspiration for communities to take ownership and responsibility for the community gardens and orchards developed by their projects. One felt this was already taking place. A third project manager had developed a strategy to formalise local community groups established by the project (through committees). The groups are currently still being supported by the project but are increasingly steered by others and supported by established structures and processes.

11.4　Overall, three projects confidently stated that delivery would continue beyond Our Bright Future funding and a further three were confident that elements of their project would continue. Approximately a quarter of project managers expressed no clear plan or direction for their project after its current funding period.

11.5　Several project managers commented that it was too soon to have formalised succession plans and a small minority discussed projects leaving a legacy as opposed to any form of continuation.

11.6　Meanwhile, there were a few examples of project managers taking ideas to their management boards and more senior staff. One project manager also reported that there was a lack of clarity from their organisation over the commitment of investment going forward. It is apparent that project managers are not always able to control or influence the sustainability of projects and that the decisions on actions post-funding sometimes lie with others within their organisation. For these projects, evidence of success remains important for putting forward the case for continuation of projects.

Project legacy

11.7　In interviews in 2018, project managers provided a variety of examples of the anticipated legacy of their projects. These can broadly be classed as learning and information resources, changes in policy and practice achieved and the future progression and destinations of young people empowered by projects. Some examples of these are subsequently provided.

Learning and information resources

11.8　Project managers have commented that, beyond the lifetime of projects, they expect to make learning resources and templates available to be used by their own and wider organisations and in some cases, schools. For example, the NUS is creating resources to support the replication of social enterprises in other locations and keep existing social enterprises operational.

11.9　Fruitful Communities is producing "a simple orchard care pack. Includes a booklet with basic tree maintenance tasks. If anyone is interested, they can use it. What to do – how to deal with issues". The resource includes a list of activities young people can undertake to contribute towards maintenance.

11.10　Another project is creating a website to share stories from participants and showcase their work. It is hoped this will act as a legacy and support the organisation's future work.

Change in policies and practices

11.11　Chapter 9 provides examples of how policies and practices have been influenced as a result of projects and the programme. There are also a variety of ways in which Our Bright Future projects are likely to leave a legacy for their lead and partner organisations. One means is through qualifications which have been developed or refined as a result of Our Bright Future projects. For example, Hill Holt Wood has written their own accredited qualifications in straw bale building, timber framing and log house building.

11.12　There are a few examples of changes to organisations resulting from their new experiences working with young people, or conversely in the environment sector, as a result of Our Bright Future funding. One project manager commented in an interview (2018) that their organisation would not have had a focus on the environment without Our Bright Future funding and that they have learnt a lot from the programme already. They described how this had made their organisation aware of opportunities for young people in the green economy. Meanwhile the CEO of one project commented that because of the success of the project, they had ensured resources were allocated to young people and had agreed to have one space on the organisation's board reserved for a young person.

"When we brought students to meetings… it reduces the average age! And creates excitement…Because of the success of x project more strategically, we are committing to making sure we have got resources focused around young people and families… [The Project] has been the springboard for x organisation to think about how we can have a wider programme of work around young people and families." Programme Stakeholder Interview 2018

"We are exploring different funding streams, and different partnerships with other organisations to see how we can maintain it. The environment is a new focus for us and we'd like it to continue as it has been successful." Project Manager Interview 2018

11.13   At least one project is also currently working on developing its own Youth Forum which will continue to operate after the programme ends in order to provide a sustainable legacy for youth involvement in the organisation post-2020.

11.14   While there are a few examples of how policies and practices have been influenced, where legacy has been discussed by projects, it is often expressed as an aspiration. For example, one project manager commented that the programme "*will hopefully encourage government to provide a platform for passionate environmentalists to engage with them [young people] on decision making that will affect the future*". *Project Manager Interview 2018*

Legacy for participants

11.15   As has been discussed in Chapter 6, there have been a variety of outcomes for young people participating in the programme. These include perceptions of improved employment prospects as a result of the confidence, skills and qualifications gained. Reports from project managers also suggest participants have benefitted from improvements to their mental health as a result of their participation. While emerging impacts have been identified in some cases (e.g. jobs/apprenticeships secured), the true long-term impacts are still potentially to be realised. In interviews in 2018, a few project managers said that this would be part of the programme's legacy, as demonstrated by the following examples.

- Vision England's project manager commented that there would be an individual legacy for each participant and the wider visual impairment community. They suggested that participants were promoting the project and demonstrating to others everything individuals with visual impairments can achieve.

- Another project manager referred to the difference their project has already made to the lives of individual participants. One example was of a young person who had been experiencing bullying, anxiety and depression prior to joining the project and was now employed, acting as a mentor to other young people and had gained confidence being around other people and managing their anxiety.

11.16   There is limited evidence of the scale of the programme's impact on young people at this stage and the extent to which it influences their future. The Green Leaders project undertook a survey of 89 participants and found that, after taking part in the project, 43% had taken up helping out with groups, clubs or organisations that they were previously not involved in, and two thirds also stated that they would be more likely to get involved in groups, clubs or organisations. This aligns with evidence discussed in the programme's Baseline and Context report which indicates that those who participate in volunteering and social action are more likely to contribute to future social and environmental activities[64].

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[64] Pye, J., James, N. & Stobart, R., 2014. Youth social action in the UK - 2014: A face-to-face survey of 10-20 year olds in the UK. London. Ipsos Mori.

Long-term legacy of the programme

11.17   There were a number of concerns expressed during interviews with project managers and programme stakeholders in 2018 about the potential for the programme to have a lasting legacy. There is uncertainty among project managers and programme stakeholders as to whether Our Bright Future could/should seek to establish and maintain a brand or identity which continues beyond the five years of the programme. One programme stakeholder felt that it is imperative that the consortium *"put forward funding to secure another cycle"* while another felt that *"to have a true legacy we need a step change in impact"* and suggested that more progress was needed.

11.18   In an interview in 2018, one external stakeholder cautioned however that the programme's legacy in terms of young people will be limited due to only reaching a small subset of the population for up to 5 years. They felt that to have a legacy, the programme would need to benefit a generation and suggested that a longer-term programme of 12 years would be necessary for that.

Lasting relationships and collaborations

11.19   There are a few indications that the programme will have a positive legacy over and above that of individual projects, primarily through lasting relationships and collaborations. The programme has clearly led to the development and strengthening of relationships between organisations, as evidenced in chapter 10 on partnership working. Some project managers noted that they would consider working with other projects and organisations within the portfolio again in future. Though this remains largely speculative at this stage, this suggests that there is potential for the relationships developed to lead to ongoing and future collaborations, contributing to a positive legacy of the programme.

11.20   The partnerships and opportunities to develop relationships through Our Bright Future funding at a local level may also have a legacy. One lead organisation developed a partnership with the local NHS Trust in their area as a result of their project. This had already led to additional eco-therapy work and the project manager felt that the Trust's buy-in would ensure that their work would continue to be embedded in the mental health network. In addition, as a result of their Our Bright Future funded project, one organisation has been invited to join the Step Up to Serve steering group for their 2019 Year of Youth Environmental Action.

Improved processes

11.21   Two project managers referred to the programme having improved their evaluation processes. One commented that this had helped them to win another project. The other project manager anticipated that the evidence gathered would be valuable for future funders and beneficial in improving the project's long-term sustainability.

Conclusions: Creating a legacy

Project sustainability and legacy

While some projects have started to consider their future sustainability beyond the programme funding, interviews with project managers in 2018 suggest that, for most projects, planning for sustainability as a whole remains aspirational and speculative. Overall, three projects confidently stated that delivery would continue beyond Our Bright Future funding and a further three were confident that elements of their project would continue. Approximately a quarter of project managers expressed no clear plan or direction for their project after its current funding period.

Due to organisational structures (e.g. where a project is delivered by an organisation with national reach), project managers are not always able to control or influence the sustainability of projects. In some cases the decisions on actions post-funding will lie with others within their organisation.

Based on interviews with project managers, the legacy of projects is currently expected to derive from three main areas: the development of learning and information resources that can be used

by others; changes in policy and practice achieved as a result of project activities or campaigning; and the future progression and destinations of young people empowered by projects.

Programme legacy

Interviews with programme stakeholders and project managers in 2018 suggest that there is uncertainty about what legacy the programme is likely to have, although its meaningful legacy is of course through the delivery of the portfolio of projects.

A key consideration is the continuation of programme funding, with the potential for generational change perhaps requiring longer term support (one external stakeholder suggested 12 years would be necessary).

The programme will also have a legacy through the relationships between organisations it has helped develop and/or strengthen (see also Chapter 10). This includes the improvements in processes and evidence gathering that programme support has enabled in project organisations, which may help with future funding bids.

Recommendations: Creating a legacy

It would be valuable for the programme team to more clearly define what is hoped the legacy of the programme will be, putting this in a portfolio wide context and supporting projects in contributing to this legacy. The programme could consider asking each project to prepare a legacy and sustainability plan with support to consider the potential options.

Legacy and sustainability could continue to form a discussion focus for SLI events (perhaps including the Annual Programme Seminar) in 2019, so that projects can learn from each other early enough that they have time to put in place actions and processes before the programme funding is complete.

12. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

12.1   This section summarises the key conclusions and recommendations made in each section of the report. Recommendations are numbered for ease of reference and relate to the conclusions.

Overarching conclusions

12.2   The rationale for the programme is still considered strong, if not stronger than at its inception. The agenda on certain issues (such as environmental volunteering and the engagement of young people with environmental issues), which closely align with the Our Bright Future outcomes, has progressed over the last two years offering significant potential for the programme to support or influence these agendas. There is a strong sense that globally, and particularly within the UK, the time to take key actions for the environment is as urgent as ever. This urgency relates to the increasing profile of several key environmental issues (e.g. plastics, air pollution, climate change) and the environmental policy uncertainty arising from the UK's forthcoming exit from the European Union.

12.3   An overall conclusion at this stage is that what the programme is trying to achieve is ambitious: in terms of the scale and diversity of activities; and in terms of the changes it proposes to facilitate, many of which are essentially long-term changes involving many factors such as behaviour change, developing environmental leaders of the future, environmental improvements, material changes in policy and practice. Where quantitative and well-defined targets exist, the programme is on track, or exceeding expectations. Yet the more complex changes it seeks to make are much harder to quantify and it would be useful to more clearly define what 'success' means, and what is achievable by the end of the programme in these areas.

12.4   There are indications of outcomes in relation to most programme aims across the portfolio. However, evidencing the collective outcomes of such a far-reaching programme has been challenging both for the programme and for the individual projects that make up the portfolio. In many cases the evidence of outcomes and impacts is qualitative or anecdotal, and relates to a selection of projects rather than being evident uniformly across the portfolio. This is partly because gathering more robust programme-wide evidence has been challenging, given the variety of project objectives, types and approaches. It is also important to note that there is a strong likelihood that many impacts will not be evidenced until well after the programme has ended.

12.5   Key overarching recommendations for the programme at this stage are:

1) In order to maximise the impact of the programme, Our Bright Future should reflect upon its core aims and clearly prioritise and focus actions to ensure that the programme achieves what it set out to do. In the following sections there are a number of recommendations about which elements are working well and could be used to drive further achievement. In some cases, there is an indication that something works, but more evidence is needed to gain robust proof and a fuller understanding.

2) It seems natural at this point that the programme should focus on legacy and sustainability. Within the report a number of suggestions have been made in this area, primarily: the possibility of developing participant or alumni networks; supporting project development and sustainability (or perhaps continuity); and sharing best practice internally and within the wider youth and environment sectors.

Management, governance and programme functions

12.6   Overall the programme has been managed well. The flexibility and responsiveness of the programme team has been especially appreciated by projects in terms of allowing projects to address immediate delivery challenges.

12.7   Although programme governance is considered to have been effective, there are some aspects of the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel which could be improved, such as: supporting more active participation from young people; addressing unequal involvement of consortium partners; having greater clarity over the roles and actions of individual members (reflecting their knowledge/skills); incorporating greater evaluation expertise within the Evaluation Panel; encouraging greater challenge and critical analysis from members of the consortium; and establishing sub-groups to tackle specific topics.

12.8   The evaluation has identified that the Policy Function and Youth Function are areas requiring some attention to work more effectively. It is recognised that the current political context may present an opportunity to influence UK policy, yet until recently there was still some uncertainty over common programme policy aims. There is now a better understanding of what is required of these functions and the opportunities available.

> 3)   The programme may wish to reflect further, and take actions to improve the functioning of the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. Suggestions for improvement include: greater clarity over the roles and actions of individual members (reflecting their knowledge/ expertise); greater challenge and critical analysis from members; and, the establishment of sub-groups to tackle specific topics. At the same time, the programme could revisit whether reimbursing all partners on equal terms for their participation on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel is feasible and could help improve the effectiveness of the partnership.
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> 4)   Young people should be further supported to enable more active engagement in the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. Both panels should consult with the youth representatives to determine how this might best be achieved.

12.9   There seems to be an ambition across projects and stakeholders for Our Bright Future to gain wider recognition. At present however, media attention has focused on projects as opposed to the programme which has lacked national coverage to date, although the Parliamentary event in March 2019 did lead to some national media coverage including on Radio 4. It is hoped that the evidence provided by the mid-term report will offer new opportunities to capture the interest of the media.

> 5)   The difficulty of communicating the Our Bright Future brand (both to young people and within media) needs to be better understood and addressed. Communicating the context and aims of the programme as a whole, in addition to the activities of individual projects, has evidently been difficult in many circumstances (e.g. when speaking to participants and local media). Two further suggestions on this point are highlighted below:
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> a.   If there is a desire for young people to feel part of a wider programme and movement then there is a need to provide greater opportunities for all young people (not just Youth Forum members) to engage with resources or other participants at a level beyond their own projects. This is particularly important if participants wish to maintain an affiliation with the programme once they have passed the age limit of 24 or if they move away from their previous project's location. In addition, the recent wider interest from young people in the environment would suggest an appetite from young people to engage with these issues and one another (regardless of whether they have access to an Our Bright Future project).
>
> b.   Equally, if it is hoped that the programme will maintain a presence and sustain relationships beyond the life of the programme, then it will be important to consider what its legacy could be beyond 2021. As more projects are nearing completion, there is also a need to consider how to

Project delivery and lessons learnt

12.10 The project portfolio is extremely varied geographically and in terms of project objectives and activities, reflecting the open call for project applications and the wide scope of the programme outcomes. Formal and informal training is however a core theme across the programme reflecting the original rationale for the programme and the majority of projects are undertaking direct physical environmental improvements (20 projects: 65% of all projects).

12.11 The desire to scale up and replicate previous or existing activity was a strategic ambition, and yet although projects appear to have pursued this, there is no clear understanding of how scale-up and replicate are defined or how this has benefitted the programme.

6) An assessment of progress against the scale-up model employed by projects, and how projects are interpreting this aim, might be useful at this stage to fully understand what the benefits of this strategic approach have been in practice and if some approaches have been more successful than others.

12.12 Due to the diverse nature of projects in terms of target beneficiaries (i.e. school groups compared to older participants) and types of activity (e.g. group work compared to mentoring of individual young people) there is no direct correlation between the number of young people engaged by projects and the scale of the Our Bright Future funding paid to them to date. A crude calculation of average cost per participant shows significant variation between projects, although this does not take into account the frequency and length of engagement. To some extent, projects requiring more funding per participant are those engaging more 'hard to reach' young people and/or those with particular needs, yet this is not always the case.

7) It would be useful to understand unit costs better across the portfolio to provide indicative cost ranges of types of intervention. Of particular interest would be cost by: type of participant (age, marginalised groups, those with disabilities etc.); engagement duration and intensity (i.e. costs for short, medium and long-term engagement); activity type; and if possible, by types of outcome.

12.13 Project staff skills and capacity were mentioned consistently as challenges at the beginning of the programme. Encouragingly, project managers report that Our Bright Future funding has been instrumental in supporting delivery organisations to upskill staff, particularly via SLI activities. Fewer problems are now reported in this area, indicating that there is now a group of skilled professionals, able to support youth focused environmental activities. However, staff turnover has been reported as a consistent delivery issue since the beginning of the programme. The importance of specialist skills makes high staff turnover a concern, and this may become increasingly so as we move towards the end of programme funding and staff start to seek alternative opportunities (if project continuation is not secured).

12.14 It is clear that project staff have worked hard to refine their approach to recruitment of young people over the course of the programme to date. They have made consistent efforts to develop and substantiate this area of knowledge and practice, and have demonstrated resourcefulness and flexibility in dealing with such challenges. Best practice has been developed and shared effectively between Our Bright Future projects.

8) Thanks to the programme, there now appears to be a network of professionals skilled in combining youth focused and environmental activities. Consideration should be given as to whether efforts should be made to maintain or capitalise on this network and how organisations might be encouraged to retain this skillset post-project. It is important that the skills developed through the programme are not lost after the completion of projects. In other words, how can

the capacity of environmental organisations to engage young people be maintained and vice versa.

9) The programme's network and SLI support has been a key contributor to upskilling of project staff. In addition to skills, a wealth of resources and information on good practice has been developed (including learning around recruitment). An option might therefore be to continue to provide resources and deliver SLI as a product in its own right beyond the programme's completion. This could be useful not only for members of the portfolio but also for organisations external to the programme within the environment and youth sectors. Before any future for SLI is considered, it would be useful to investigate whether project staff have received any other form or common sources of training or been accredited for the combined skillset they have gained through their project.

Achievement against targets

12.15   The following table summarises progress against each of the indicators. Those marked in dark green are exceeding the targets, those in light green are on track and it seems highly likely that targets will be met. Those in orange are those for which evidence is lacking at present or targets may not be met if current progress continues.

Table 12.1 Key achievements for young people and the environment	
Outcome 1 Young people	**Progress at mid-term**
60,000 (59,945) young people have participated in Our Bright Future activities	**Total: 85,788** ▪ One-off Engagement (once, up to a day): 60,012 ▪ Short-Term Engagement (more than once, up to three months): 16,404 ▪ Long-Term Engagement (more than three months in duration): 9,013
26,000 (26,190) young people have increased environmental skills and knowledge	Not measured consistently across projects, but given that all projects are supporting skills and knowledge development it seems highly likely that this target has been reached.
4,000 young people have gained environmental qualifications or awards e.g. OCN, NVQs, John Muir, DofE Award, academic qualifications	3,932 awards and qualifications gained
900 (894) young people have entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships	758 (of which 299 have gained employment)
400 young people have started entrepreneurial projects as part of the programme	214 entrepreneurial projects (50 businesses, 164 social enterprises)
Young people participating in the programme have improved their health and well-being	Not measured uniformly, but widespread anecdotal evidence and survey data to evidence this. More robust data is needed.
Young people participating in the programme feel more engaged and empowered to lead change in their local communities	Widespread anecdotal evidence, and case study evidence suggest that this has been achieved. More robust data would confirm this.
Outcome 2 Environment and Communities	
450 (468) community spaces have been improved	1,520 community spaces improved
Local communities have improved community cohesion	Some anecdotal evidence. More robust data would confirm this.
Local communities have increased awareness of and engagement in the environment	Some anecdotal evidence. More robust data would confirm this.

12.16   **The programme has engaged 85,788 young people,** far exceeding its overall target of 60,000 young people participating in Our Bright Future activities. It is worth noting however that the majority (70%) are one-off engagement (less than one day).

12.17   Targets have been surpassed significantly for short and medium-term engagement, but it also seems likely at this stage that the target for long-term engagement will be achieved by the end of the programme if similar progress continues. A small number of projects have also surpassed their targets for each level.

> 10) It would be worth the programme considering why, what seemed at the outset to be ambitious targets for engaging young people have already been surpassed to such an extent and whether: the way engagement is measured and reported needs to be refined; if any changes should be made to take advantage of these achievements; or if it would be beneficial to focus efforts in other programme areas where targets have not yet been met. Although targets demonstrate reach, they do not explain what is being achieved by engaging these young people, and this is likely to be very different for those engaging in the medium and long-term versus less than one day.

12.18   There have been some notable achievements in terms of programme targets relating to **skills, knowledge and employment.** Some have almost been exceeded already at the mid-term stage whilst the remainder look likely to be achieved if progress continues. Key achievements are:

> 11) Our Bright Future is moving positively towards its target for entrepreneurial projects started. It would be useful to monitor and follow up on these businesses and social enterprises after at least a year of operation to assess whether they were sustained over a longer time period.

12.19   Projects have supported improvements to 1,520 community spaces, far exceeding the programme's original lifetime target.

> 12) The target of 4,000 qualifications or awards gained has almost been surpassed. At this point, the programme may wish to look at individual project targets and revise programme targets accordingly. The same could be done for the target relating to community spaces supported.

Mid-term outcomes and impacts

Outcome 1: Participation in the Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on young people equipping them with the skills, experience and confidence to lead environmental change

12.20   There is a wealth of qualitative evidence from project managers, participants and others to indicate that young people have gained a range of new skills through participating in Our Bright Future projects. These skills are both specific to environmental topics, and more general soft and transferable skills. However, there is currently no indicator to assess whether the corresponding target has been met. The collective evidence base has a number of limitations which mean that the level and scale of the skills and knowledge gained by participants across the portfolio remains unknown. Awards and qualifications achieved, particularly accredited qualifications, are a strong indicator of skills and knowledge gained by participants across the portfolio and the target for this has almost been surpassed already. Around 80% of these are accredited, and the John Muir Award accounts for 30% of all awards.

> 13) Consider whether the target for skills and knowledge gained could be assessed for the remainder of the programme, potentially through using a sample of participants. Seek to find ways to strengthen evidence in this area and assess whether volunteering and social action in the natural environment supports different skills to other types of social action, or similar skills but to greater or lesser extents.

> 14) The prevalent use of the John Muir Award across the portfolio could offer opportunities for further research, a potential partnership or networking opportunity for those completing the awards. It may be valuable to explore formal collaboration opportunities with the John Muir

Trust. In addition, the qualifications gained could provide a proxy for the amount of time participants have spent engaging with the natural environment. This could be scaled up to a programme level across the multiple projects offering the award.

15) It would be useful to investigate further the role which Our Bright Future overall has had in terms of career decisions and employment, but this is something that would be most beneficial to administer as follow up survey or other research. Many projects have suggested that this would be difficult to administer due to capacity, therefore the programme may wish to undertake this as a separate and targeted piece of research across all programme alumni.

12.21 Although well-being was not referenced in the programme's original outcomes, there is a wealth of qualitative evidence to show projects are supporting participants to improve their overall confidence, well-being and mental health. These outcomes are less tangible and often difficult to evidence. Yet there seems to be widespread accounts (most of which are anecdotal but some more robustly evidenced) from different sources that participants have experienced improvement in their confidence, well-being and mental health. This is further strengthened by the Outcomes Flower survey data collected by the evaluation team in 2018.

16) In general, stronger evidence relating to improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health would benefit the programme, particularly in terms of sharing successes and lessons about what works. Potential options include:

a. Programme wide focused study of primary research, complementing and building upon the survey data from the Outcomes Flower.

b. Improving project-level reporting and sharing of existing surveys to collect this data, particularly being explicit about the limitations of each survey and reporting base numbers consistently (i.e. how many people were asked, and who responded).

12.22 The setting and design of projects appears to have supported participants to improve their mental health and well-being, through for example, being outside, engaging with nature and wildlife, undertaking physical work and the stability and structure offered by regular engagement. Providing alternative learning environments in a friendly and relaxed manner appears to have helped some participants to better realise their potential and improve their mental health. It has also been observed to reignite a more general motivation for learning in addition to improvements in the behaviour of some young people. The improvements in confidence, well-being and mental health gained through participation in projects have encouraged and supported some participants to take up opportunities they would not otherwise have done, taking on new roles, transitioning into education, employment and independent living.

17) There are a number of useful insights into the activities that have led to increased confidence, and these could be explored and shared further amongst the programme and wider sector.

Outcome 2: The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities

12.23 The Our Bright Future programme is supporting a wide range of terrestrial and marine habitats, through a variety of conservation activities. Given that evidence for environmental change takes time to observe (often decades in the case of habitats and species), while some more robust evidence is expected at the end of the programme, it is likely that some impacts will not be seen during the life of the programme.

18) The final evaluation would be strengthened if all projects can support assessments of physical environmental improvements with measurable or scientific evidence such as conducting surveying and monitoring; developing case studies of environmental change, recording changes as part of wider site management plans or just simply taking before and after photographs at each site.

12.24   There is anecdotal primary evidence from a sample of participating young people to demonstrate increased awareness, more positive attitudes and intentions to conserve the environment as a result of their involvement in projects. This is supported by wider anecdotal evidence provided by projects. There is also evidence of so-called 'hard to reach groups' of young people caring about the environment -having not considered it previously- as well as examples of young people sharing their newly gained enthusiasm for, and knowledge about, the environment and conservation with peers and family members. It remains difficult to ascertain to what extent changed attitudes and intentions have resulted in actual behaviour change and how long this behaviour will be sustained at this stage.

12.25   In the majority of the case studies, there is evidence that engaging young people in environmental tasks with clear tangible outcomes has been a key success factor, in terms of raising awareness of environmental issues through witnessing the scale of a problem first hand; and equipping young people with the motivation, understanding and skills to tackle environmental problems. Illustrative examples of tasks which foster an appreciation of the natural environment and an understanding of environmental issues that are appropriate for young people include: coppicing; beach cleaning; clearing invasive species; building bird boxes; and collecting food destined to be wasted.

19) It would be beneficial for projects to follow-up on the change in attitudes reported by young people by gathering data on the extent to which this has led to actual pro-environmental behaviour change. It would be most valuable if this could be followed up at various intervals after a participant's first engagement in order to assess whether any pro-environmental behaviour change is sustained over the long-term.

20) Additionally, the next iteration of the Outcomes Flower survey of participants should be rephrased to capture what participants have *already* done differently as a result of projects as opposed to the previous version which asked what they *would* do differently. This will allow for stronger conclusions on actual behaviour change as opposed to merely intentions.

21) Some key aspects of project activities have been identified as working well in fostering appreciation of the natural environment and an understanding of environmental issues. Projects which have yet to use such approaches could take inspiration from them in order to encourage further development of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

12.26   The types of community spaces supported by Our Bright Future projects are wide-ranging, including both green and grey infrastructure. Consequently, the activities of Our Bright Future are assumed to be positively benefiting many users of different community spaces and there are some indications of this supporting community cohesion, described in terms of more positive perceptions of young people and other social groups and increased connectedness to the wider community for young people.

22) Evidence relating to community impacts is largely anecdotal at present. Given the need to improve data collection in other focal areas (e.g. related to Outcome 1 and related to the Policy Asks), community impacts might be considered a correspondingly lesser priority in terms of programme data collection. If, however, it is felt that the impact on communities should be a priority for the programme, or if it is a priority for any projects, there may be benefit in providing support to collect data in a more robust and consistent manner.

Outcome 3: The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy

12.27   Evidence at the mid-term point indicates that projects are actively seeking to influence change within their organisations, among partners and with key influencers and decision-makers locally and nationally. Project staff and young people have engaged with a variety of key influencers. At the project level the majority have been political influencers (42% e.g. MPs / ministers in the devolved administrations, local councillors, etc.), NGO/VCS organisations (25%) and public sector influencers (20% e.g. local authorities, governmental departments, schools, health services etc.).

12.28   Project success in initiating dialogue with political influencers may well reflect that local MPs, councillors and mayors are interested in and can relate to the activities of projects in their areas. This may be a useful learning point: that political influence is perhaps more effective locally.

12.29   Awareness raising has been the main focus of project policy engagement activities at this stage. Projects have reported on some specific, localised outcomes, with many of these being quite practical in nature, such as young people, through their involvement in a project, engaging with and asking for changes such as in environmental practices in a school or their local area (e.g. installation of recycling facilities).

12.30   Influence of changes in practice have generally been around quite specific things, such as recycling facilities in schools, suggesting that influencing practice projects may be best place to deliver this. At present, these changes are ad-hoc (i.e. driven by the projects) rather than stemming from any programme wide strategy.

12.31   At the programme level, most key influencers engaged have been those in NGO/VCS organisations and the public sector (which includes departmental representatives e.g. Defra). At the time of data collection, no political influencers (e.g. MPs) had been engaged although in practice a large amount of engagement with MPs was undertaken in the build up to and during the Parliamentary event in March 2019, including all 650 MPs being invited, resulting in 90 responses.

12.32   To date, the programme has embarked on influencing activities such as launching the #owningit campaign, the collaborative creation of the three key Policy Asks, direct liaison with key influences, inviting influencers to attend events, connecting with existing groups and initiatives, such as the #iwill campaign, providing inputs into policy consultations and contributing to research.

12.33   At this stage, evidence suggests that policy activities have resulted in: the agreement of three defined Policy Asks, and their use in framing the Parliamentary event; developing new lines of communications with relevant organisations; raising awareness of the programme; blogs/vlogs from influential bloggers; evidence shared with relevant initiatives; and reported influence of Defra policy. It is worth noting that the individuals and organisations that Our Bright Future wishes to influence are subject to many other lobbies, and that awareness raising is a good first step in this process.

12.34   Up to this point there has been little coordination by the programme of influencing activity around an agreed set of policy priorities. Activities across the portfolio have been driven by each project's own priorities rather than by any programme level strategy. However, there are now three agreed Policy Asks which could form the basis of a wider influencing strategy at a project level.

23) A review should be taken of current resourcing of the Policy Function, to consider whether it requires additional resource. Suggestions for maximising its potential that could be investigated include: greater resourcing (including staff time); a more defined project level influencing strategy; and setting measurable indicators and targets for influencing activities.

24) Consideration could be given to using the Policy Asks to frame and coordinate project influencing activity at the local level, which may cumulatively have a larger potential for influencing change.

25) Given the emphasis on influencing policy and practice as a key strategy for programmatic legacy, Our Bright Future could explore whether it is feasible to set indicators and possibly targets relating to engaging policy influencers, using the mid-term data as a baseline of what is achievable. Of particular interest might be the extent to which local projects can, possibly more immediately, engage political influencers. Alongside this, the programme should continue to monitor engagement from projects in advocacy activities.

26) The wealth of practical examples of changes to practice at a project level could be shared amongst projects (and wider sector) through case studies or a practical guide.

27) At present there is no clear coordination of evidence creation and collection for Outcome 3 at the programme level, except in relation to specific contributions to consultations or research. Better coordination of evidence creation across the portfolio should be coordinated. This might include requiring projects to gather evidence relevant to the three key Policy Asks so that it can be used to support advocacy and influencing.

28) Attribution of influence, especially linking activities and campaigns to specific changes in policy or practice can be difficult. However, it is recommended that the programme team seek to understand as far as possible how effective influencing and campaigning has been. Additional monitoring and information gathering are recommended specifically for the #owningit campaign and Policy Asks. For example, analysis of use of the owningit hashtag could help to understand if this campaign has had the intended effect. Meanwhile, contacting MPs who participated in the Parliamentary event 6 months / 1 year afterwards could help to understand whether the Policy Asks have gained traction with influencers.

Outcome 4: The Our Bright Future programme utilises an effective partnership working and a youth-led approach, leading to stronger outcomes for young people and the environment

Involving young people

12.35   The mechanisms for engaging young people have been somewhat challenging to implement. Issues flagged by project managers include difficulties accessing the Youth Forum and a lack of communication about what happens at the Youth Forum.

12.36   Evidence of the ways young people's inclusion has impacted on the programme direction is lacking at present. Although young people are at the table, are they able to influence? And what type of 'influence' is expected of young people? This may be affected by some delivery challenges, but it seems clear that there is not currently a shared understanding of what 'youth-led' means for the programme. One area where young people have reportedly had a significant influence is in the development of the Policy Asks and co-design of the Parliamentary events. It is worth noting that programme level involvement of young people has provided personal benefits for those involved, particularly confidence.

29) The evidence about what impact youth involvement in the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel has had on the programme strategically and operationally is not clear. There are a number of things to consider here, and ideally to be discussed with the youth representatives:

o   Is there a clear understanding amongst the programme stakeholders about what 'youth-led' means in practice? Could there be some clear indicators against which progress can be measured?

o   Are there any further mechanisms that could be used to encourage active participation of youth representatives? e.g. clearer outline of roles or an agenda item to cover youth perspectives.

o   Is the problem lack of evidence e.g. a failure to record these impacts? Or, is it possible that young people were unaware that their actions had resulted in changes (a feedback failure)?

30) A review should be taken of current resourcing and operation of the Youth Function, to assess whether it requires additional resource or changes in approach to fulfil its potential. Suggestions for maximising its potential that could be investigated further include: better communication about what happens on the Youth Forum; making the Youth Forum more accessible to more and a wider range of young people; and greater clarity over the roles of youth representatives.

12.37   Project level involvement of young people has been successful, perhaps as this is more achievable/practical. There is strong evidence that young people are leading activities, and that this is having very good outcomes for young people.

12.38   The main outcome of opportunities to lead is confidence, which in turn leads to empowerment and advocacy. Giving young people a voice helps them to realise that they deserve to be heard and involved. Youth empowerment seems to be the crucial factor in enabling people to lead.

31) It would be useful to assess what potential there is to extend the types of activities offered to the Youth Forum members to benefit a wider cohort of young people. i.e. the participants. This links to suggestions elsewhere in this report around participant or alumni networks.

Partnership working

12.39   The SLI Function is, on the whole, working very effectively and particularly opportunities for face to face engagement (workshops, the Annual Programme Seminar and project exchanges). Some projects have expressed that there remain challenges to participation due to resource constraints, but it is understood that this is being monitored and addressed by the programme.

32) In order to continue to optimise the value of the SLI Function, the programme team should remain responsive to feedback from projects. This includes providing opportunities to enable face to face engagement, given that these are considered the most useful and beneficial. There may be further opportunities to improve the Green Room and provide clear guidance / reminders to project managers as to where key documents can be found.

12.40   The main outcomes of the consortium approach have been learning and knowledge exchange between consortium organisations. There is also evidence of internal influence on member organisations in terms of ways of working (particularly around youth leadership) and strategy. There is less evidence of how the consortium approach has steered the overall delivery or direction of the programme or its influence at this stage, however there are indications of some positive work in this direction.

12.41   Similarly, the main benefits for projects of being part of the portfolio have been learning (often practical ways of working), relationship-building within and between sectors, and opportunities for future joint-working. The partnership approach has also had direct benefits for young people. These have been derived through engaging with other projects and their participants. However, this is typically at a small scale through project exchange visits or programme wide events.

33) Although there are some strong examples of sharing and learning, this is not necessarily reflected equally across the portfolio. There are certain geographical areas, and certain projects which are leading the way, but more may need to be done to understand more about the projects that are not engaging as proactively, and what can encourage or deter them from doing so.

12.42   The programme appears to be adding value, creating something which is greater than the sum of its parts. This is primarily through inter-organisational learning, but there are strong indications that future joint projects will emerge. The collective skills, experience and knowledge of how to support environmental activities for young people, which empower and upskill young people, must not be underestimated. The changes experienced by the organisations within the portfolio (e.g. those in the environment sector engaging young people to a greater extent) have, reportedly, come about much more rapidly than they might otherwise have without the programme. It is important that the programme recognises this as a key impact from Our Bright Future.

34) A need has been identified to better harness opportunities to fully realise the collective voice of the portfolio and consortium, and the added value of the programme. One area in particular that could be supported further is the development of new partnerships, or supporting the development of embryonic/informal partnerships.

Legacy

12.43   There is some uncertainty about what legacy the programme is likely to have, although its' meaningful legacy is of course through the delivery of the portfolio of projects. The programme will

also have a legacy through the relationships between organisations it has helped develop and/or strengthen and through the improvements in processes and evidence gathering that programme support has enabled in project organisations.

12.44   While some projects have started to consider their future sustainability beyond the programme funding, the evidence suggests that for most projects planning for the sustainability of projects as a whole remains aspirational. The legacy of projects is currently expected to derive from three main areas: the development of learning and information resources that can be used by others; changes in policy and practice achieved as a result of project activities or campaigning; and the future progression and destinations of young people empowered by projects.

> 35) It would be valuable for the programme team to more clearly define what the legacy of the programme should be, putting this in a portfolio wide context and supporting projects in contributing to this legacy.
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> 36) Legacy and sustainability should continue to form a discussion focus for SLI events (perhaps including the Annual Programme Seminar) in 2019, so that projects can learn from each other early enough that they have time to put in place actions and processes before the programme funding is complete. The programme could consider asking each project to prepare a legacy and sustainability plan with support to consider the potential options.

Evidence limitations and needs

12.45   There are a number of recommendations outlining where evidence is currently patchy, needs strengthening or where a better understanding of a particular issue is recommended. Before embarking on additional evidence gathering, the programme team should reflect on their evidence needs and prioritise efforts in these areas. Evidence needs should also be framed in terms of their value for the legacy of the programme and could also target key emerging agendas.

12.46   The quality of evidence captured by projects is a concern, making it particularly difficult to report consistently about the outcomes of the portfolio. A review of evaluation carried out by projects found that relatively few scored highly against a quality criterion[1], with reports lacking clear analysis or evidenced conclusions. This is primarily due to a lack of clear guidance and requirements in terms of evaluation from the outset (where project began prior to the contracting of the evaluation team). This has been problematic in terms of programme evaluation, because the standard of evidence provided by projects is not robust. It is clear at this point that reporting and evaluation processes would benefit from a review and refresh by the Evaluation Panel and programme team.

> 37) Although there may be valid reasons why projects cannot collect all demographic data, it should be a priority to investigate why basic programme-wide data such as age and gender has not been submitted by all projects. Considerations should be given at a programme level about how reporting socio-demographic data can be improved not only in terms of demonstrating the reach of the programme but to benefit projects seeking future funding. Throughout the evaluation, the team has been made aware of the challenges faced by projects in collecting data, particularly for those who may only engage for less than one day (classed as 'short term engagement'). In many ways this is understandable, yet for medium and longer-term engagement the programme could benefit from more detailed reporting and should consider whether to set minimum data requirements for these participants.
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> 38) A comprehensive review of monitoring and reporting is recommended following the publication of the mid-term report and feedback on how monitoring is used could be more regularly shared with project managers. As part of this review, the programme should seek options for improving

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[1] Evaluation criteria: Report includes an executive summary, introduction, methodology (sampling, tools used, research questions), findings (clearly presented, supported by data, graphs and/or quotes), discussion (how outcomes are being achieved, what they mean for delivery), conclusions (key findings, lessons learned, how this will inform delivery), recommendations and appendices.

the approach to project evaluation. This will not only be of benefit to the programme but also for projects seeking future funding. The Evaluation Panel should consider options, and reflect upon the current gaps in evidence on programme outcomes to make positive changes and maximise the potential to collect meaningful and impactful evidence.

Opportunities

12.47   The UK is facing fundamental shifts in terms of policy and environmental legislation. Much of the programme's influence is likely to come from sharing evidence, lessons learnt and best practice about approaches taken by Our Bright Future and the portfolio of projects. Funders and policymakers will need to know what works for which groups of young people. They are also likely to be interested in whether projects or programmes such as Our Bright Future offer value for money in terms of delivering outcomes for young people, communities, the environment and economy, compared to alternatives.

39) In light of these changes to the context of the programme, it is recommended that Our Bright Future takes advantage of current opportunities identified including:

a.   Linking into Defra activities relating to young people and the environment, in particular the 2019 Year of Green Action. Our Bright Future will also be able to offer evidence and best practice in support of other Defra initiatives such as Children in Nature.
b.   Highlighting evidence and best practice around health, well-being and the environment particularly in light of the continued interest in social prescribing, with particular emphasis on young people.
c.   Shaping policy and legislation development in the wake of the UK's exit from the EU, most notably around the environment, but also potentially policies relating to training, skills and employability.
d.   Supporting and facilitating greater youth participation, within organisations and in the development of policies.
e.   Continuing to link into the youth social action agenda e.g. #iwill campaign, Heritage Lottery Fund Kick the Dust and share evidence and learning on practical environmental action for young people.

40) There are numerous opportunities now available to tap into activities and developments at a policy level, and the programme needs to ensure that it is able to position itself well to take advantage of these. For example, the programme needs to ensure that it, and projects remain responsive to, and capitalise on (where appropriate) evolving agendas, high-profile and disruptive events such as the ongoing youth climate strikes and the increased attention on plastic waste. In responding to such news items, the team should ensure they communicate a coherent viewpoint as a programme, consortium and portfolio.

41) It is hoped that the mid-term report will provide an opportunity to gain wider media coverage, and therefore effective dissemination of evidence is crucial at this point in the programme.