



OUR BRIGHT FUTURE

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

JUNE 2022

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Glossary

CEO Advocacy Advisory Group	The group responsible for advising on the programme's policy activities, involving CEOs from all partner organisations and young people involved in projects.
Consortium	The eight partners governing the programme which sit on the Evaluation Panel and Steering Group.
Evaluation Panel	The group responsible for steering the direction of the programme's evaluation, made up of representatives from portfolio organisations identified as having an interest or expertise in evaluation and young people.
Green Room	A secure login website for the Our Bright Future community, providing resources, information and hosting conversations.
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 Programme Team	The team responsible for programme management at The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) and National Youth Agency (NYA).
Outcomes Flower	The bespoke survey prompting participants to reflect on and indicate their level of agreement with 6 statements including 'I feel relaxed', 'I feel confident in myself' and 'I feel close to other people' before and after their participation in Our Bright Future projects to assess the difference projects have made.
Policy Asks	A change or changes in policy sought through policy activities and/or a campaign. Three Policy Asks were designed in collaboration with young people and put forward by the programme in 2019: more time spent learning in and about nature; support to get into environmental jobs; policymakers, employers, businesses, schools and charities to pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment.
Policy Function	This function identifies opportunities, supports the projects and young people in the programme to participate in policy activities, engages with policymakers/decision-makers and ensures that the Policy Asks and evidence produced by the programme are shared to have wider impact.
Policy Influence	The act of influencing the direction, conversation, or application of a change in policy, either at an organisational or strategic level.
Portfolio Organisation	An organisation running one of the 31 Our Bright Future projects.

Share Learn Improve (SLI) Function	This function works with projects to identify areas of learning need, provide support and facilitate knowledge sharing.
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 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.
Steering Group	The Steering Group, made up of senior representatives of each of the eight consortium organisations, a representative from the Fund, a chair from RSWT Council and youth representatives, was responsible for identify ways to maximise the programme's impact, ensuring a lasting legacy of the programme and overseeing programme management.
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).
External Stakeholder	Organisations and departments within the youth and environment sectors as well as The National Lottery Community Fund and Defra who are not directly involved in the programme.
Internal Stakeholder	Members of the Programme Team at the Wildlife Trusts and National Youth Agency and members of the consortium i.e. Evaluation Panel and Steering Group.

Acronyms

CEP: Collingwood Environmental Planning

Defra: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

ERS: Economic Research Services

EA: Environment Agency

EU: European Union

MP: Member of Parliament

MLA: Member of the Legislative Assembly (Northern Ireland)

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NUS: National Union of Students

NYA: National Youth Agency

NWWT: North Wales Wildlife Trust

PAM: Policy and Advocacy Manager

RSWT: Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts

SLI: Share Learn Improve

VCS: Voluntary and Community Sector

YDMT: Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust



FOREWORD

Anish Banerjee

I have been associated with Our Bright Future through the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Youth Council between March 2021 and February 2022. Being an international student at the University of Manchester, I unfortunately had to complete much of my course remotely back home in India. The Youth Council, other than being a wonderful learning experience, has kept me connected to Manchester while contributing to conservation in the county. I truly believe Our Bright Future has really helped increase youth engagement in the conservation field. This is particularly crucial for young people from either BAME or international backgrounds, who may face significant barriers to voicing their opinions to crucial environmental and social issues. Furthermore, at a personal level, the projects under Our Bright Future play a significant role in developing skills, such as campaigning, outreach and event management, which the youth can use to make a difference in environmental action.

As mentioned earlier, Our Bright Future has been a wonderful platform for engaging young people in environmental action. The evaluation report is consistent with the programme's values of youth engagement. Understanding how the youth have perceived the program has been highly insightful and intriguing. One particular finding was a high portion of participants in the survey, mentioned that their involvement with Our Bright Future has improved their mental health. Personally, the sense of community and connection to nature provided by Our Bright Future has been of great benefit mentally. I was particularly impressed by the number of participants who had received a qualification, internship or work placement after being involved in the program. This emphasises that, provided with an opportunity, young people will definitely impress.

The evaluation report can prove to be a gamechanger in terms of youth engagement in the environmental and social sectors. The report highlights the sheer success of the program and bodes well for similar projects in the future. This should encourage increased funding, resources and opportunities for projects focusing on elevating youth engagement. Additionally, due to the fact that the program encompasses a diverse range of projects, I believe the findings of the report can certainly be used to mould any youth project, regardless of sector and magnitude. Nonetheless, I strongly encourage you to divulge deeply into the report. You will be pleasantly surprised at how young people can really shape the future when given the opportunity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Our Bright Future programme was an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It was a portfolio programme of 31 different projects running from 2016 to 2021. The programme brought together projects from the environmental and youth sectors, seeking to achieve shared outcomes for the environment and communities, as well as the youth and environmental policy landscapes. Projects shared the aim of empowering young people (aged 11-24) to lead future environmental change and ranged in scale from national to local.

Project activities included: involving young people in practical environmental conservation; engaging them in vocational training and work experience; supporting them to develop their own social action campaigns around environmental issues; and helping them to start their own sustainable enterprises.

The National Lottery Community Fund invested £33m to support the programme, which was governed by a consortium of eight organisations led by RSWT. All eight partners were expected to support the delivery of the programme by: linking projects together; providing specialist expertise/experience; being responsible for elements of the programme; and, in some cases, delivering projects.

This final evaluation report covers all six years of the programme, from its set up in 2016 to its close in 2021. Written by evaluators Economic Research Service Ltd (ERS) and Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP), this report seeks to celebrate the achievements of Our Bright Future and share the reflections of those involved as the programme draws to a close.



Context and rationale

Over the duration of the programme, there have been significant changes to the programme's strategic context, with a growing focus on youth voice emerging in the environmental sector, particularly in relation to potential solutions to the climate emergency. COVID-19 also impacted on programme delivery, although some activities continued in some form, adopting social distancing measures and/or remote working practices. The challenges faced by young people that formed the rationale for Our Bright Future (i.e., wellbeing/anxiety, connectedness to nature, access to skills/employment) remain relevant, and are perhaps even more acutely felt in the post-pandemic context.

Evaluation methodology

The programme evaluation aimed to identify, analyse and assess the collective impact of the 31 projects; whether it has achieved its long-term ambitions; and finally, to gather evidence of impacts and lessons learned in terms of what works and why. To do this, the evaluation draws on the following key sources:

- **Secondary data produced by project managers:** including quarterly and annual monitoring reports, project evaluation reports and case studies, as well as data collected by the programme team.
- **Primary data collection:** annual interviews with project managers, the programme team, youth representatives, internal and external programme stakeholders; case study project visits; a Participant Impacts survey; and a short survey of a sample of participants (known as the Outcomes Flower).



Programme Outcomes

Outcomes for young people

Our Bright Future has demonstrated that engaging young people in the environment and conservation has created benefits for young people. Across all evidence sources, participants were consistently found to be more confident, skilled, happier and able to find work through their participation in the programme. The key outcomes for young people were:

- Improved mental health and wellbeing;
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence;
- New skills and knowledge;
- Increased employability and enhanced or influenced career aspirations.

Outcomes for the environment and communities

There is evidence that through the cumulative environmental and conservation activities of projects, creating and enhancing habitats and improving community spaces, the programme has had a significant positive impact on the natural environment and communities. Project activities and the actions of participating young people led to the offsetting or reduction of CO2 emissions and reductions in waste being sent to landfill. Furthermore, projects created indirect benefits to the environment through influencing the attitudes and behaviours of both participants and communities.

Outcomes for young people's pro-environmental and pro-nature attitudes and behaviours¹

Project activities led to increased environmental awareness and knowledge and improved the attitudes and behaviours of participating young people towards the environment. This is likely to represent a key legacy of the programme, as these outcomes will continue to have beneficial environmental impacts through the actions of young people in future, in addition to the actions of those they potentially influence (friends, family etc.).

Outcomes for policy and practice

There is evidence that Our Bright Future projects and the young people participating in them have had a direct influence on decision-makers and the way they valued young people as constituents. Through this, projects have influenced local decisions relating to the environment or youth policy.

¹Richardson et al. (2020), ['The green care code'](#)

Key Programme Learning

Factors supporting outcomes for young people

Key success factors in achieving outcomes for young people included: providing supportive environments in which young people from different backgrounds can work together; connecting young people with peers and also role models; challenging young people and supporting them when needed; and providing variety in the types and location of activity. In addition, the programme demonstrated that the cross-fertilisation of activities works to achieve a variety of outcomes. For example, practical activities supported young people to improve their conservation skills but also brought a range of benefits in other areas such as employability and confidence.

Factors supporting outcomes for policy and practice

At the programme-level, the Policy Function provided a clear focus for policy advocacy and influence, including establishing and maintaining contact with a large number of decision-makers and organisations relevant to the programme and its aims. The Policy Function facilitated the creation of three Policy Asks by young people involved in the programme, and their launch at a parliamentary event is another key output of the Policy Function. While the evidence of the Asks leading to project-level outcomes is limited, they provided a focus for programme-level influencing and there is some evidence that they may have influenced national discussion and decisions around policy related to young people and the environment.

Partnership approach

The programme established an open and supportive culture. However, some felt partnership working was not truly achieved. The degree to which the programme was pre-prescribed perhaps limited the ability for the Steering Group/leaders to direct the programme and the opportunities for a partnership to develop. Although consultees felt that projects and the programme worked together effectively and efficiently, the portfolio design was considered to have limited the scope for collaboration on new ideas and seeking new opportunities. Projects did, however, report effective partnership working between projects, which added value to the outcomes for young people.

Programme processes

Management and programme operations were highly praised for their efficient, clear communications and a flexible, open approach. The active engagement of the funder in groups proved valuable and efficient. The Share Learn Improve Function supported both formal and informal learning across the youth and environment sector. In person events supported more than learning, but contributed to project team motivation, peer support and development of a network and a sense of being part of a movement.

The programme worked hard at, and was clearly committed to, engaging young people in decision making. The Youth Forum, Evaluation Panel and Steering Group provided opportunities for 148² young people to build their skills and gain experiences that would support both their employability and ability to lead environmental change. Overall, the programme focussed on youth engagement at an impressive scale but may be best described as youth-informed rather than youth-led.

Programme Legacy

Young people, communities and the environment will continue to benefit from Our Bright Future projects' learning, resources and activities. Our Bright Future's joint-sector approach has created a legacy in the youth and environmental sectors by influencing organisations' policy and practice. Young people intend to use the skills and experiences they have gained through participating in Our Bright Future to create a positive legacy for the environment.

² This number will continue to increase during 2022 as new members continue to join programme groups and more young people continue to be engaged through online events.



1. INTRODUCTION

This report is the Final Evaluation Report of the Our Bright Future programme and seeks to summarise, evaluate and celebrate the achievements of Our Bright Future as well as share reflections of those involved.

Written by the evaluators, Economic Research Service Ltd (ERS) and Collingwood Environmental Planning (CEP) as the project activity drew to a close in 2021, this report builds on the [Mid-term Evaluation Report](#) produced in 2019. Alongside this core evaluation report are six [learning papers](#) that reflect on topics related to the programme outcomes and learning from the delivery of Our Bright Future (see Appendix 1). They are:

- **Paper 1:** Skills and employability: learning from Our Bright Future
- **Paper 2:** Engaging young people in the environment: benefits for mental health and wellbeing
- **Paper 3:** Outcomes and impacts for the environment and communities
- **Paper 4:** Engaging young people in the environment: achievements, what worked, lessons learned
- **Paper 5:** Reflections on the Our Bright Future programme approach
- **Paper 6:** Young people in governance roles: achievements and learning from Our Bright Future

In addition, three deep dive thematic studies were produced in 2020-21 based on targeted primary research into key outcome areas of Our Bright Future:

- Environmental Leadership Study
- Key Impacts for Participants Study
- Skills Development in Our Bright Future Projects

The learning papers and thematic studies provided a valuable evidence base for this final evaluation and are cross-referenced throughout this report (see Appendix 1).

What Is Our Bright Future?

Launched in 2016, Our Bright Future was a programme of [31 individual projects](#) (also referred to as the portfolio of projects) across the UK that brought together the environment and youth sectors to create a movement seeking shared outcomes for the environment, communities, and the environmental and youth policy landscapes. Projects were also 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 focussed on activities such as involving young people in practical environmental conservation, engaging them in vocational training and work experience, supporting them to develop their own campaigns around environmental issues and helping them to start their own sustainable enterprises. The National Lottery Community Fund (hereafter referred to as The Fund) invested £33 million over the period 2016 – 2022 to support the programme, which was governed by a consortium of eight organisations led by The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) (see Appendix 2). All eight partners were expected to support the delivery of the programme by: linking projects together; providing specialist expertise and experience; being responsible for elements of the programme; and, in some cases, delivering projects.

Context And Rationale

The need for an environment-themed programme was identified by The Fund's UK Funding Committee in 2012. A range of interrelated drivers were identified (for further details see [Baseline and Context Report](#)).

- **The Fund:** At that time, The Fund had no competitive UK programme focusing exclusively on the environment. The Fund was also seeking to do more than fund discrete projects.
- **UK funding:** The relatively low levels of funding available for environmental initiatives suggested a gap and need for a large-scale funding programme.
- **Environment:** The pressing needs relating to climate change, decline in biodiversity, and the need to transition to a low carbon economy.
- **Youth voice:** An increasing emphasis on meaningful youth participation, aimed at enabling young people to have their voices heard and participate in decision making.
- **Youth unemployment:** In 2016, youth unemployment (16-24 year olds) was at 13.3%³. There was concern among young people and youth organisations that young people were being disproportionately affected by economic challenges.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Young people's mental wellbeing was reported to be at its lowest ever recorded level.
- **Time in nature:** Increasing concern that young people were spending less time in nature compared to previous generations and that they were feeling disconnected from the environment and environmental issues.
- **Public policy focus:** Appetite for providing young people with skills and experience that would help them to take advantage of jobs growth within the green economy.

³Office for National Statistics

Whilst there were a variety of environment-focussed programmes across the UK at this time, there was no programme funded on the scale of Our Bright Future. The programme sought to take a new approach by bringing together the environment and youth sectors as a consortium and portfolio of projects. The aim was to enable the two sectors to develop and refine approaches and to empower young people to lead future environmental change.

“Our Bright Future has done a great job of coming from [the] environment sector to reach out to young people, which not many other sectors have done. Climate action is youth driven and quite a lot of role models have emerged. It is a youth issue and priority.”

External Stakeholder.

The ambition was for the programme to:

- Forge stronger links between young people and their environment and facilitate long-lasting change;
- Create a portfolio of projects to provide opportunities for young people to lead change and improve their environment, as well as to empower them to shape and influence change within their local environment and gain new skills linked to the green economy; and
- Fund projects that provide employment, volunteering and training opportunities that are clearly linked to environmentally sustainable activities.

Evidence and theory available at the outset (see Baseline and Context Report) showed that a programme such as Our Bright Future had the potential to help address multiple issues and potentially have significant benefits for young people, the environment and communities. These included developing young people’s skills, knowledge, employability, health and wellbeing; fostering pro-environmental behaviour change; empowering young people; and developing social capital and community cohesion.



Programme structure and delivery

Projects and portfolio organisations

Each of the 31 projects in the portfolio ran for up to five years (in some cases this was extended to 6 due to the impact of COVID-19 on delivery) and was allocated around £1 million to scale-up and/or replicate existing activity, reaching new beneficiaries or new locations. Portfolio organisations came from both the environment and youth sectors and brought a range of organisational expertise and remits, from conservation activity and environmental campaigning to supporting young people to start their own enterprises or deliver creative projects.

Similarly, projects focussed on a wide range of different activities, with all projects taking a different approach to contributing to the programme outcomes, whether it was supporting young people to improve their wellbeing through taking part in sustainable construction projects or engage their local communities in reducing food waste. Not only did projects' area of activity vary greatly, they also targeted different groups of young people, with a range of needs, and engaged with them using a variety of methods (such as through regular face-to-face group activities or through residential). An overview of all projects and portfolio organisations can be found in Appendix 4. A more detailed breakdown of projects by typology can be found in the [Mid-term Evaluation Report Appendices](#).

Programme Functions

Portfolio organisations benefited from three additional programme 'functions' designed to assist projects by providing direct support and facilitating learning from each other through shared knowledge and information. The ambition was to achieve an overall programme impact greater than the sum of its parts, exceeding what would have been possible if the 31 projects were delivered in isolation. The three programme functions were: 1) Share Learn Improve (SLI); 2) the Policy Function (both coordinated by RSWT); and 3) the Youth Function (coordinated initially by Inspired and later by the National Youth Agency [NYA]).

- SLI supported the 31 projects to learn from one another, develop relationships and share best practice through face-to-face and online events, online resources (including via the programme's members-only web portal, The Green Room) and through financial support for visits between projects.
- The Policy Function aimed to encourage and facilitate young people to raise their voice to influence policy and practice related to young people and the environment. As well as supporting projects and participants to engage in and stimulate advocacy activities, the Programme Team included staff roles dedicated to engaging the programme as a whole with policy and decision-makers.
- The Youth Function offered opportunities for young people to influence the strategic direction of the programme, predominantly through the opportunity to be involved in a Youth Forum and as youth representatives on the programme's Evaluation Panel and Steering Group.

⁴A single staff member was joined by three additional roles in 2020 with responsibility for devolved nations with additional support from a Campaigns Officer who joined in July 2020

The first face-to-face events of the programme witnessed a number of significant events which went on to influence the direction and context within which the programme sits (see [Mid-term Evaluation Report](#)). This included the development and consultation on Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, and the UK's referendum decision to leave the European Union, as well as resulting uncertainties relating to policy. The emergence of the global School Strike for Climate movement also raised the profile of youth voice and activism.

The second half of the programme was significantly affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK from March 2020. As well as leading to widespread disruption for programme portfolio organisations, their partners and participants and the Policy Function, the pandemic is widely recognised as leaving a legacy of impacts for young people and organisations across the UK. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated social distancing was considered by programme and external stakeholders to have resulted in several key implications for programmes in the youth and environment sectors, such as Our Bright Future. These were:

- Increased demand for outdoor activities;
- Increased demand for face-to-face, social activities and opportunities;
- Increased appetite from young people to feel “part of something” e.g. online communities such as those delivered by Our Bright Future projects;
- Political preoccupation with COVID-19, leading to less focus on the environment;
- Altered and broadened perceptions of community, to include digital online communities;
- An elevated appreciation of the importance of nature and green therapy; and
- Increased recognition of the importance of projects and programmes like Our Bright Future for health, wellbeing and the development of young people.

Outside of the impacts of COVID-19, the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme funding for 16-24-year-olds on Universal Credit also provided opportunities for portfolio organisations to support employment and apprenticeships for young people. In some cases, other social justice movements have inspired and led to young people's engagement in projects. While organisations may not have been directly engaged in these movements, many have seen their role as providing the knowledge to enable young people to make informed decisions and form their own opinions using increased awareness and knowledge of environmental and climate issues.



Programme Outcomes and Indicators

Programme outcomes

The Our Bright Future programme was focussed on delivering four key outcomes. Projects within the portfolio all contributed in some way to these outcomes, and it is the delivery and achievement by the programme of these outcomes that is presented and evaluated within this report. Individual projects set and delivered their own objectives, although all were expected to contribute to the achievement of the following 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. (Discussed in Part 1 of the report)
- **Outcome 2:** The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities. (Discussed in Part 1 of the report)
- **Outcome 3:** The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy. (Discussed in Part 1 and Part 3 of the report)
- **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. (Discussed in Part 2 of the report)

Programme targets and indicators

To help measure and monitor progress and for reporting to The Fund, indicators and targets were set for each of the programme outcomes. These indicators are listed in Appendix 3, together with headline data on their achievement. The targets set for each indicator were designed to help guide and inspire delivery. Due to delivery beyond that originally anticipated by projects in the first years of the programme, the targets for many of these indicators were revised upwards by the programme consortium. The revised targets reflected the trajectory of delivery by projects; however they were set prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which had significant impacts on many project activities (as detailed where appropriate throughout this report). These indicators and targets represented a useful benchmark for delivery for projects and the programme. However, it was not the purpose of the evaluation to assess progress against each indicator, but to take a summative approach to understanding and presenting the outcomes and impacts of the programme as a whole. To do so, this evaluation draws on much of the qualitative evidence generated by projects on outcomes and impacts that go beyond the programme indicators.

Evaluating Our Bright Future

ERS, in partnership with CEP, were commissioned in August 2016 to undertake an evaluation of Our Bright Future. The programme evaluation sought to identify, analyse and assess:

- The **collective impact** of the 31 projects;
- The **added value** of the programme i.e. the value derived from bringing 31 projects together under the Our Bright Future umbrella (e.g. learning, influence on policy and practice);
- Whether the programme has achieved its **long-term ambitions**; and
- Evidence to demonstrate impacts, effective practice and lessons learnt to **support programme learning** and improvement.

Final evaluation report

The purpose of this final evaluation report is to bring together all the evidence gathered throughout the programme to demonstrate and reflect on the difference the programme has made, and highlight lessons learned in terms of what was effective and why. The aim of this report is to convey key messages and provide an evidence base to inform future policy and practice.

The evaluation findings are based on a variety of secondary evidence provided by Our Bright Future projects and the Programme Team, as well as primary data collected by the evaluation team. For a complete overview of data sources, collection and analysis methods please see Appendix 1.

Secondary data provided by the programme included:

- Annual project monitoring reports;
- Quarterly project monitoring reports;
- Project evaluation reports; and,
- Project End of Grant Reports.

The evaluation team collected **primary data** using the following collection methods:

- Annual (semi-structured) interviews with project managers, the Our Bright Future Programme Team, and internal and external stakeholders;
- Outcomes Flower survey results (capturing outcomes for participants and changes in participants' attitudes and behaviours);
- Young people and project case studies and case study conclusions; and
- Influence log (record of policy activity maintained by the Policy and Advocacy Manager).

Qualitative textual analysis software was used for the thematic analysis of qualitative evidence from interviews, case studies observation notes, the Outcomes Flower survey and project reports. Qualitative data was coded so that themes could be grouped according to the programme logic model (including outcomes) and have been used to inform the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

Quantitative data from project reports was analysed using descriptive statistics. Outcomes Flower results were analysed using descriptive statistics and significance tests for quantitative Likert scale.

Structure of This Report

Part 1: Outcomes for young people and the environment

- Key achievements: highlights and notable successes
- Outcomes and impacts for young people: improved self-esteem and confidence, mental health and wellbeing, skills and knowledge gained, employability and career aspirations
- Outcomes and impacts for the environment and communities: improvements to spaces, attitude and behaviour change
- Outcomes and impacts for policy and practice: resulting from the portfolio and programme

Part 2: Process and activities

- Programme processes: management, governance, communications, and evaluation
- Partnership approach: effectiveness and added value
- Youth-led approach: youth-led activities and youth governance

Part 3: Conclusions and legacy

- Legacy: secured, expected and hoped for from the programme
- Conclusions: collective conclusions and answers to overarching questions



PART 1: OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- **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.

“I have become so much more resilient knowing that I can do things I never thought I would have even had the opportunity to do”.

Participant



Outcomes for Young People



128,495 young people engaged

One Off:
83,221
young people

Short-term:
27,126
young people

Long-term:
18,148
young people

8,674 young people gained qualifications

Almost a fifth of these qualifications were accredited through bodies such as AQA and OCN (19%), while over a quarter were recorded as the John Muir or Duke of Edinburgh awards (28%). Others included community campaigning, health and safety or first aid.

1,627 young people entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships

Examples: Bio-science university course, researcher role in amphibian numbers, FareShare, Natural Resources Wales, BBC Cymru, Cardiff University.

203 enterprises were started by young people

Examples: An online shop selling jewellery made from items found during beach cleans, an enterprise selling products made from beeswax, a cut flower stall.

"It's definitely one of the reasons I've gone down this route. I wouldn't have ever known you could be a beekeeper as a full-time job and now that's what I'm trying to do. I may have got into it as a hobby, but this showed I can do it as a career."

Participant

86% of respondents felt that their mental health and wellbeing improved at least somewhat.

40% saw 'a lot' of improvement in their mental health and wellbeing.

Participant Impact Study and Outcomes Flower

95% felt that their self-confidence had improved at least 'somewhat'.

52% saw 'a lot' of improvement in their confidence .

"I feel so much more confident in myself now. Like I am capable of anything if I have a little support and a positive attitude." Participant

Our Bright Future made a difference to young people's attitudes towards the environment and feelings that they could make a difference. After taking part in the project:

92% of young people said they cared about the environment.



81% agreed that they could make a difference to the environment.

"[The project] has motivated me massively and shown me the difference I can truly make as a young person and all I can do for the environment." Participant

Outcomes for The Environment and Communities

The Our Bright Future programme also had positive impacts on the environment and local communities.

Examples: Improving the outdoor sites of local charities and community organisations, encouraging more outdoors activities.

Community or wildlife spaces
improved
3,071



Community or wildlife spaces
created
355

Projects reported that physical improvements to community spaces led to several positive outcomes for communities, including **improved community cohesion, improved perceptions of young people and increased enjoyment of natural spaces.**

“One particular elderly resident began by being very negative about our young people carrying out work on the garden... Our young people obviously made a good impression because she also said she thought it was good to see young people involved in the completion of the area. A convert!” Project manager

Physical improvements to environmental spaces included: the improvement or **creation of different types of habitats** such as grassland and activities such as building paths and planting trees. These have improved access to natural spaces and increased biodiversity in some areas.



The Our Bright Future Legacy



Bringing the youth and environment sectors together across the UK, developing relationships between organisations and showcasing how cross-sector working can be achieved.

“The biggest USP for this programme has been the link between the environment and youth sectors. These fields [have been] coming together to deliver a project in lots of different ways. [I] think that is something we should always try to keep together, the network we have made between the two. The youth sector is under-resourced so if the two fields can work together, that would be of benefit.” Internal stakeholder



Influencing others to introduce structures to support youth voice and engagement; for example, portfolio organisations, partners, and wider policy. Both those internal and external to the programme described difficulty in firmly attributing wider sector changes to Our Bright Future but several commented on a recent (previous 5 years) shift towards greater empowerment and engagement of young people in decision making, suspecting that Our Bright Future had played a role in this.

“I think there were bits and pieces happening around youth voice, but it was needed for a programme / organisation to demonstrate that embedding and championing youth leadership is possible at scale, and at a sector level. So that is a gap that I think the programme has filled.” External stakeholder



Sharing learning. The programme’s Share Learn Improve function was felt to have built trust between organisations and partners.

“Our Bright Future has inspired me. I’ve worked in the environment sector all my life. It can be relentless, and you get cynical and depressed, and it’s reinspired me.” External stakeholder



Providing opportunities for participants’ voices to be heard and represented. The parliamentary event and participation of MPs was described as “powerful” “emotive” and “inspiring”.

“In terms of the overall sense of the importance of the scheme, the economic difficulties right now and social focus on inclusion and diversity only makes [Our Bright Future], the standout programme in the sector, even more important. There is nothing that compares with it in terms of its excellence in outreach anywhere in the sector, and I hope that in future it will be multiplied in size to help as many people as possible.” External stakeholder

2. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Our Bright Future projects have delivered a wide range of activities and opportunities for young people. This Chapter considers the evidence of achievement of Our Bright Future Outcome 1: benefits to young people, including confidence, skills and experience; and, as has emerged strongly, wellbeing⁵.

Key messages

- **Our Bright Future has shown that young people experience a range of benefits from engagement in the environment and conservation.**
- **Confidence** was the most commonly described outcome for young people taking part, across all project types. Key to achieving this were project approaches involving group work, social interaction, and a supportive and safe environment. This outcome was especially notable for those starting with low levels of confidence. Furthermore, confidence was linked to the achievement of other outcomes.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing.** For participants who were experiencing poor mental health before engaging, taking part in the programme significantly contributed to improved wellbeing, such as: improvements in mental health; ability to manage feelings; feeling more relaxed; and/or reducing eco-anxiety. This outcome was particularly key for young people experiencing multiple disadvantages. Long-term engagement was more strongly linked to improving wellbeing than short-term engagement. Approaches contributing to this type of outcome included: young people being outdoors; learning in non-traditional environments; undertaking practical tasks; building connections; and receiving support or signposting.
- **Skills and qualifications.** Participants developed a range of skills and gained qualifications related to the natural environment, practical environmental skills, work-based skills, and social and emotional skills. Qualifications included bespoke as well as nationally recognised awards. Whilst many approaches were effective in developing skills, adapting and tailoring support to young people's needs was key. Wider outcomes resulting from skills developed included: improved aspirations and self-esteem; improved health and wellbeing; application of skills in a range of different settings (including work and education); and greater environmental awareness and appreciation.
- **Employability** outcomes resulted from participants' development of skills, knowledge, and confidence. Moreover, participating in projects enhanced and influenced participants' ambitions, motivations and aspirations, attitudes towards work and learning, and awareness of opportunities and options available to them. Many participants progressed to a range of higher education and employment opportunities within environmental and non-environmental sectors. Our Bright Future provided opportunities to learn skills, take the lead, and develop professional networks.
- **Across all themes above, the duration and depth of engagement was a key factor in making a difference to young peoples' lives. Furthermore, outcomes work together. For example, developing practical skills leads to improved confidence and wellbeing.**

⁵Environmental impacts are examined separately, within Chapter 2, and Youth Environmental Leadership is considered in Chapter 7.

Overview of Outcome 1

Our Bright Future engaged young people in environmentally focussed activities with the aim of supporting participants' personal development. This was summarised in Outcome 1.

Our Bright Future 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.

The quantitative indicators associated with Outcome 1 are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Outcome 1 Indicators

Quantitative indicator (Targets)	Achieved
<p>1a. 140,000 young people have participated in Our Bright Future activities (Original target: 60,000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One off engagement: 97,000 • Short-term engagement (<3 months): 27,000 • Long-term engagement (>3 months): 16,000 	<p>128,495 young people engaged</p> <p>One off: 83,221</p> <p>Short-term: 27,126</p> <p>Long-term: 18,148</p>
<p>1b. 60,000 young people have increased environmental skills and knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,000 young people have gained environmental qualifications or awards e.g. OCN, NVQs, John Muir, DofE Award, academic qualifications • 1,000 young people have entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships • 250 young people have started entrepreneurial projects as part of the programme 	<p>Young people participating in environmental education: 37,795</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8,674 young people gained qualifications • 1,627 young people entered internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships • 203 entrepreneurial projects were started by young people

The top line indicator target for Outcome 1 was originally set at engaging 60,000 young people. As it became clear the programme would far exceed this target, the figure was revised to a stretching 140,000. At the programme close, projects had collectively engaged over 120,000 young people.

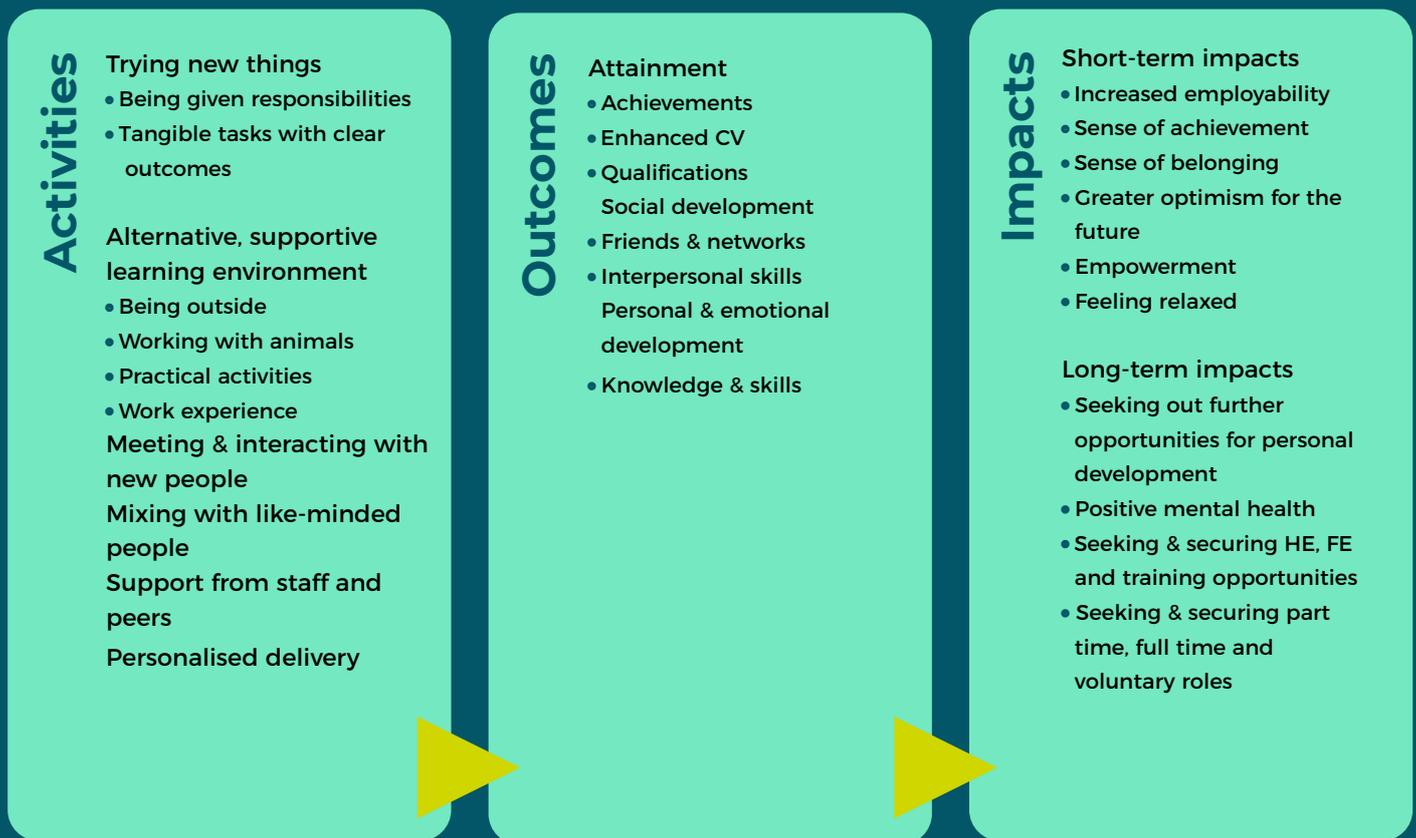


Figure 2.1 Outcomes and impacts for young people
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

The logic model in Figure 2.1 summarises how Our Bright Future project activities sought to achieve benefits for young people, against themes relevant to Outcome 1.

Across all evidence sources, the most prevalent personal outcomes for young people were:

1. Increased self-confidence.
2. Improved mental health and wellbeing.
3. Acquiring new skills and knowledge.
4. Increased employability and enhanced or influenced career aspirations.

The following sub-sections elaborate on each of these themes in turn, discussing: outcomes; successes in achieving these outcomes; and, the effect of COVID-19 upon achievement of outcomes.



1. Increased Self-Confidence

There is extensive evidence indicating that Our Bright Future projects supported many young people to gain self-esteem and confidence, alongside - and often linked with - developing social skills and networks. Importantly, confidence is a prerequisite for young people achieving a range of other outcomes.

Increased self-confidence was one of the outcomes most frequently referenced in the qualitative evidence from project manager interviews and project monitoring reports. Improvements in participants' confidence appears to correspond with their starting point with projects. Those beginning with the lowest levels of confidence and/or mental health were often observed to benefit the most. The [Participant Impacts Study](#)⁶ also indicated that improved confidence was an outcome for a slightly greater proportion of female than male participants. The study also found that long-term engagement was more strongly linked to improved confidence than short-term engagement.

Evidence of Our Bright Future's contribution to improving confidence

- As part of the [Participant Impacts Study](#), 95% of participant respondents indicated that Our Bright Future had improved their self-confidence at least 'somewhat', with 52% indicating their confidence had improved 'a lot' (n=252 of all OBF participants). Numerous testimonies provided examples of the impact improved confidence has had on participants' lives. One project participant described their involvement as "transformative" in enabling her to become who she is today. Another said:

"[The project] has made a tremendous impact on my confidence and my family are able to tell you that I seem like a different person as I am so much more open, inspired and confident." Participant

- Results of the programme's Outcomes Flower survey⁷, distributed to participants by project managers across the portfolio over 2018, 2019 and 2020 (n=891), showed that 63% of respondents indicated an increase in their self-confidence. Reporting on a scale of 1-5 (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree), the average rating against the statement 'I feel confident in myself' increased from 3.1 before participation to 4.1 after participation.
- Project managers used a range of methods to measure gains in participants' confidence, from self-reflective forms completed by participants to pre- and post-intervention surveys⁸. One project reported that 92% of their participants indicated improvements in self-esteem, while another reported that 100% of participants felt more confident as a result of their participation.

⁶ An online survey of 258 participants of Our Bright Future, distributed by project managers.

⁷ The bespoke survey, distributed by project managers, prompted participants to reflect on, and indicate their level of agreement with 6 statements including 'I feel relaxed', 'I feel confident in myself' and 'I feel close to other people' before and after their participation in Our Bright Future projects to assess the difference projects have made.

⁸ Some survey results provided base numbers, many of which were quite low proportional to the number of project participants, although the results are still considered valid as evidence.

- Improvements in confidence were often linked to developing the confidence to perform a specific task, such as talking to people, carrying out conservation work, and trying new things.

“I feel so much more confident in myself now. Like I am capable of anything if I have a little support and a positive attitude.” Participant

- Project managers’ observations, testimonies collected from participants, and surveys administered with participants further support this finding. Project Managers described young people’s progression since joining the programme, including participants developing the confidence to speak to MPs and present their views in front of an audience.

“At [a local college], five out of the seven [project] students were nervous and hesitant to do public speaking at the start of the year. They went on to speak in front of 50 Councillors, the Mayor and a packed gallery with up to 100 people in it.” Project manager

Reflections on developing young people’s confidence

There were many key activities and approaches which supported improvements in confidence, and these tended to overlap and complement one another. Most notably, this included providing young people with a range of opportunities for social interaction.

- **Social interaction with like-minded people around common (environmental) interests** helped young people to: feel connected; feel a sense of belonging; and to feel more confident in themselves, their values and opinions.
- **Opportunities for young people to interact with a wide range of different people** in different contexts developed young people’s confidence in dealing with a range of social situations.
For example: young people of different ages, geographies, and from different projects; individuals in positions of power; and people in professional settings.
- **Group-working**, including residentials, events, group sessions, and/or collaborating on specific projects, campaigns, or initiatives, encouraged peer support and helped build trust. Group-working led young people to realise the value of their input and, in turn, improved self-confidence, as well as the sharing of skills and knowledge between participants.



Other approaches and activities which reportedly increased confidence included:

- **Developing new skills, knowledge, and qualifications** led to a sense of achievement.
- **Providing new experiences and challenges**, such as presenting to an audience, carrying out unfamiliar conservation tasks, or travelling outside of their local area for the first time. This empowered young people to feel that they could make valuable contributions, and increased their confidence to face future challenges.
- **'Hands on' practical environmental activities** using a range of tools (e.g., saws, axes, loppers, and spades) enabled young people to readjust their self-perception of what was possible for them. These activities also improved confidence through demonstrating alternative ways to succeed other than through school and theoretical activities.
- **A supportive, safe, and inclusive environment** in which participants felt supported and encouraged by staff was integral to generating confidence gains. Highly personalised and tailored delivery and a high ratio of staff to participants was evidently effective in this regard, particularly for neurodivergent individuals (e.g. people with autism, dyslexia, or attention deficit).
- **Interacting and working with animals.** Activities with animals helped some young people with social anxiety and autism to develop social and communication skills, which in turn supported them to build connections and confidence.





Figure 2.2 Activities supporting confidence
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

2. Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

Improvements to young people's mental health and wellbeing was a clear outcome for certain cohorts and individual participants. Evidence of this outcome is documented in the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Paper](#) (paper 2).

Improved mental health and wellbeing often depended on participants' state prior to joining Our Bright Future. For participants who were previously experiencing poor mental health, taking part in the programme significantly contributed towards mental health and wellbeing improvements. Several project managers reported that improvements in mental health and wellbeing were key outcomes for individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage (homelessness, school exclusion, behavioural problems, and mental health problems). Individuals who were previously unemployed, felt isolated, or had lacked social contact also experienced improvements in mental health and wellbeing as a key outcome.

Evidence of Our Bright Future's contribution to improving mental health and wellbeing

- Results of the Participant Impacts survey (n=258) showed that 86% of respondents felt Our Bright Future had improved their mental health and wellbeing at least 'somewhat', 40% indicating that it had done so 'a lot'. 22% also indicated it had improved their ability to manage their feelings 'a lot'.
- Outcomes Flower survey results showed that 59% of participants felt closer to other people, and a further 57% indicated stronger agreement with the statement 'I feel relaxed' after participation in the programme.
- Testimony from Our Bright Future project managers and project participants, teachers and support workers indicated improvements in the mental health of participants as a result of taking part - in particular for those with anxiety and other pre-existing mental health challenges. This finding was further supported by participant case studies, developed by project managers and the programme evaluators.

"[A] highlight has been seeing the project save lives. We know of several cases where young people have been suicidal and have been able to share these feelings or intentions with project officers. Our officers have then acted quickly, used our safeguarding protocol and found these young people the urgent help and support they've needed. [Project name] is helping young people in crisis. It is enabling young people to turn their lives around. There is no more important highlight than this." Project manager

"I have had depression and anxiety for many years now. Getting involved with the project and, via that, becoming a regular volunteer at [project name] has helped give me a routine and expanded my communication skills and dealing with situations I may not have usually put myself in." Participant

Reflections on improving mental health and wellbeing

Improvements in mental health and wellbeing were most often associated with projects focusing on participants' personal development, or projects engaging in practical environmental activities. Long-term engagement was also more strongly linked to improving wellbeing than short-term engagement. Respondents aged 19 to 21 at the time of responding to the Participant Impacts Study survey most widely reported improvements in mental health and wellbeing as an outcome, whereas those aged 22-29⁹ least reported this outcome.

Various project activities and approaches were linked to achieving improvements in participants' mental health and wellbeing. As shown in figure 2.3, these were often inter-related leading to cumulative effects. They included:

- **Being outdoors** provided young people with a relaxing environment, away from digital devices and home and school lives. This offered freedom from daily stresses and anxieties and the potential for physical health benefits through activity.
- **Having the support of peers and trained youth workers** offered young people the opportunity to share their anxieties, concerns, feelings and other struggles. In turn, they were able to benefit from referrals and/or signposting to wider services and resources. This was most beneficial when participants were able to build a relationship and trust with the same staff members through regular sessions. One to one coaching with staff was identified as most valuable for those with the most severe anxieties and/or challenging behaviour.
- **Practical tasks with tangible outcomes** allowed participants to visibly, and often immediately, see the impact of their work, providing a sense of achievement and supporting associated wellbeing gains.

⁹ The upper age limit for participation was 24 years old. Given the programme duration, some previous participants were aged 25-29 at the time of responding.

Other selected factors or approaches known to have contributed to improved mental health and wellbeing in an Our Bright Future setting are summarised below.

- **Meeting likeminded people** who shared a commitment to the environment - particularly other young people - supported participants to feel less isolated and more connected.
- **Providing a safe and supportive social environment** was important in supporting young people with social anxieties to overcome fears of meeting new people, and to build confidence, connections, and social skills, promoting wellbeing in the longer-term.
- **Learning about environmental issues**, such as how they might be tackled and seeing the positive results of project activities, reduced young people’s ‘eco-anxiety’.



Figure 2.3 Activities supporting wellbeing outcomes
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP



3. Acquiring New Skills and Knowledge

Skills and employability outcomes for participants are explored in the [Skills and Employability Learning Paper](#), paper 1, as well as the [Skills Development Thematic Study](#).

Reflecting the prevalence of conservation activities across the portfolio, much of the evidence on skills and knowledge outcomes for young people relates to learning about the natural environment. While the majority of projects focussed on the development of practical environmental skills, some were specifically focussed on skills areas such as leadership, campaigning and influencing. Improvements to participants' social and emotional skills were observed across all project types.

Evidence of Our Bright Future's contribution to developing skills and knowledge

- Participants developed skills across a range of areas. Most commonly, this included practical environmental skills, work-based skills (such as timekeeping, professional behaviour etc.), and social and emotional skills (confidence, team-working, communication etc.).
- Participants gained a wide range of qualifications as a result of participating in the programme. This included bespoke qualifications as well as nationally recognised awards covering practical, personal, social, emotional and work-based skills, for example: AQA unit awards; level one and level two apprenticeships e.g., environmental conservation; ASDAN qualifications; Agored Cymru awards; City & Guilds awards; and John Muir Awards (See Table 2.1).
- Young people engaged as part of the [Environmental Leadership Thematic Study](#) reported that Our Bright Future had made them feel more motivated to make a difference for the environment, as well as more confident and better equipped (in terms of skills, knowledge, connections etc.) to act on that motivation.

"I guess before I had a mentality of 'power isn't for people like me' and I came out with a mentality of 'I can build and be part of that future if I want'. There is a place for people like me in these areas, someone with my skillset and from my background. And I actually have something to give as well." Participant

- Participants also reported applying the skills they gained across a range of non-project settings. 80% of young people who responded to the Participant Impact Study survey stated they had done so (n=257). Settings included: in voluntary roles; in a work environment; or, at university, college, or school. A slightly greater proportion (89%) of those participating in apprenticeships via their projects indicated having applied the skills gained through Our Bright Future elsewhere, compared with participants taking part in other types of project activity.
- It was clear through a range of evidence sources that confidence was both a pre-requisite and an outcome of skills development.

“Being a part of [the] project has given me the opportunity to learn new skills in horticulture. But on a personal note, it has helped me to gain the confidence and self-esteem to apply for the T.A. (Territorial Army). I never really believed in myself before, but now I do.” Participant quoted by a project manager

Reflections on developing young people’s skills and knowledge

Across Our Bright Future, there was no typical approach to skills development or common participant engagement journey; rather, a range of approaches were effective in developing skills of various types across different groups of young people, in diverse settings. Project managers noted that interpersonal and social skills were developed by participants - to some extent - across all activity types. Outdoor delivery was clearly a preferred vehicle for projects to deliver skills improvements, and in some cases was an essential component, vital for the development and application of practical skills.



There were a variety of activities and approaches taken by projects which supported the achievement of skills outcomes:

- **Adapting and tailoring support to young people's needs** has been central to achieving skills outcomes and generating positive experiences. The role of project staff (and the multiple skills and specialisms often required to effectively deliver outcomes) was also highlighted.
- **Frequent use of group activities and intensive engagement** (either of longer duration or greater depth) were key in supporting participants to improve their social and interpersonal skills. These skills were reported as particularly impactful for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, with complex needs, and/or those who find social situations challenging.
- **An alternative learning environment and practical, hands-on experience** appealed to many young people for whom mainstream education was not well-suited. Overall, there were differing views on whether improved skills attainment was a direct result of the outdoor setting, or simply the non-classroom, non-home environment.
- **A high staff to participant ratio, a longer duration of support, and actively removing barriers to engagement** were identified as key to supporting young people to develop skills and achieve qualifications.
- **Practical activities complementary to the academic curriculum** and further and higher education courses appealed to work-aged young people seeking to improve their employability and add experience to their CVs.
- **Intensive support around confidence-building, support of an appropriate peer group, practical activities, and flexible, open-ended provision** appealed to under-represented / disadvantaged groups and supported outcomes.
- **A structured programme with accreditation** was a key engagement motivator to young people of employment age. This was linked with known barriers to entering the environmental sector and securing entry-level opportunities.

Interestingly, many of the elements supporting skills development also proved to be crucial to engaging and retaining young people as part of the programme, as set out in the [Youth Engagement Learning Paper](#) (paper 4).

As with health and wellbeing outcomes for young people, outcomes for skills development overlapped with benefits for young people in other areas. Wider outcomes resulting from skills development included: improved aspirations and self-esteem; social benefits; improved health and wellbeing; application of skills in a range of different settings (including work and education); and greater environmental awareness and appreciation.

4. Increased Employability and Enhanced or Influenced Career Aspirations

Within this report, employability outcomes refers to improvements in participants' work-based skills, knowledge of sectors and work opportunities, as well as tangible steps towards employment. Supporting young people's employment progression was not a central aim of all projects and was therefore not consistently tracked via dedicated indicators. While the scale, proportion and extent to which this outcome has been achieved varied by project, there is evidence that participants' employability has improved and that many have progressed into further study, including in subjects relevant to the green economy such as farming, animal care, or conservation.

Our Bright Future increased participants' employability through the combination of outcomes described previously, namely the development of skills, knowledge, and confidence. Moreover, participating in projects enhanced participants' ambitions, motivations and aspirations; attitudes towards work and learning; and awareness of the opportunities and options available to them.



Evidence of employability outcomes for young people

- Participants progressed to a range of employment and study destinations relevant to the environmental sector following participation in Our Bright Future. Participant Impact Study results showed that 40% of respondents felt that Our Bright Future had influenced them to pursue a career in the environment or related to their project (n=242).
- Just under a third of young people surveyed linked their success in securing jobs or further study to taking part in Our Bright Future. **This has included:**
 - Choosing to study an environmental subject (e.g. geography, sustainability, ecology, wildlife conservation) at A-Level, undergraduate, and postgraduate level;
 - Choosing to undertake voluntary work in the UK and overseas;
 - Applying for and securing work placements and paid employment in the environmental sector in areas as diverse as sustainability, policy change, advocacy and campaigning, conservation, horticulture, and ecological consultancy;
 - Internships and apprenticeships with the National Trust, National Park Authorities, Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, and Groundwork; and
 - Taking on external leadership and decision-making roles.
- While many participants had an interest in the environment prior to their participation, Our Bright Future influenced participants' career aspirations both within and outside of the environment sector (Participant Impact Study). This influence reportedly stemmed from:
 - A newly found interest in either: the environment, working with young people, working in the outdoors, or around a specific topic area touched upon in the project;
 - Greater awareness of the environmental sector, as well as the job opportunities and career pathways available;
 - An increased desire to contribute to environmental and social causes; and
 - Increased self-confidence and greater confidence in their skills and knowledge, demonstrated via the experience gained as part of the project.

"It's definitely one of the reasons I've gone down this route. I wouldn't have ever known you could be a beekeeper as a full-time job and now that's what I'm trying to do. I may have got into it as a hobby, but this showed I can do it as a career." Participant.



- The Participant Impacts Study found that 84% of past participants surveyed (n= 251) stated that Our Bright Future had improved their aspirations and hopes for the future. This appeared to be slightly more common among those who participated in entrepreneurial activities and apprenticeships (92%) compared to other activities (where 81% stated this).
- Experiences gained through the programme provided young people with “something to talk about” in job interviews and applications, when applying for opportunities both within and outside of the environmental sector(s). There are examples of participants using their qualifications to support applications for higher education courses, and certain qualifications gained through projects provided participants with additional UCAS points.

“In a job interview with a London-based environmental education charity, [a project participant] was asked ‘What’s one thing you do that makes you stand out?’ She replied to say she was an active gleaning volunteer and was currently making a film about gleaning. Her interviewees were impressed to the extent that they offered her the job and signed-up themselves to come gleaning during the charity’s volunteering days.” Project manager

- Longer-term impacts on young people’s destinations have yet to be realised, with more than half of participants yet to reach working age. Qualitative evidence from young people responding to the Participant Impact Study survey revealed that, in a number of cases, future career and education plans were hampered by COVID-19.
- Young people have also contributed to ‘greening’ jobs in sectors outside of traditional environmental roles. The Participant Impact Study found that young people are applying the environmental values, skills and interests developed through Our Bright Future to jobs and studies as diverse as fashion and engineering, taking their awareness into new settings.

Reflections on delivering employability outcomes

Overall, Our Bright Future provided vital opportunities and resources which enabled young people to improve their employability. Progressions into education, as well as benefits related to improving work readiness, getting jobs, and gaining work experience, were most commonly observed for those of working age i.e., programme participants who were 16-18 and above.

A range of approaches supported achievement of employability outcomes:

- Structured, accredited (and paid) opportunities **supported young people to overcome some of the known barriers linked with entry to the environmental sector.**
- Opportunities to take the lead and take ownership of projects, activities, and campaigns **was beneficial in building confidence and skills which can be carried forward into work environments.**
- Access to and support to develop professional networks, **often through seminars or events, has improved aspiration and has linked people to new opportunities, new professional connections, and visible role-models and mentors.**
- Opportunities to interact professionally **with those in power supported young people’s development of social, influencing, and professional skills.**
- Mentoring, employability support (e.g., interview practice and job search support), and peer support **were also important factors in improving work readiness.**

Impact of COVID-19 on outcomes for young people

The outbreak of COVID-19 meant many projects- formerly delivering outdoors - adapted activities to be run online. Many projects emphasised the importance of ensuring project activities continued in some form through this period, in order to counter the negative impacts of the pandemic on participants' mental health. Some projects provided additional pastoral support through regular mentor/mentee check-ins as part of this.

With the move to online engagement following the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, project managers reported that, in some cases, it took several weeks to build young people's confidence to take part in activities online. Conversely, some projects reported that certain young people, previously anxious about meeting new people in new settings, welcomed the move to online activities and showed greater confidence in virtual environments. More frequent group discussion, because of the move to online delivery, was also observed to have increased some participants' overall confidence and resulting skills.



3. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

The range of Our Bright Future projects, both in terms of activities and objectives, means that the programme supported a wide variety of activities benefitting natural and community spaces and, in turn, people in local communities. This chapter highlights examples of the impact the programme has made for the environment and communities and reflects on lessons learned. It goes on to draw the link between instilling pro-environmental and pro-nature behaviours and longer-term benefits for the environment.

Key messages

- Conservation and direct environmental improvement activities have achieved positive outcomes for communities. Through improving the quality of community spaces, project activities have **increased communities' use and enjoyment of their communal and natural areas**. By involving young people in community action, projects have also **improved community cohesion** in their local areas, by bringing together different community groups to achieve shared goals and by improving community perceptions of young people. It is assumed that benefits to communities will continue to be realised beyond the lifetime of the programme as young people continue to take action to improve natural and community spaces.
- **Some project activities and the actions of participating young people have directly led to tangible improvements such as planting trees and hedges, providing wildlife habitats and a reduction in waste being sent to landfill**. Furthermore, the indirect effect of the programme on the environment is likely to have been underestimated: projects have influenced young people to increase their pro-nature conservation and pro-environmental behaviours which is likely to lead to positive outcomes for the environment over the years to come.
- In addition, **young people's increased environmental awareness and knowledge, as well as their pro-environmental / pro-nature conservation behaviours, are likely to represent a key legacy of the programme**. The effect of these outcomes will continue to be felt both through the continued activity of these young people and those they potentially influence (friends, family etc.).

Overview of Outcome 2

By engaging young people in environmentally focussed activities, the programme sought to achieve positive benefits for the environment and communities, whilst supporting young people's personal development.

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

The quantitative indicators associated with Outcome 2 are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Outcome 2 Indicators	
Indicator	Achieved
2a. The creation and/or improvement/ increased sustainability of 3,500 community and wildlife spaces (Original target: 450) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces improved: 3,185 • Spaces created: 315 	3,426 community and wildlife spaces, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaces improved: 3,071 • Spaces created: 355

The original indicator target for Outcome 2 was improving or creating 450 community or wildlife spaces. As it became clear the programme would far exceed this target, the figure was revised to a stretching 3,500. At the programme close, projects had collectively improved or created 3,426 spaces for communities to enjoy.

The logic model shown in Figure 3.1. explains the link between Our Bright Future projects' activities and outcomes and impacts for the environment and communities. Activities included young people directly in creating improvements to habitats and green spaces, supporting young people to drive behaviour change and champion sustainability goals.



Figure 3.1 Our Bright Future outputs and outcomes for the environment.

Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Here we include 'longer-term impacts'. Research shows that engaging in simple nature activities, such as spending time in, and actively being aware of nature, are likely to lead to pro-nature conservation behaviours. Activities could include planting pollinator friendly plants or getting in touch with decision-makers about nature conservation issues, as well as pro-environmental behaviours, such as using public transport or reducing meat consumption¹⁰. Evaluation evidence suggests that the programme has influenced young people's attitudes towards the environment and nature and therefore may continue to have positive impacts in the long-term.

In discussing Outcome 2, the report considers achievement and reflections associated with:

1. Improving the quality and access to community spaces, resulting in:
 - a) enhanced enjoyment and appreciation of spaces created in the environment.
 - b) Increased community cohesion.
 - c) Increased respect for community spaces and improved perceptions of young people.
2. Outcomes for natural spaces and the environment.
3. Pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation attitudes and behaviours.

Due to the range of project activities, projects were not required to use consistent numerical metrics. However, projects were able to collect rich qualitative data on outcomes for communities and the environment. The following sections draw on this evidence.

¹⁰ Richardson et al. (2020)

1. Improving the quality of and access to community spaces

Our Bright Future projects delivered a range of activities which directly led to positive benefits or communities and community spaces. Project activities included:

- Improving the **quality** of community spaces, such as: the transformation of brownfield sites into community meeting spaces; planting native wildflowers; creation of wellbeing and sensory gardens in community areas (e.g. schools, churches, universities); litter picks and beach cleans; eco-art; and outdoor cooking area construction.
- Improving **accessibility** of green spaces for community members: footpath creation or repair; and vegetation clearance.

Programme data shows that projects largely concentrated on improving existing spaces rather than creating new community spaces (figure 3.2).

They key outcomes for communities, reported by projects, were:

a) enhanced enjoyment of built and natural spaces improved and created; b) increased community cohesion; and c) increased respect for community spaces and changed perceptions of young people.



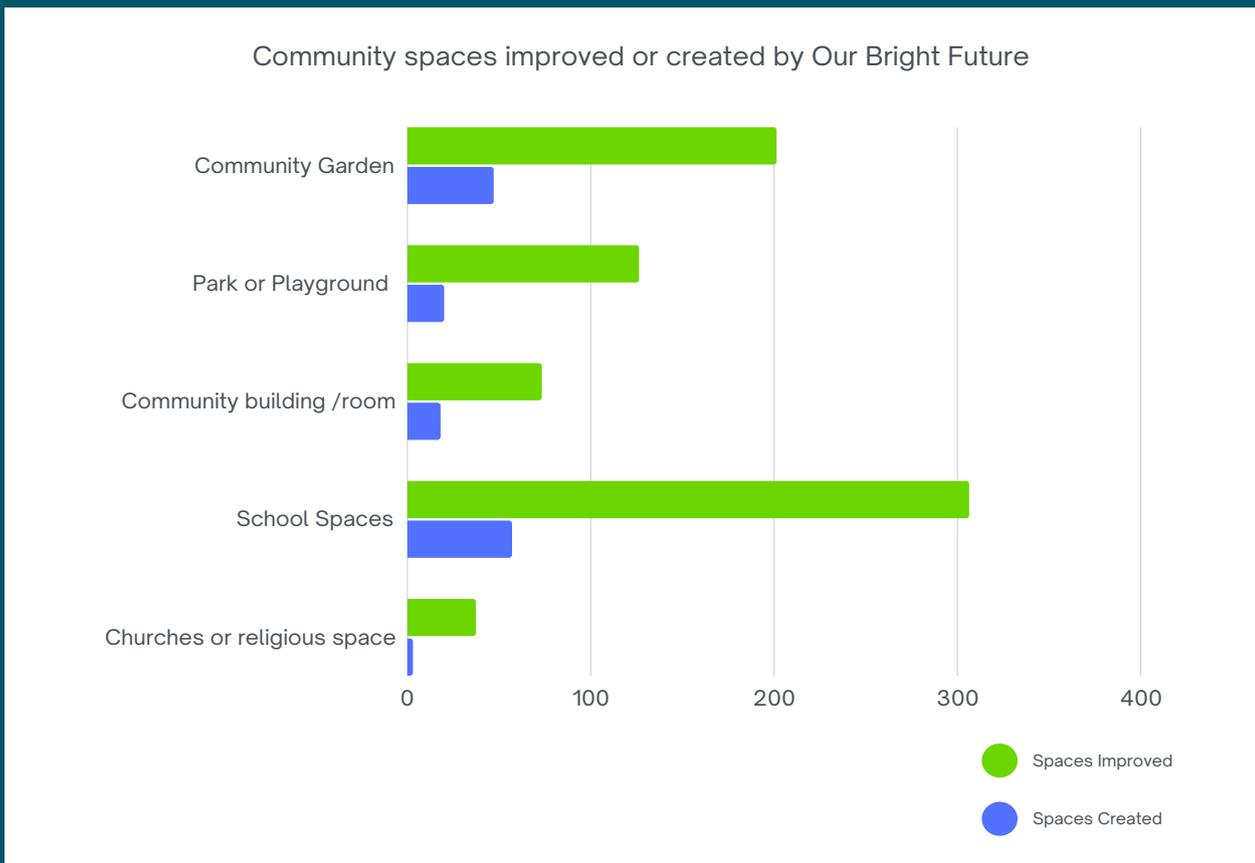


Figure 3.2 Community spaces improved and created by Our Bright Future projects
 Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

1a. Enhanced enjoyment of built and natural spaces improved and created by projects

743 community spaces were improved by the programme (including schools, religious or community buildings, community gardens and allotments) and 175 new spaces were created. As a result, numerous schools, colleges and users of public services and community spaces (e.g. hospitals) have benefitted and will continue to benefit from improvements to their grounds and gardens. For example, one project built a community hub which is now used by various local groups for talks, sports, and leisure activities.

The below case study highlights an example of how an Our Bright Future project brought added value to their local community by working with young people to develop their skills and improve their confidence. The project also transformed an outdoor space for a local charity to continue to use to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in their community.



Case study: Green Academies Project, National Trust

The **Green Academies Project** worked with a local charity to improve their café's outdoor seating area. The charity, Smile for Life, aims to enrich the lives of disadvantaged and disabled children in the North East and uses their café to provide hospitality training and experience to volunteers with a range of additional needs.

The café is located at an old fire station with a neglected and run-down outdoor space that the charity hoped the Green Academies Project could convert into a warm and welcoming seating area. As part of the site's transformation, activities completed by project participants included: pulling away dead ivy from walls, scraping away old paint and clearing plant debris. Participants also created hanging baskets and raised beds, filling them with a variety of flowers and spring bulbs. A recycled wooden box was lined and painted which was used to house a bamboo plant and one participant helped to build a new shed.

Over 100 people attended the opening of the café's new outdoor space and the charity is now able to use the garden to serve customers, raise money and continue to train young people with learning difficulties in hospitality.



1b. Increased community cohesion

A small number of projects indicated that working with communities and supporting local groups contributed to increased community cohesion. Projects, as well as social actions led by participants, initiated interactions between young people and others in the community, leading to improved relations and mutual respect.

The case study below describes the unexpected benefits of bringing together two groups via activities to involve Community Payback service users in improving the outdoor space at a residence for adults with learning difficulties.

Case study: Milestones, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

As part of their activities, **Milestones** project worked with Community Payback (CP) service users to develop community gardens. The focus of the project was to offer long term, meaningful activities which provide the opportunity for CP service users to develop a sense of ownership and purpose, rather than punishment. Over a period of weeks or months, CP service users see positive changes to these long-term projects and, in some cases, see the benefit to those who are using the community garden, leading to a sense of achievement.

A project deemed to be a particular success was the community garden created by the project for 'Hft Wiltshire', a local disability charity providing supported housing to adults with learning difficulties. The project aimed to improve the charity's outdoor area so that it would become a space where residents project aimed to improve the charity's outdoor area so that it would become a space where residents learning practical conservation skills.

Not only did the project create a new outdoor space where residents could start to engage with nature and the environment, the project also promoted a sense of partnership and cohesion between residents and CP service users. Project staff were initially worried about the differences between the two groups and had concerns that issues of bullying may occur. However, thanks to the project's culture of **"accepting everyone for who they are and seeing the value in everyone"**, both CP service users and the residents involved in the project found the work inspiring and rewarding. CP services users particularly appreciated the opportunity to work closely with another group, as they can often feel ostracised from the community as a result of their offending.



"The focus of [the activity] was initially... constructing the physical space, with Community Payback service users as the main participants. Over time, the focus has changed and the site has become a true Community Garden, with those it is intended for taking an active and constructive part in its development alongside Community Payback [service users], working together in a joint creation. On site, there was the impression that everyone just worked together for the common good of the site and everyone there." Project manager.

1c. Increased respect for community spaces and changed perceptions of young people

Several projects noted that improving community spaces, particularly previously neglected spaces, had generated increased respect for these areas which led to reduced littering and reduced anti-social behaviour at these sites. Both communities and the young people involved in project activity to transform these spaces have become more invested in ensuring spaces continue to be respected.

“Staff...have reported an improvement in anti-social behaviour, decrease in litter and have witnessed a degree of self-policing from some of the groups of young people who sometimes congregate at the [community] garden since the site has been improved and planted up. More people seem to be using the area to have their lunch or sit for a while.”

Project manager.

In turn, seeing young people involved in action to improve community spaces and the subsequent increased respect for sites was often reported to lead to community members' improved perceptions of young people.

The case study below provides an example of the type of impact projects have had on local community spaces. In particular, bringing previously disused spaces back into use, promoting nature and biodiversity within these spaces and demonstrating to communities that young people can take positive action.



Case study: Youth In Nature, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Youth In Nature created or improved 29 wildlife zones over the duration of the project. One such zone was a community garden at St Hilda's Church in Hull, where the young people were responsible for converting the existing garden, with its longstanding problems of **litter, vandalism and anti-social behaviour**, into a wildlife zone.

Some local residents were initially highly sceptical that the space could be converted by the young people involved in the project, particularly due to the anti-social behaviour that the garden was known for and negative preconceptions of young people. However, the project transformed the garden by clearing litter, installing plant holders made from tyres which were decorated like bees, scattering wildflower seeds to attract butterflies, building a small pond to attract amphibians and creating a plan for the garden's ongoing management.

In the five months since the garden was transformed, **there has been no further vandalism or anti-social behaviour at the site** and local people have even added flowers to continue to improve the garden. In addition to creating a space that the local community could be proud of, the project has also promoted community cohesion and has improved local residents' perceptions of young people:

"One particular elderly resident began by being very negative about our young people carrying out work on the garden. She was quite anxious about a group of young people being so close to her bungalow, where she had witnessed frequent anti-social behaviour by gangs of young people meeting up near the shops with nothing much to do... Our young people obviously made a good impression because she also said she thought it was good to see young people involved in the completion of the area. A convert!" Project manager.



2. Improving natural spaces and the environment

Our Bright Future projects also delivered a range of activities which directly led to benefits to the environment. Activities included:

- **Conservation work to support wildlife and habitats** including: the creation of bug hotels, bird and dormice box construction and installation and woodland habitat piles; improvement of fish and eel habitats; care and release of endangered fish; mammal trapping; installation of gabion foundations; improvement work on Wildlife Trust nature reserves, private sites and sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs); beehive siting; and creation of ponds.
- **Vegetation planting and control:** planting trees, orchards, wildflowers, food, native hedges; dead hedge creation; invasive species control or removal; and woodland management.
- **Built environment improvements:** removal of vegetation damaging masonry; preservation of a scheduled ancient monument; dry stone walling; heritage listed building development; an archaeological dig; and supporting an industrial heritage site to become more nature friendly.
- **Resource efficiency initiatives** to: save/sequester carbon emissions; divert materials from landfill (e.g., avoidance of food waste); and litter picking and reuse of materials.

It should be noted that, due to the wide range of activities delivered by projects, outcomes and impacts for the environment were also very varied. This chapter considers both environmental indicators collected at a programme level (where possible) and positive examples of the change achieved by projects. This section therefore highlights examples and case studies of projects' impact on natural spaces and the environment.

Key outcomes for the environment were reported by projects as: a) **direct improvements to natural spaces and the natural environment** and b) **improvements in resource efficiency**.

2a. Direct improvements to natural and built environments

Direct improvements to the natural environment achieved by projects included: the improvement or creation of different types of habitats, such as grassland, deciduous woodland, river catchments; and physical environmental improvements or creation activities, such as building paths and planting trees. As shown in figures 3.3 and 3.4 below, Our Bright Future projects were involved in the creation and improvement of a range of different natural and environmental spaces, supporting a range of habitats.

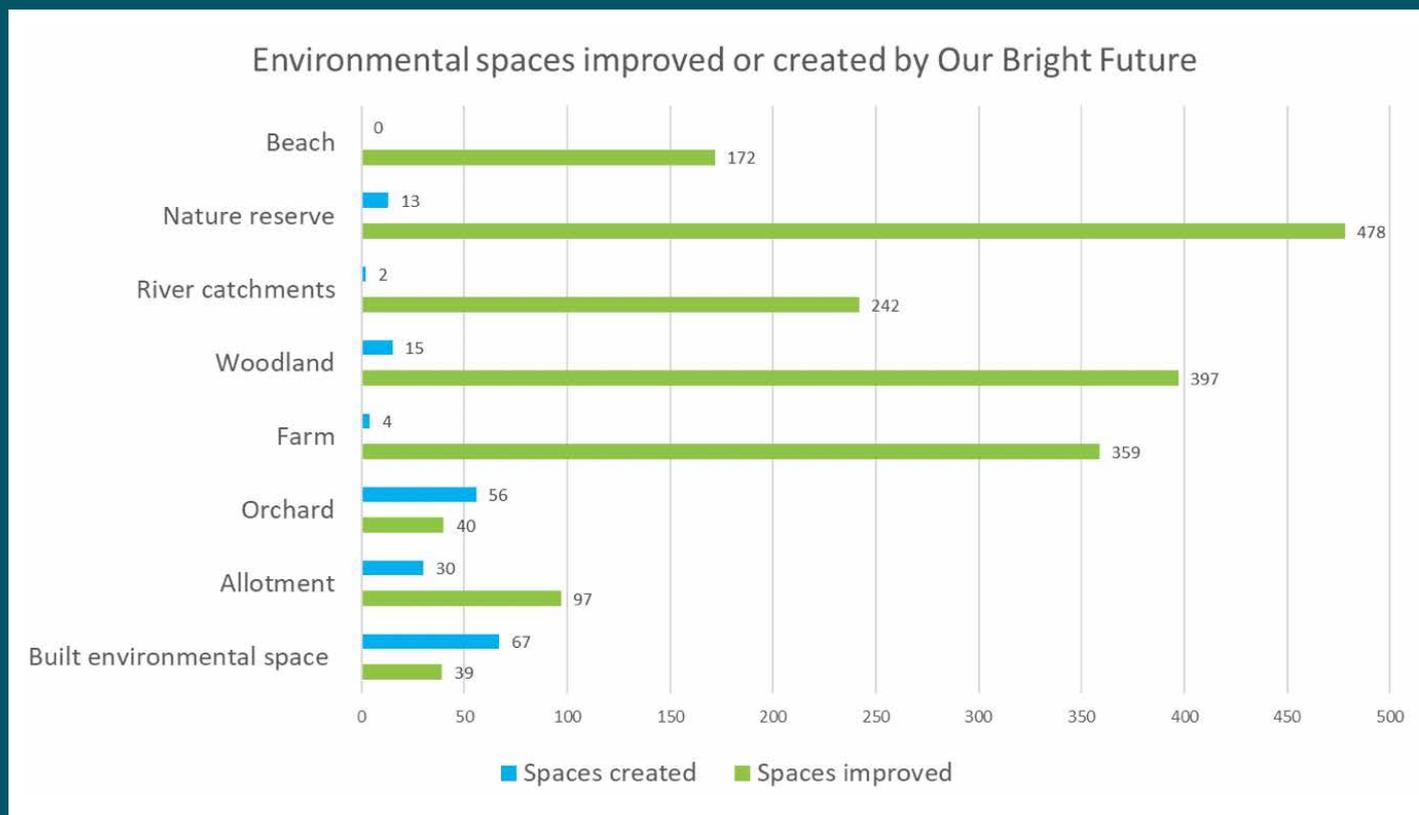


Figure 3.3 Environmental spaces improved and created by Our Bright Future projects
 Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

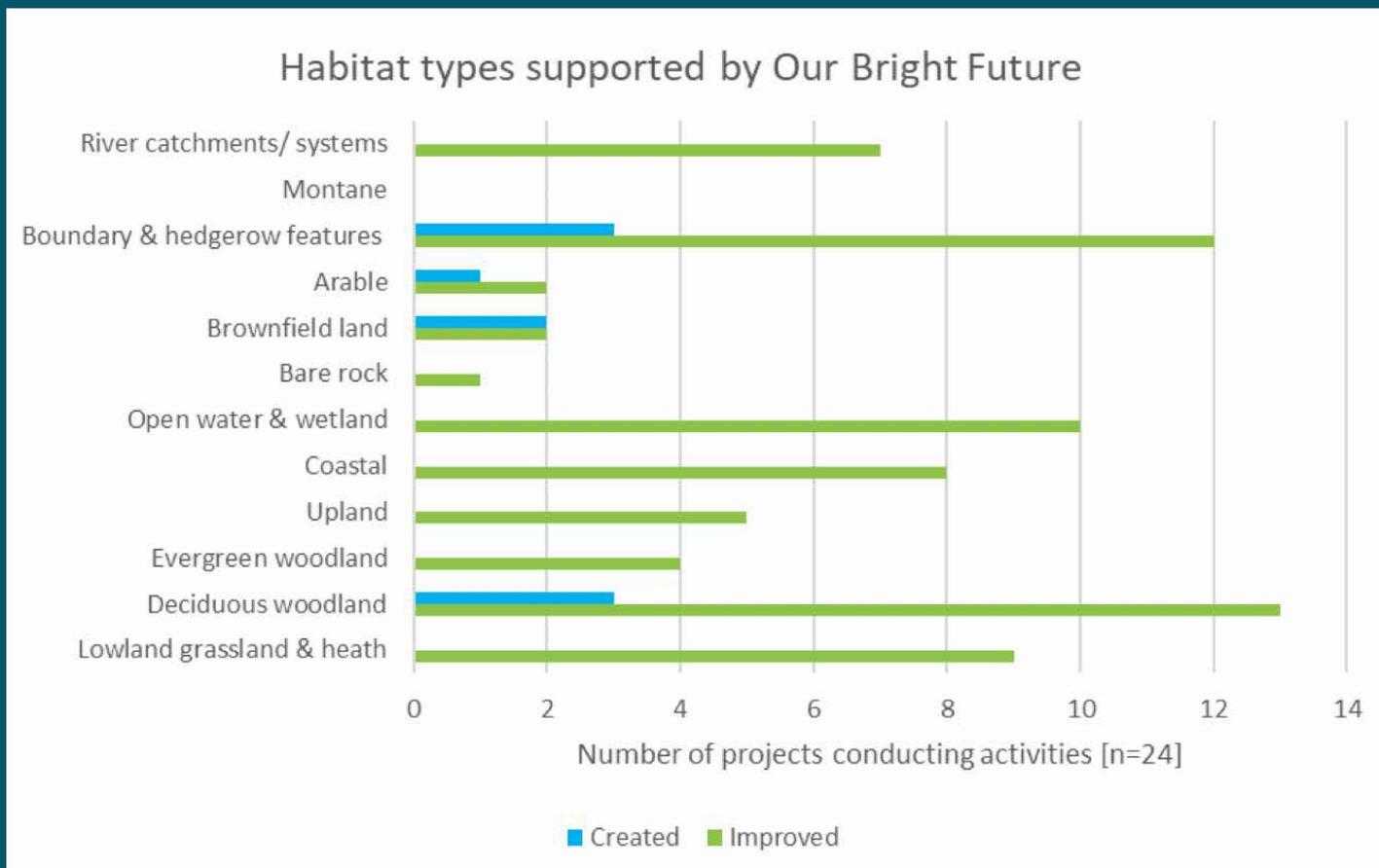


Figure 3.4 Habitat types supported by Our Bright Future projects
 Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

As activities to improve these spaces were so varied, from tree planting to creating habitats to clearing invasive species, it is challenging to quantify the collective environmental impact of the programme. However, projects have described the tangible differences that their activities have made to local natural spaces. In addition to improving outdoor and natural spaces for the benefit of local communities, projects were also responsible for making spaces both more sustainable and more wildlife friendly. As a result of improving local community spaces, one project reported an increase in fauna on site and noted that flycatchers, newts and a variety of butterfly and bat species had been seen in the space for the first time. A number of projects increased the biodiversity of spaces, such as parks, by: planting wildflowers and creating bug hotels; and creating eco-friendly, sustainable community buildings, for example by installing green roofs on newly constructed community buildings.

The case studies below highlight some examples of these improvements to natural and built environmental spaces and the outcomes that have been achieved for wildlife and biodiversity as a result.

Case study: Belfast Hills Bright Future, The Belfast Hills Partnership

The **Belfast Hills Bright Future** project worked with young people and members of the local Woodland Trust to carry out a site renovation at Aughtim Quarry in County Down, Northern Ireland. The aim of the project was to establish colonies of wildflower and native grasses on newly capped areas within the quarry, using seed collected from a nearby nature reserve.

This was a two-year project with the aspiration of increasing species diversity and reducing the need for active site management, such as cutting, by introducing yellow rattle.



In addition to wildflower and meadow creation, new areas of woodland were created by planting new trees on capped areas. Existing woodland areas were also managed through the thinning and restocking of Japanese larch stands with native broadleaf. A healing bed for trees was also created within the quarry grounds.

Not only were young people able to gain practical conservation skills through wildflower planting, tree planting and creating healing beds, participants also developed a greater appreciation of the importance of industrial sites to biodiversity and improved their knowledge of the types of restoration activity that can make a difference to these sites. Furthermore, **the site was greatly improved both in terms of appearance and its value for wildlife and biodiversity.** The quarry has signed a 10-year maintenance agreement, committing to continue tree and wildflower planting on the site and securing further positive outcomes for wildlife and biodiversity at the quarry.

Case study: Growing Up Green, Hill Holt Wood

As part of their activity to achieve outcomes for young people and the environment, the **Growing Up Green** project involved young people in the site management of Lincolnshire's Hospital Plantation. Despite being the largest green space in the local area, the site had been largely disregarded in the past and had a history of poor management.

Recognising the site's potential value as a greenspace and biodiversity hub, the project organisation produced a management plan for the site, aiming to rehabilitate the plantation by involving young people in coppicing, tree felling, the removal of invasive species and heathland management.

In 2019, students from the University of Lincoln conducted a review of the project organisation's efforts to improve the site. This review found that the project had **created favourable conditions for the diversification of species** as a result of the project's activities.

According to this review, the management of this site has been deemed to be important in providing learning on the management of smaller-scale sites within the forestry sector. **It is hoped that learning from the project will influence future activities to restore heathland sites in the UK.**



2b. Resource efficiency

Projects were invited to report on ‘CO2 emissions saved’ and ‘waste diverted from landfill’. The total cumulative figures for the whole programme are shown in table 3.2 below. Carbon emissions saved was reported by seven projects and waste diverted from landfill reported by six projects. These projects and/or activities tended to have a particular focus on delivering impacts in these areas, such as repurposing food waste.

Table 3.2 Environmental Outcome Metrics

CO2 Emissions saved	Wasted diverted from landfill
31,168 tonnes CO2e per year (across seven projects)	1,342,526 kg (across six projects)

It is important to recognise that carbon measurement is technically complex, with many differences of opinion about appropriate methodologies, as well as the validity of carbon proxies. Furthermore, project data appears to confuse CO2 emissions saved and CO2 sequestered. The data in table 3.2 has not been verified at a programme level to establish whether this was indeed the case or to check for consistency of approach. Future programmes would benefit from establishing consistent methodologies and/or include verification processes. Taken at face value, the waste diverted from landfill is of a significant scale, and equivalent to the annual waste of over 3000 households.



Reflections on achieving environment and community outcomes

The following were key elements of projects' approaches and activities which supported the achievement of direct outcomes for environments and communities.

- **Adapting and recognising the capabilities of participants** was crucial to making sure environmental improvements activities achieved outcomes e.g. younger or smaller children have limited strength so are better suited to tasks matched to their physical abilities.
- **“High octane, physical activity that involves some stretching out of comfort zones, with a visual impact”** (project manager) provided an effective ‘hook’ for some young people to get involved in activities to improve natural and community spaces. Examples include coasteering, snorkelling and bush craft.
- **Focusing on ‘quick wins’** meant that participants can immediately see the results of their work and take pride in what they have achieved. This is particularly important for motivation and engagement.
- **Encouraging friendly competition between groups**, e.g. during practical conservation tasks, can be positive for engagement. 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”.
- **Fostering links between young people and their local community** offered opportunities for young people to connect to and better understand their local heritage, culture, food, and the local environment.
- **Online engagement**, e.g., via Facebook, expanded community outreach and engagement. Projects have livestreamed nature quizzes, competitions, sharing of stories and experiences to inspire others.



3. Pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation attitudes or behaviours

Project managers provided testimony from young people, project staff, teachers, parents, and support workers, as well as the results of pre- and post-engagement surveys, showing the positive impact that participation in project activities had on young people's attitudes to the environment and their pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation behaviours

The evidence indicates that the changes in attitudes most commonly seen among Our Bright Future participants were:

- Increased interest and respect for the environment, countryside and wildlife;
- Increased optimism towards tackling environmental problems; and
- Reassurance that environmental issues can be overcome.

Linked to changes in attitude, there was evidence of a variety of changes in young people's behaviours towards the environment as a result of engagement with Our Bright Future projects. This included:

- Taking steps or expressing intentions to reduce personal impacts on the environment; and
- Sharing knowledge of the environment with others e.g. with friends and family

"[The project] has motivated me massively and shown me the difference I can truly make as a young person and all I can do for the environment." Participant



Young people's pro-environmental and pro-nature attitudes

According to the results of the participant Outcomes Flower survey (see [Outcomes Flower Report](#)), participating in Our Bright Future increased the extent to which young people care for the environment. Although the majority of young people reported that they already cared about the environment before taking part in the programme (65%), there was a statistically significant rise to 92% after taking part in the programme.

Results of the Outcomes Flower survey also showed that Our Bright Future helped young people feel that they can make a positive change for the environment. After participating in the programme, 81% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they could make a difference to the environment (compared to less than 37% of participants before taking part).

The results of a survey undertaken as part of the [Participant Impacts Study](#) are shown in figure 3.5. These provide an indication of how widespread the influence of the programme on young people's awareness, engagement with and attitudes towards environmental issues may have been. More than 90% of respondents felt that Our Bright Future had increased their knowledge and awareness of environmental issues and the natural world, with this increase considered 'a lot' for more than half of respondents.



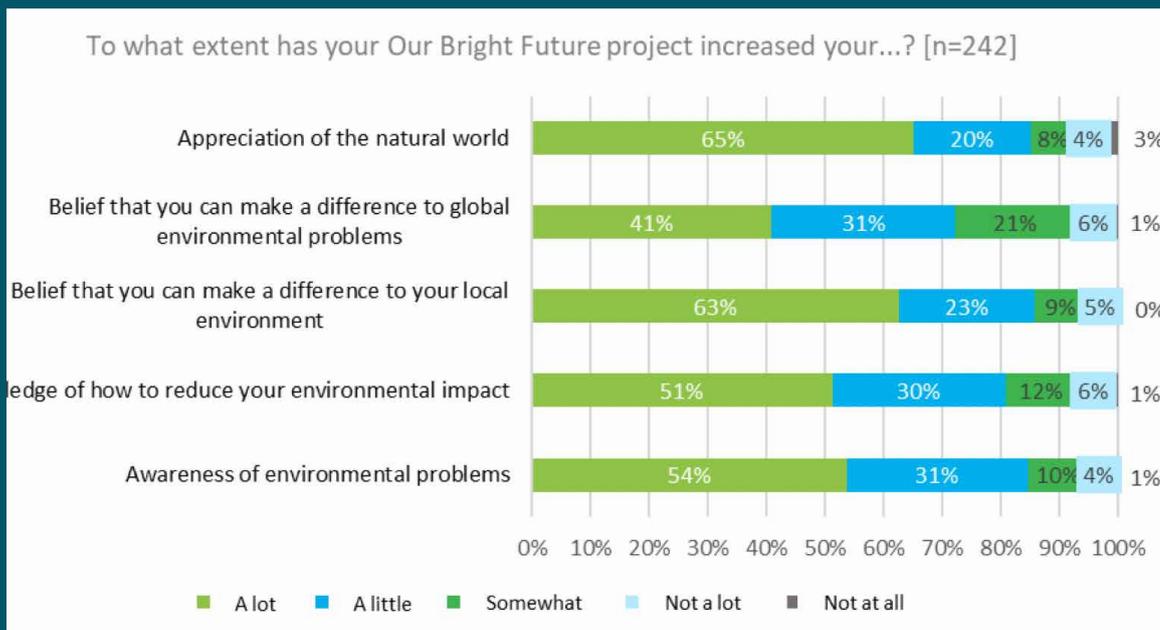


Figure 3.5 Influence on attitudes, awareness and appreciation of the environment and issues
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Young people’s pro-environmental and pro-nature behaviours

More than half of respondents to the survey undertaken as part of the [Participant Impacts Study](#) reported adopting a range of pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation behaviours and actions as a result of their involvement in Our Bright Future projects. Figure 3.6 shows that this outcome was observed to varying extents, with some young people indicating that they already engaged in those specified behaviours before taking part.



Figure 3.6 Adoption of pro-environmental behaviours and actions
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

When young people were asked to describe the difference that Our Bright Future had made to them as part of the Outcomes Flower survey, the outcome most commonly described was a 'shift towards pro-environmental behaviours'. These were phrased as one-off or reoccurring actions taken already, habits respondents had adopted and intended to keep up, or intentions around behaviours to adopt going forward. These included, for example:

- Reducing the use of plastic and single use plastic, as well as reduction in waste more broadly;
- A reduction in use of products considered harmful to wildlife; and
- A change in behaviours relating to wildlife and habitats, such as planting flowers to encourage wildlife and putting up bird boxes and feeders. One young person said "I will appreciate wildlife more and my understanding of it. I will feed birds more often".

Other benefits of young people's pro-environmental and pro-nature attitudes and behaviours

- **Participants influenced the attitudes of others by sharing their knowledge and awareness with others in their social, professional, and peer networks.** For example, one family had reportedly become vegetarian as a result of the project; others coordinated local events; and individuals contacted their local authority and encouraged their schools and places of part-time work to take pro-environmental and/or pro-nature actions.

"Because of learning about the environmental impacts of animal agriculture through [the project], myself and my parents and sister became vegetarian over a year ago. This has led to really interesting conversations with the rest of our family and friends." Project participant quoted by project manager



- **Participants continue to enjoy and pursue hobbies related to nature and the environment**, e.g. by continuing with project activities (such as beekeeping and rock-pooling); getting more involved in local community activities (such as beach cleans and conservation work); joining/starting a group linked with the outdoors; and spending more time outdoors (such as gardening or walking).
- **Participants aspire to support the environment through environment-focussed careers**, e.g. seeking employment with companies with good environmental values and furthering their knowledge at university.
- **Participants developed a sense of social and environmental justice and responsibility**, including considering impacts and environmental issues from the perspective of marginalised people and communities and recognising the barriers they face. Participants of several projects referenced recognising balances of power, their own privilege, and the dominance of certain 'voices', including their own.

Communities' pro-environmental and pro-nature attitudes

Project managers also reported that community members experienced an increase in pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation behaviours due to the awareness-raising activities and campaigns delivered by projects and young people - particularly relating to themes such as littering and resource use. As well as the direct conservation and restoration activities of projects, raising community awareness also led to positive changes in community spaces in some cases. For example, communities being more informed about the effects of discarding plastics on public beaches. The influence that the project had on communities in terms of supporting the development of pro-environmental and pro-nature conservation behaviours is expected to continue to lead to positive impacts for the environment in years to come.



Reflections on encouraging pro-environmental and pro-nature behaviours

Evidence from the Our Bright Future programme indicates that the following approaches and activities encouraged changes in environmental attitudes and behaviours:

- **Development of knowledge of the environment, nature, green spaces and their importance**, linking those to environmental problems on local and global levels (e.g. climate change).
- **Sharing concrete examples of how individuals can make a difference to environmental problems**. Examples of how individuals and communities have made a difference has been found to be effective in supporting an increased sense of empowerment.
- **Opportunities to engage with other people and discuss environmental issues**. This provided inspiration, supporting young people to feel less isolated and part of a wider movement.
- **Witnessing threats to the local environment and wildlife, and the difference that they themselves can make**, e.g. the scale of food waste, removal of invasive species, or rubbish on a beach. Tackling a problem first-hand provided confidence and was a motivator as many environmental problems can seem insurmountable and abstract.
- **Facilitating enjoyment of the countryside, natural environment and outdoors in general**, e.g. through foraging for food or cooking on a campfire, particularly within environments local to young people, supports participants to develop attachments to and an appreciation of green spaces and the outdoor environment
- **Giving young people autonomy and a sense of ownership over activities which benefit nature and the environment**, e.g. designing and leading their own project supported young people to feel more empowered in addressing environmental issues and threats to nature.



4. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

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

This chapter focusses on the extent to which the collective and individual efforts of the Our Bright Future projects and programme have contributed to changes in policy and practice. It focusses on the outcomes and impacts of policy influencing - as opposed to listing activities - in order to reflect on achievements.

Key messages

There is evidence that Our Bright Future projects and the young people participating in them have engaged with a range of decision-makers around environmental topics. This includes local decision-makers, such as representatives in schools and colleges, and members of parliament at a national level. Outcomes of this engagement have varied, and have included, for example: a shift in decision-makers' perceptions of young people and the value of engaging them in policy-making processes; shifts in policy or practice at an organisational-level, such as implementing a new recycling policy at a university, or establishing youth governance approaches in a project organisation; and, project staff and young people having improved capacity and skills to undertake policy-activities in the future.

At the programme-level, the Policy Function has provided a clear focus for policy activity, including establishing and maintaining contact with decision-makers and organisations relevant to the programme and its aims. The direct influence of this activity on policy is hard to attribute, but awareness and recognition of the issues important to young people is considered likely to have been increased.

The creation, with the participation of young people, of three Policy Asks, as well as their launch at a parliamentary event, is another key output of the Policy Function. While the evidence that the Asks led to project-level policy outcomes is limited, these Asks provided a shared focus for programme-level policy activity. Moreover, there is some evidence that they may have influenced national discussion and decisions around policy related to young people and the environment.



Evidence is drawn from the sources outlined in Appendix 1, as well additional evidence supplied by the Policy and Advocacy Manager (PAM). Additional evidence included: Influence Logs (policy activity logs maintained by the PAM since May 2017) and narrative reporting against progress towards policy indicators¹¹ (Appendix 3).

This chapter is divided into two sections:

- **Programme achievements:** achievements of the programme Policy Function and young people in influencing change; the cumulative impact of influencing activities across the portfolio; and progress against three Policy Asks.
- **Project achievements:** achievements of Our Bright Future projects and young people in influencing: 1) internal organisational change; and/or 2) external change in policy or practice.

The chapter goes on to outline programme-wide learning on what has supported the programme, projects and young people to influence policy on a local, national and UK-wide level.

Due to the nature of policy influencing, attribution of change to a specific influencing activity is complex. As campaigning actions ripple outward through spheres of control, influence, and concern, attribution becomes increasingly difficult to measure (see figure 4.1). In order to best explain how programme and project activities have influenced change in this complex sphere, narrative evidence is used to describe the relationship between the activity and the change.



¹¹ Indicators for the Policy Function were confirmed by the programme team in 2021.



Figure 4.1 The three spheres of control and their relationship to policy influence¹²
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Programme-level influence

Programme activities to influence change

Our Bright Future sought to increase the representation of young people in a range of policy and decision-making spheres, at local, regional, and national levels. The programme aimed to highlight the value of youth voice to a range of external stakeholders and to young people themselves, as well as to support young people to develop skills and confidence to influence environmental change. These aims were supported by a dedicated Policy Function, which facilitated projects and participating young people to engage with (and to create or lead) policy activities relating to young people and the environment.

At a programme-level, the role of the Policy Function was to: directly engage with policy and decision-makers; develop and promote 'Policy Asks'; and, share programme evidence. The Policy Function also oversaw the development of a Policy Influence and Advocacy Strategy, as well as the establishment of a high-level CEO Advocacy Advisory Group¹³ for the programme, involving CEOs from all partner organisations and young people involved in projects.

Aiming to embody the youth-led ethos of the programme, three Policy Asks were co-produced with project staff, consortium members, and young people engaged with the programme. The Asks reportedly provided a clearer focus for projects, and some project managers stated that the Policy Function generated a feeling of being part of 'something bigger', rather than operating as 31 separate projects.

¹²Source: Adapted by ERS based on a diagram by Tsui, Hearn & Young (2014): [ODI Working Paper 395: Monitoring and evaluation of policy](#)

¹³The 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 network".

Figure 4.2 below, illustrates how programme-level influencing activities intended to lead to change in policy and practice related to young people and the environment.

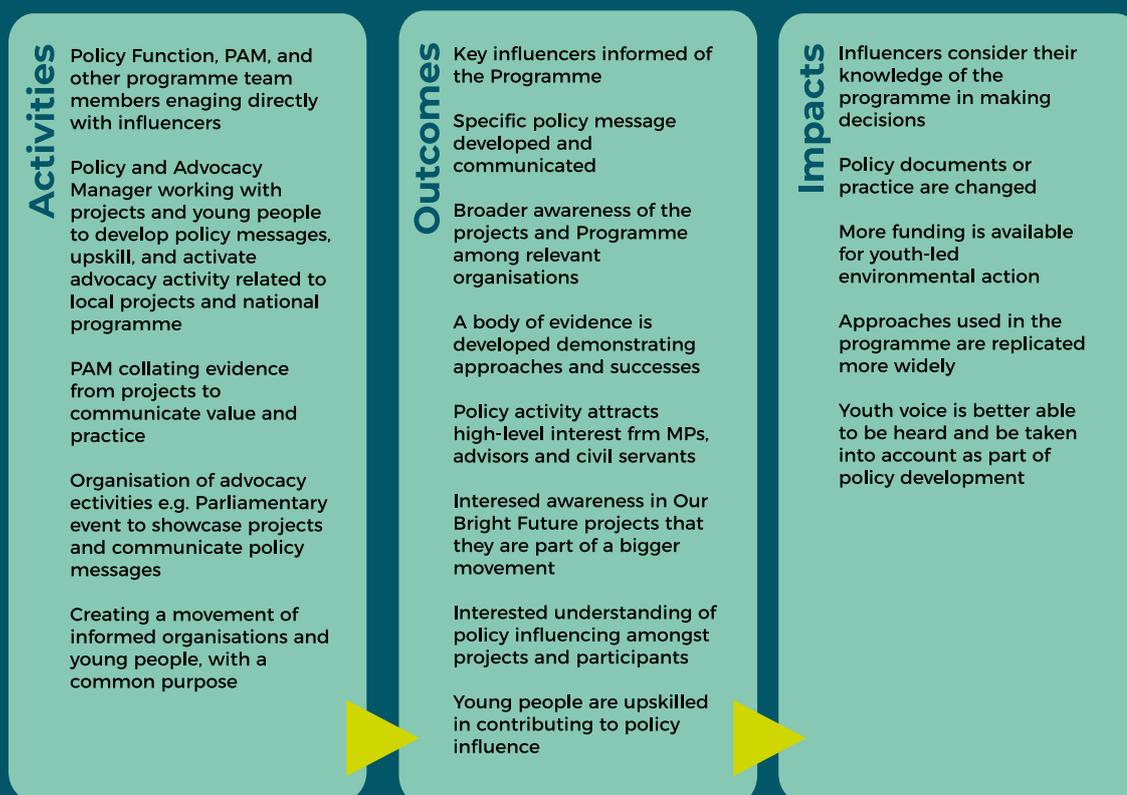


Figure 4.2 Programme influencing changes in policy and practice
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

The Influence Log listed programme engagement and policy influencing activities, providing information on who has been engaged and how, as well as outcomes achieved. The Policy Function and broader programme team engaged widely with programme partners and projects, as well as influencers¹⁴ and external stakeholders. The three Policy Asks were finalised after being developed with young people's input in the second half of 2018 (and were [launched](#) in March 2019). From that point onwards, the Asks framed programme-level policy activities.

Ask 1: More time spent learning in and about nature

Ask 2: Support to get into environmental jobs

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

Indicators

A series of indicators for the Policy Function were confirmed by the programme team in mid-2021. In order to best explain the complex nature of measuring and attributing policy change to influencing activities, evidence provided by the programme team is narrative, describing the scale and scope of influencing activity. Five of the activity-focussed indicators most relevant to programme-level influencing are discussed in table 4.1, followed by indicators relating to involving young people in policy activities. The full list of indicators is included in Appendix 3.

¹⁴Target 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.

Table 3.2 Outcomes 3 Indicators (selection of indicators presented)	
Indicator	Achieved
More than 30 organisations changed policy or practice	Many examples provided against this indicator included portfolio organisations enacting internal organisational change. These often related to embedding new youth governance structures.
More than four actions or events organised to promote the three Policy Asks	Events typically focussed on actively engaging with the political process, with topics including: influencing local politics; understanding and influencing democracy; two youth hustings, for example, with organisations at local, national, and devolved nation levels. Actions cited included a letter to the Education Select Committee and campaign actions to promote outdoor learning.
Programme findings and evidence are created and shared with similar programmes, funders, government departments etc.	A series of 'effective practice guides' have been disseminated to national funders, partners, and sector groups, including: 'Involving young people in organisational governance'; and 'Putting young people in the lead'.
At least 10 sector groups / external networks are engaged	A range of relevant groups and networks were engaged, with the intention to: share opportunities and learning; raise the programme's profile; facilitate young people's access to decision-makers; and to create opportunities to input into strategy.
Young people have been involved in organising and taking part in policy events and activities	It is clear that a range of opportunities have been offered by the Policy Function, and connections to policy-makers and decision-makers have been fostered. Examples of this include: two young people taking part in a Youth Summit, sharing their views with a national environmental organisation; young people engaging in the #LearnMoreOutdoors campaign; and the programme hosting an online event to introduce young people to local politics. Young people also chaired and facilitated sessions at online programme events.

Achievements of programme-level influencing: changes in policy and practice

The Policy Function secured Our Bright Future a “seat at the table” in relevant spaces, often becoming a sustained presence at boards, meetings and forums, as well as securing opportunities for young people’s voices to be heard and to engage with high-profile decision-makers.

An internal stakeholder described that, at first, communications were mainly from the programme team to decision-makers. More recently, however, as the programme profile has grown, approaches from NGOs, decision-makers and media to Our Bright Future had increased. This was achieved through high-profile events, such as the parliamentary event (March 2019), but also through sustained efforts to maintain engagement and build relationships. The time taken to achieve this shift supports the rationale for the longer programme duration (e.g. over 3 years), demonstrating there is a need to generate momentum prior to change being achieved.

Table 4.1 provides examples of policy achievements and outcomes at the programme level. These have been presented against each of the three Policy Asks. Following this, examples of broader programme-level policy outcomes (not related to a specific Ask) are provided. The table and points which follow are not exhaustive in terms of listing all policy activity undertaken, rather they attempt to summarise policy activities for which clear outcomes or results can be evidenced.

Table 4.1: Examples of programme-level policy outcomes

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Policy Asks 1</p>	<p>More time spent learning in and about nature</p> <p>#LearnMoreOutdoors campaign (Northern Ireland)</p> <p>Ulster Wildlife, the programme’s policy contractor in Northern Ireland, ran the #LearnMoreOutdoors campaign in early 2021. Four training sessions for youth advocates were delivered. The young people filmed clips for a series of six videos on the theme of outdoor learning, and these were widely shared together with social media messages. As part of the campaign, the young people wrote to the Minister for Education Mr. Peter Weir MLA and met him in March 2021. As a result, young people had the opportunity to share guidance on outdoor learning via the Education Authority website. The campaign was also picked up by local media.</p> <p><i>“Really impressed by @UlsterWildlife #Grassroots students’ presentation today. We are blessed to live in such a beautiful country, we need to look after it & help our children to both enjoy it & respect it”</i> Peter Weir MLA, Twitter</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Policy Asks 2</p>	<p>Support to get environmental jobs</p> <p>Green Recovery Challenge Fund</p> <p>In May 2020, the programme team supported senior staff at RSWT to engage with Defra. These meetings focussed on: the Government’s long-term investment in environmental training schemes; opportunities to improve the job prospects of young people; delivery of the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan; and securing a ‘green’ COVID-19 recovery. Our Bright Future supplied evidence, feeding into a review of the skills and training landscape, including Support for young people to work in the environmental sector: A research review and the Mid-Term Evaluation Report.</p> <p>At the end of June 2020, the Government announced £40 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund , which is intended to support people to secure and to safeguard jobs in the environmental sector. The Fund has subsequently been doubled to £80m .</p> <p><i>“I know that Defra have looked closely at Our Bright Future for thinking about how to maximise job potential through funding through the Green Jobs Challenge Fund.”</i> External stakeholder</p> <p>Moreover, in December 2020, 8 organisations connected to Our Bright Future were successful in receiving funding from the scheme, representing 15% of the total awarded at over £5.8 million.</p>

¹⁵<https://twitter.com/peterweirmla/status/1376896834132660232>

¹⁶<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-40-million-green-jobs-challenge-fund>

¹⁷<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/80-million-fund-for-green-jobs-and-new-national-parks-to-kick-start-green-recovery>

Youth Environmental Service (previously known as National Nature Service - NNS)

The PAM worked with a Wildlife and Countryside Link working group, as well as a parallel group of health and climate activists, to develop and promote the Youth Environmental Service (YES). Through this initiative, young people are calling on the UK Government to fund new green jobs to help nature recover while addressing youth unemployment. Input was centred on analysing the capacity of the environmental sector to address high youth unemployment, and contributing Our Bright Future learning and evidence to feed into proposals. A letter with top level messages went to the Chancellor on the 20 June 2020 to make the general case for long-term funding.

“Most recently, our work on the National Nature Service has referenced Our Bright Future. We have setup a diversity and inclusion group for organisation members and the Our Bright Future scheme is a good model for how to do things well.” External stakeholder

The YES initiative was officially launched in October 2020, calling on the Prime Minister and Chancellor to announce a major funding package to provide new green jobs and training through nature recovery work, as part of their spending review. A range of MPs have engaged with the initiative. Further, the Environmental Audit Committee have now released their [report on green jobs](#). A section is dedicated to the YES.

Pay more attention to the needs of young people

The Policy Function supported **The National Lottery Community Fund** to set up a young persons’ steering group (Young People in the Lead) through provision of evidence, learning, and practical tips. The programme team suggested that the experience of a senior level Fund representative in attending the all-project seminar in Wales, and the impression the young people there made, may have contributed towards driving this. More widely, The Fund created a new position - Head of Youth Voice - who has worked closely alongside Our Bright Future.

In 2020, the PAM worked with the **Environment Agency (EA)** to plan a series of webinars whereby young people could learn about the organisation’s work and priorities, ask questions, and voice their views, feeding into the Rethinking Water citizen jury campaign , as well as the EA's Challenges and Choices consultation (this was chaired by a young person). The programme suggests this process encouraged EA representatives to progress work internally around increasing youth voice. With EA reportedly keen to progress the youth agenda, the PAM hosted a series of webinars, involving senior leadership from the EA, around this topic. Following the series of events, the PAM shared young people’s recommendations to improve youth engagement plans with EA and these have been presented to the EA board. This work continues.

“[Participant name] chaired the event engagingly and with great professionalism. Even when the slides took a while, which can happen in the virtual world we’re all working in, [participant name] filled the space with interesting information and reflection. She clearly has the respect of her peers at Our Bright Future and brought lots of different voices into the debate.”

External Stakeholder, Environment Agency

¹⁸<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/about/our-people/young-people-in-the-lead-advisory-group>

¹⁹ <https://www.involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/practice/how-can-we-work-together-improve-water-environment>

Further examples of the ways in which the programme has influenced policy are:

- **The National Lottery Community Fund’s Climate Action Fund:** The Policy Function shared ideas and learning from Our Bright Future (specifically on the Policy Function and SLI approach) with The Fund as part of the process towards developing the Climate Action Fund. Specifically, this included learning around how Our Bright Future collaboratively generated the Policy Asks, and how the projects shared good practice and learned from each other across the programme, primarily through the SLI Function.
- **Human Rights Consortium Scotland (Scotland):** YouthLink, the programme’s policy subcontractor for Scotland, ran a session with Together Scotland and five young people on the right to a healthy environment, as part of the consultation by the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership. The Taskforce recommended that the right to a healthy environment should be included in Scottish human rights legislation. Specific recommendations from the young people were included in the All Our Rights in Law²⁰ report (2021), produced by the Human Rights Consortium Scotland to stand alongside the Taskforce report.
- **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds’ (RSPB)** plans for engaging young people at an organisational level have reportedly been informed by learning from the programme.

“Our Bright Future has been influential in helping us to develop our own strategy and approach to youth development. It has been particularly beneficial in the development of our new 2021-2023 Youth plan; we’ve taken on board the learnings from the programme. Furthermore, the resources continue to be a great reference point for our work.” Emily Lomax, Youth Manager at RSPB. Emily Lomax, Youth Manager at RSPB

Our Bright Future projects and young people influencing change

Project activities to influence policy change

Figure 4.3 illustrates how, theoretically, projects delivering a range of influencing activities can support change in terms of: increased awareness; changed policy and practice; and decision making that is more focussed on youth and environment.



Figure 4.3 Projects influencing changes in policy and practice
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

²⁰https://hrcscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/HRCS_all-our-rights_report_48pp_web_single-pages.pdf

At a project level, participants actively sought to influence change within and outside their organisations, both locally and nationally. Awareness-raising (about the programme, and environmental issues) represented the bulk of activity up to the programme’s mid-point. Most recorded outcomes were specific and localised, for example influencing a local college to change its recycling policy.

Since the launch of the Policy Asks in 2019, data has been recorded on the number of influencers²¹ engaged per quarter by projects and/or young people. In total, 1,845 influencers had been engaged by projects. The per quarter figures peaked with 445 engaged in quarter 4 of 2019 and dipped in quarter 2 and quarter 3 of 2020, coinciding with the outbreak of COVID-19. Engagement figures quickly recovered, then began to fall as projects ended.

Projects also reported on the type of influencers engaged. In the earlier phases of the programme, data showed that political influencers were the largest category engaged by projects and young people (77%). In the final phase of the programme, this was overtaken by NGO & VCS sector influencers. One explanation for this shift relates to COVID-19: political influencers were less accessible due to civil servants and MPs being focussed on managing the pandemic response. The greater number of NGOs engaged was reportedly due to the time it takes to generate engagement, as well as the increased focus on legacy and reinforcing networks as the programme drew to a close. Over the duration of the programme, NGO/VCS influencers totalled 57% of all interactions, demonstrating a continuing spread across influencer types.

INFLUENCERS ENGAGED PER QUARTER BY PROJECTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

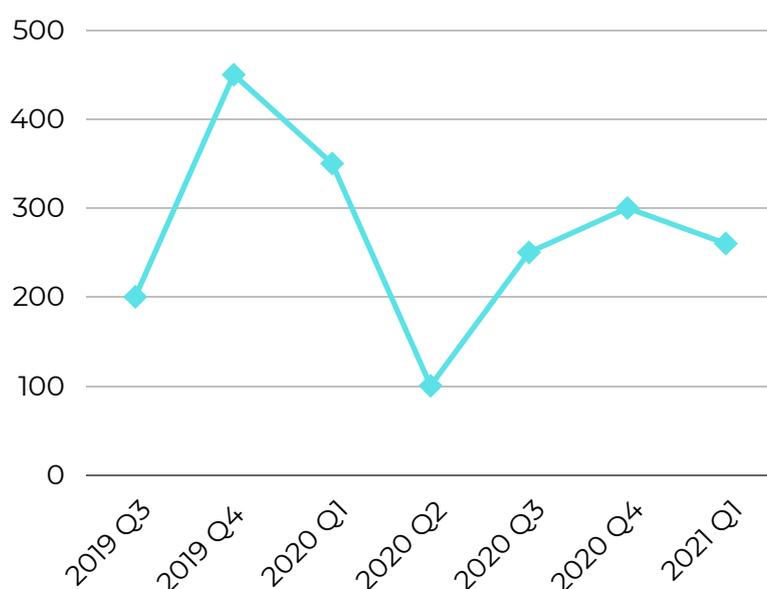


Figure 4.4 Influencers engaged by projects (since launch of Policy Asks in 2019)
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

²¹Target 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.

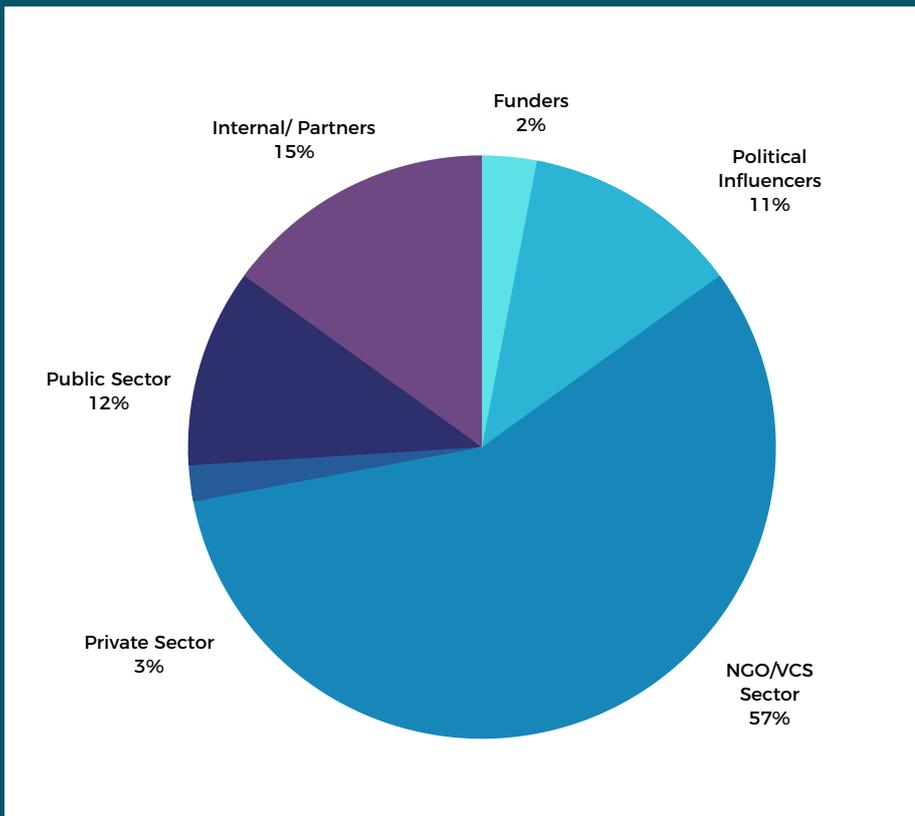


Figure 4.5 Influencers engaged by category
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Achievements of project-level influencing: changes in policy and practice

A wide range of influencing activities were carried out by projects and young people, including: events; campaigns and actions; engaging influencers; developing new decision-making and governance structures; disseminating messages through a range of media; and sharing evidence and good practice. Several outcome themes have emerged: 1) the ways in which projects have influenced **internal organisational change**; 2) the influence projects have had on **external policy and practice**; 3) the ways projects have influenced **decision-makers' attitudes towards young people**; and 4) the ways in which young people engaged with strategic policy influencers at local and national levels. They are summarised below with indicative examples of change and selected key achievements.

1. Influencing internal organisational change

Projects have taken a variety of actions to influence policy and practice within their own organisations. This ranges from driving practical action, (re)designing processes, changing attitudes, to instigating culture change. Most commonly, outcomes of this type related to implementing of youth governance structures at an organisational level (see [Youth Governance Learning Paper](#), paper 6). A culture shift around inclusion of underrepresented groups was also a key theme.

“We have learned that it’s possible to change the whole culture and way of working of [project’s portfolio organisation] to include working with young people, including those facing significant disadvantages.” Project manager.

2. Influencing external changes in policy and practice

Most often related to: 1) schools, colleges, and universities; and 2) local authorities and councils. Outcomes most often included commitments and action around resource-use, recycling, plastic reduction and air pollution, as well as the climate emergency more generally. For example, one project influenced a local college to enact a campus-wide switch to wooden cutlery, an annual saving of approximately 2.6 million pieces of plastic. The localised nature of this type of change often represented a ‘quick win’ when compared to achieving change at a national level. This was due to more immediate access to decision-makers, the ability of young people to take action directly and the visible and measurable nature of outcomes.

Selected examples of projects influencing change include:

- *“The Student Living and Sustainability Officer of our Students’ Union is putting a larger emphasis in saving food waste on campus as a way to bring climate justice”* (participant).
- In 2020, young people secured commitment from their city council (Nottingham) to improve communications around recycling. The decision-makers were impressed by the solution-focussed approach.
- One project has influenced their local council to be more environmentally conscious in their land management, for example, to avoid mowing grassy areas to support wildlife.
- Young people convened a number of negotiation meetings with a local Mayor who then agreed to set-up ongoing, official air quality monitoring.

3. Influencing decision-makers' attitudes towards young people

A wider benefit noted by projects was that activities had positively influenced decision-makers' attitudes towards young people. Some even felt that this was the most significant influencing work they achieved. This was often done by giving young people and their work greater visibility, for example through site visits or face-to-face meetings with MPs or local representatives. There was also a perception that this change in attitude, as well as greater awareness of young people's concern for the environment, may lead to policy outcomes in the longer-term.

"There is a belief that seeing these projects first-hand and meeting the young working on them will prompt decision-makers to engage on a greater basis with the needs, abilities and skills of our young people. We feel it is too soon to tell if our work with Our Bright Future and young people has influenced change by decision-makers. However [...], it is our belief that these young people and the work they have achieved has a lasting impact." Project manager

4. Influencing the direction of plans and strategies:

Young people involved in Our Bright Future projects engaged with strategic policy influencers at local and national levels. This included attending events, meetings and roundtable discussions, hosting 'actions' - such as litter picks or beach cleans - and coordinating petitions. Outcomes have included securing commitments and pledges and generating publicity and visibility for key issues. Through these actions young people made tangible contributions to a range of strategic plans, initiatives, policy developments, including with several high-profile organisations such as Defra and the National Trust.

Further examples have included:

- Young people were invited to feed into a consultation for a national organisation about youth participation on their trustee boards.
- In 2021, young people contributed to an online consultation for a regional Recovery Plan. The council confirmed that some of the young people's ideas will be used within the Plan.
- Young people from one project were consulted as part of a regional climate change strategy.
- 40 young people from Ulster Wildlife and the Belfast Hills Partnership met with key decision-makers at Stormont to set out their asks for safeguarding the environment with a view to influence the development of Northern Ireland's first ever strategy for the environment.

As well as the outcome themes described above, projects shared evidence demonstrating their contribution towards high profile initiatives such as the development of a National Nature Service²².

Projects and young people's contribution towards collective change

For some projects, campaigning and influencing was central to their overall delivery model, however for others it was in addition to key project objectives. The drivers for projects to undertake influencing activities therefore came from various sources (see figure 4.6). Given the differing drivers, as well as range of project types and participants across the portfolio, influencing topics, tactics, and audiences also varied.

Initially, at a programme-level, there was not one single collective policy aim or message for projects to champion. Whilst this may have reduced the collective impact and momentum, it has meant that influence was evident across a wider range of issues.

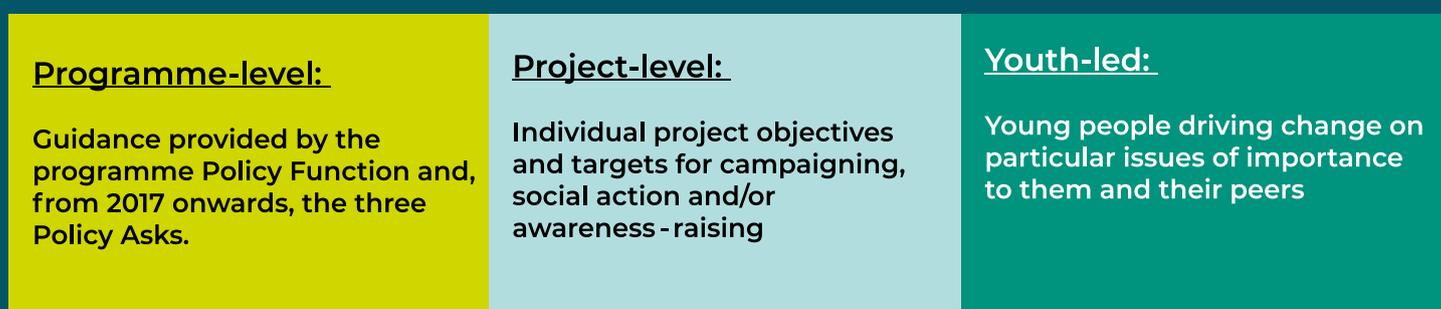


Figure 4.6 Drivers for project level influencing activities
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

The contribution to the Policy Asks at a project-level has varied, with individual Asks also being of varying relevance to projects. Evidence indicates that projects contributed most consistently to generating influence around Ask 3, 'pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment' (this is also strongly linked to the youth-led ethos of the programme discussed in Chapter 6). Ask 1, 'more time spent learning in and about nature', was most relevant to those projects working directly with schools, colleges and universities.

There is less evidence on individual project-level influence linked with Ask 2, 'support to get into environmental jobs', which may suggest this has been less relevant or harder to action.

²²National Nature service. Accessed 14/11/2021 <https://www.nationalnatureservice.org/moreinformation/>

Table 4.2: Examples of project-level policy outcomes

Policy Asks 1

More time spent learning in and about nature

In terms of policy influencing, projects have shared information and/or met with AMs and MPs, have participated in campaigns to promote Ask 1 and have shared videos and promoted the Ask through media.

Several projects indicated they have upskilled teachers and other educators in outdoor learning, as well as building educators' confidence and changing attitudes around this type of provision.

"The project ran courses for teachers to help them gain the confidence to take their teaching out of the classroom into the community." Project manager

Further, a few projects influenced educational institutions to change practice, increasing their outdoor provision to students. In some cases, impacts of these changes upon the young people have already been observed; for example, improved soft and employability skills. Success factors in securing this change have included linking environmental education to the existing curriculum and demonstrating the value of outdoor activities for young people by inviting educators to observe sessions directly.

Policy Asks 2

Support to get environmental jobs

The PAM provided evidence from Our Bright Future to inform the scoping phase of a (potential) new National Lottery Community Fund funding stream, focusing on supporting young people into green employment. A number of young people contributed to the Our Bright Future evidence on this theme, having supported the development of the programme's report: "[Support for young people to work in the environmental sector: A research review](#)". In addition, young people from Our Bright Future are now directly working with The Fund to input into the development of this potential new funding stream, as a result of the connections the PAM made between programme participants and Fund representatives.



Policy Asks 3

Pay more time spent learning in and about nature

As set out in Chapter 8, changing processes around youth governance is a key legacy of the programme, with some strategies in place for the next decade. This effect has largely been felt within portfolio organisations, but external influence is apparent too. Connecting young people with decision-makers (and associated infrastructures) external to the projects has been beneficial in terms of developing young people's ability and skills to generate influence. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that facilitating such connections has affected decision-makers' perceptions in the longer-term, leading to two-way benefits and ongoing relationships.

The exposure of young people and portfolio organisations to the policy making process- both local and national - has built capacity and skills. Proximity to decision-makers has enabled young people to learn more about the process of how change is achieved in a real-life setting.

"This area of work has contributed to a greater awareness of young people's concern for the environment amongst people in positions of power. The outworking's of this raised awareness in terms of policy direction and change are yet to be fully seen." Project manager

"An important element of the project related to policy and influencing has been to enable the young people participating to find their voice and understand how to navigate decision-making processes. Being able to access such individuals, coupled with developing the skills to communicate and negotiate through the project has contributed to feelings of empowerment and agency, of having a voice and being heard." Project manager

Challenges and reflections from project level influencing

Projects emphasised that due to the time it takes to a) build capacity for influencing, b) to build relationships and momentum, and c) to realise change, the long duration of the programme has proven vital.

One challenge was a perceived mismatch between the pace of change young people were keen to see, and what impact was realistically possible to achieve in a short timeframe. To relieve tensions in this respect, one organisation suggested that transparency around the expected pace of progress is key, as well as supporting development of spaces and routes where young people can bring about more accelerated change.

Comments from a few project managers suggest that having a national group to share ideas with, as well as the backing of a high-profile organisation - RSWT - has supported delivery of a campaign at a scale that would not have been possible otherwise.

"We feel that the core Our Bright Future partnership has been really successful in ensuring that the collective influence of the individual projects has been amplified as national messages." Project manager

What factors enabled and constrained policy influencing outcomes?

There were a range of factors which reportedly constrained policy outcomes in the period since the [Mid-term Evaluation Report](#), including:

- **COVID-19** had a range of impacts. For example, policymakers' focus and resource was shifted to the emergency pandemic response, making it harder to keep the Policy Asks on the agenda, and meaning key policy contacts (and relationships) were lost or progress stalled.
- **Maintaining relevance in a shifting policy context:** some internal stakeholders considered the Policy Asks inflexible in adapting to a) shifting government priorities and changed ways of operating post-election (UK General Election held December 2019); and b) maintaining relevance for cohorts of young people joining later in the programme. A couple of stakeholders commented that issues such as the climate crisis and biodiversity loss may have been higher on the agenda - following the school strikes in 2018/19 onwards - than at the outset when the Asks were formulated with a different cohort.
- **Difficulty influencing policy in central government:** stakeholders shared a perception that gaining traction in England was more challenging than in the devolved nations. A number of projects felt that the focus should not necessarily have been national, pointing to local and more practical changes which could better support participants.
- **Projects' capacity to engage with the programme Policy Function:** some projects stated that policy influencing sat outside of their core skillset. Further, the Asks were of varying relevance to individual projects, especially those who did not have policy, campaigning or influencing among their objectives. Some projects also said that they lacked resources to implement this type of activity.
- **Barriers for young people engaging with policy influencing:** some projects felt that having fixed Asks did not align with the youth-led ethos of their project, preferring to let participants define the direction. Also, some projects felt the Asks were less relevant to young people in urban areas, and others pointed to barriers to young people engaging meaningfully in influencing activities, such as age range, or complex lives.

In terms of factors which enabled achievement of policy influence, some themes are highlighted below:

- **A dedicated, centralised policy team:** the Policy Function supported projects to take part in policy activities, enabling portfolio organisations to build capacity and confidence with campaigning through provision of training, support, resources, and guidance. A number of projects have since made campaigning a core part of their work.
- **Three defined Policy Asks:** especially considering the diverse objectives of Our Bright Future projects, many consultees felt that having defined Policy Asks was helpful in generating shared goals, a clearer focus, as well as more cohesive messages across the portfolio.
- **Youth empowerment:** a key success of the Policy Function is generally seen as enabling youth voice to be heard by decision-makers, regardless of ultimate outcomes in terms of policy influence. The programme and projects have engaged young people in environmental issues and provided opportunities for them to be heard by decision-makers in supportive environments.
- **High-profile events:** for those involved, national, high-profile events were considered beneficial. Events supported awareness and profile raising, attracted media attention, linked young people to decision-makers, and provided a model that projects could replicate on a local-level. The [parliamentary event](#), and the [Countryfile Live](#) events are frequently cited as positive examples.
- **Devolved nations:** having an equal focus on influencing policy changes in the devolved nations
 - Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - was seen as positive, as it allowed young people from these nations to feel represented in the programme's policy activities.
- **Devising the Policy Asks:** the Asks were not in place at the outset of the programme and it was not outlined as part of the initial bid process that projects would be involved in supporting young people with policy influencing²³. The PAM described the importance of taking adequate time to develop the Asks, to ensure they were youth-led, and to allow projects - many of which had no prior experience of campaigning - sufficient time to build confidence and skills to engage with this type of activity.

²³This aim evolved throughout the programme. The original outcome three was: "There is better evidence about how young people can improve their local environment and this evidence is used to inform policy and practice." This was changed in conjunction with The Fund and Steering Group in October 2017 to better reflect the direction and aspirations for the programme.

Legacy of influencing activities

There were a range of reflections from projects on policy activities as part of End of Grant Report submissions. One key theme was a recognition that achieving policy change is “tough”, and that impacts take a long time to come to fruition. It is likely that the work carried out via the Our Bright Future programme will continue to generate (or to contribute to) outcomes in the longer-term.

At this stage, there are various known legacies of the influencing activities carried out at both a project and programme-level. These are summarised below.

- **Attitude change** towards young people and their capabilities and passion has occurred. In some cases, the effects of this could be long-lasting.
- Improved **capacity and skills** of project staff and young people to undertake influencing.
- There is a resource legacy, given the production of various guides, toolkits, and reports which can continue to be disseminated post-programme.
- **Networks and relationships** have been built within the VCS, youth, and environment sectors, as well as with policy and decision-makers which will represent an important legacy if they are sustained.
- The Our Bright Future programme and portfolio have contributed to the development of various **plans and strategies**, some of which will continue to be in place for up to 10 years.

It is also worth noting that the Policy Function, as well as communication and dissemination work by the programme team, is continuing during 2022. This is in order to help secure a legacy for the programme, as well as to continue in progressing the three Asks. The Our Bright Future Policy and Advocacy Strategy for 2021-22 sets out an overarching plan for achieving this. As part of the continuation of the Policy Function, the intention is to continue consultation with Youth Forum members, to ensure young people have an opportunity to shape this legacy.



PART 2: PROCESS AND APPROACH

5. Programme Approach: effectiveness and added value

6. Programme Processes: management, communications, governance, evaluation

7. Youth-led Approach: youth activities and youth governance

“Our partnerships were a huge success and added great value to the project...We could work closely together to achieve common goals” Project manager



5. PROGRAMME APPROACH

This chapter discusses the strengths and challenges of the Our Bright Future approach, specifically the consortium, portfolio, and programme functions, and provides reflections about how it has added value. The chapter also relates specifically to the first part of Outcome 4.

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

Key messages

- The Our Bright Future consortium and functions provided effective **opportunities for joint and cross** sector learning. Policy Function and the Policy Asks were key to creating a sense of collective identity.
- **Not all stakeholders felt the programme could be described as a partnership.** The projects and programme worked together effectively and efficiently, however the portfolio design somewhat limited the scope for collaboration on new ideas seeking new opportunities.
- **The programme was clearly very committed to youth engagement.** Some young people benefited greatly from the opportunities to have a role in governance provided (see also Chapter 7).
- **Some projects found it difficult to communicate to young people the scope of the wider programme.** This was for various reasons including participants with acute needs or a sense of some of the projects aims and objectives being removed from Our Bright Future goals.

Key features of the Our Bright Future programme approach

Our Bright Future's programme structure and approach were a distinguishing feature of the investment made by The Fund. The three core elements of the approach were: 1) the portfolio of 31 projects working under the Our Bright Future banner; 2) a consortium of organisations brought together to manage and steer the programme; and 3) the inclusion of central programme Functions, namely the financial management and funder liaison, as well as the: Policy Function, Share Learn Improve (SLI) Function and the Youth Function (including the Youth Forum).

The consortium of eight organisations was led by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT), with wider membership reflecting the youth and the environmental focus of the programme. The portfolio of 31 projects was created via an open application process. A panel, including young people, then selected the portfolio of projects, selecting a portfolio intended to be representative of all parts of the UK and aligned to the Our Bright Future goals. A key aim was that projects should 'scale-up and replicate' proven activity. "

"One of the reasons [the programme has] been so successful is it took a whole bunch of projects which were already successful. It was about building on previous work, scaling them up." Internal stakeholder

Joint-sector approach

A cornerstone of the Our Bright Future approach was to bring together organisations that typically worked with young people and those with environmental goals. Of the 31 lead project delivery organisations, 16 were from practical environmental organisations or those with goals related to sustainable futures. Six were from the youth sector and nine from other types of organisations, such as from the arts and heritage sector as well as national charities working with vulnerable adults and young people.

A strength of this joint sector approach was the ability to learn from each other. Early on, those with experience in youth work shared their expertise, for example, about how to manage challenging behaviour and reach disengaged young people. Over time, the environment-focused organisations also shared tools such as CO2 green travel calculator. For the youth organisations involved, their green programmes have reportedly become some of their most popular schemes.

Over the duration of the programme, some portfolio organisations found it harder to meaningfully engage with other projects, as well as with programme-level activities. These projects reported a weaker link between their own objectives and the programme objectives, meaning it was difficult to find areas to collaborate on. This was most often the case for organisations not primarily focused on young people or the environment. Although allowing projects the independence to set their own strategic goals and objectives was a defining feature of the programme, the evidence suggests that having a clear link between (project) organisational goals and programme goals worked best in supporting collaboration between projects. Projects' engagement with programme team posts on the Our Bright Future online platform (The Green Room) did increase during 2020, however, with views of the platform's conversation page increasing by 103% between January and March (as compared with the previous quarter). This perhaps suggests that projects became more able to engage and collaborate online as delivery outputs lessened, and homeworking became the norm.

"We sit outside the other projects. Our focus isn't the environmental focus most of the time. [It is] hard to find common ground with the other projects." Project manager

Projects working towards sustainability goals rather than practical environmental tasks felt some distance from programme objectives. These projects suggested an increased emphasis on sustainability, beyond nature conservation, across the portfolio would have been beneficial. It was felt that this would have aligned better with social policy, even at the time the programme was created. However, it is worth reflecting that the selection of the portfolio considered many other factors, such as location and ability to scale-up and replicate existing activity.

Youth-led

A fundamental principle of the programme was to maximise opportunities for young people to be involved in the governance of the programme. This included young people sitting on the original selection panel, as well as on the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel. The mechanisms through which the programme sought to involve young people, via what is referred to as the Youth Function, are illustrated overleaf.

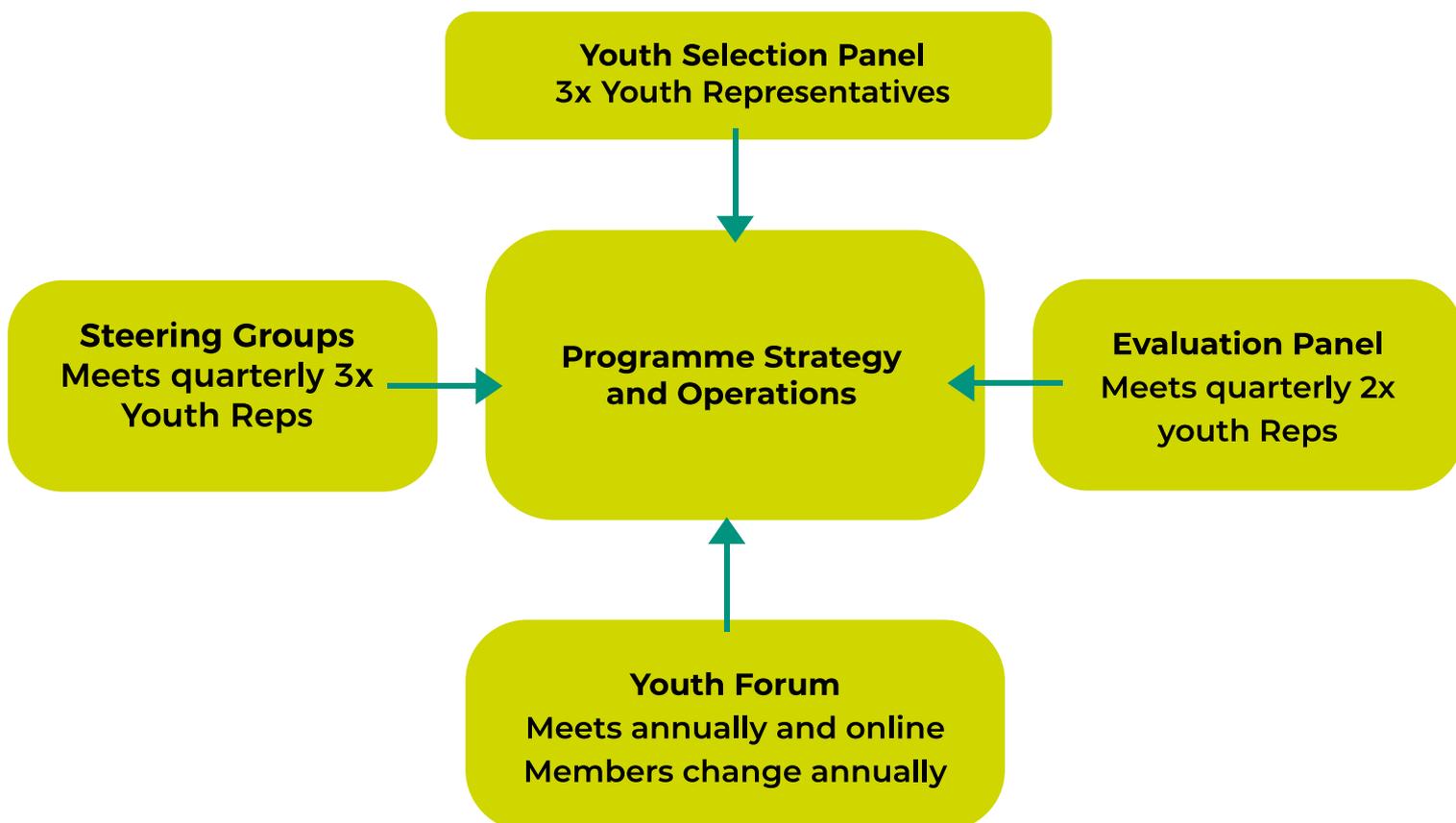


Figure 5.1 Interaction of programme Functions and components
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

The youth-led ethos was integral to Our Bright Future and the input of young people was highly valued by projects and the programme team. However, it was not without challenges. Specifically, some questioned: whether inviting youth representative to join groups was the right approach; the extent to which the presence of young people at boards and groups had tangibly impacted on the programme; whether youth representatives reflected the breadth of Our Bright Future participants; and ultimately whether programme was “truly youth-led” or simply “youth involved”. The youth-led ethos of Our Bright Future will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Programme-level partnership working

By adopting a consortium model, Our Bright Future endeavoured to move away from a traditional grant-making structure. However, some organisations reported that they felt imbalances persisted throughout delivery to the extent that the group of organisations that comprised Our Bright Future could not be considered a true partnership.

For some, there was an absence of an equal partnership relationship and genuine two-way engagement, despite constructive conversations on the topic. Ultimately, there may have been inconsistent expectations about how the programme would operate, specifically in relation to the extent it would establish a partnership. Some internal stakeholders reported that the extent to which project activities were defined and agreed from the start left limited scope for activities to foster partnership working. For example, opportunities to collaborate on new ideas and methods or to respond collectively to changes in external context were limited.

The Policy Function, however, emerged as something that project managers felt provided a focus for joint working, united projects and created a sense of being part of 'something bigger' rather than 31 separate projects. What differentiated this work strand was that the Policy Asks were co-produced between projects, consortium members and young people.

A key reflection was that projects did not know the extent to which they would be expected to contribute to programme activities. Projects suggested that this should have been made clearer from the start (i.e. during the bid stage of the programme) and built into project budgets and plans.

"Time is the main constraint on [partnership working]. The requirements of the wider movement were not specified at the time of our bid and applicants were not informed to include any Our Bright Future- wide programme engagement time/costs within their original bids. We experience a constant tension between programme-wide engagement and other priorities around project delivery." Project manager

Project-level partnership working

Effective partnerships were clearly forged at a project level, adding value for young people. 22 of the 31 projects delivered in formal partnership with a total of 43 other organisations involved in project delivery. Project managers described several benefits from project-level partnerships. First, project-level partnerships allowed projects to provide each other additional expertise (e.g. on social enterprise). Second, working in partnership facilitated projects' access to young people for referrals, to environmental spaces and to further opportunities to collaborate with other organisations.

Project partnerships were spoken of very positively. The overarching view was that these partnerships added to the depth and range of project outcomes. The main barrier highlighted was the time it takes to build relationships and lack of a development phase to scope and establish partnerships. Many projects were able to build on and strengthen existing relationships.

“Our partnerships were a huge success and added great value to the project. They brought additional expertise and passion to the team. We could work closely together to achieve common goals and to collaboratively solve any issues we faced.” Project manager

How the programme approach added value

Learning

Feedback suggested that the programme team successfully created a learning ethos. Formal learning, led by the SLI Function²⁴, included an annual conference, regional workshops, webinars and The Green Room online community, as well as online learning resources. Ad hoc learning also occurred when teams exchanged ideas, resources, and experiences.

The variety of organisations involved in the consortium was generally considered a strength. Through the consortium organisations a wide range of skills, viewpoints, and networks were accessible that all organisations had the opportunity to harness.

“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. A portfolio of projects should have a bigger impact.” Internal stakeholder

Learning together made an important contribution to stakeholders’ sense of being part of ‘something bigger’. The learning events were not just about skills development but also establishing a collective identity, providing mutual support, and networking. Participating organisations often reported that their motivation was enhanced by meeting each other and sharing ideas or challenges. Ensuring events were sufficiently frequent (online or face-to-face) was key to helping forge stronger connections.

“[Being part of Our Bright Future] has enabled and encouraged learning to pass between the projects nationally and this has been excellent. We have learnt from the experiences of the other projects, and it has helped us to take risks and try new things because we can see other organisations have done this. The Our Bright Future ethos of sharing and learning has been so powerful.” Project manager

²⁴For more information, please see Share Learn Improve: Growing Together A Good Practice Guide (2020) <https://ourbrightfuture.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Good-Practice-Guide-SLI-V2-Final.pdf>

Informal knowledge exchange resulted in practical benefits for organisations, such as: adopting improved health and safety procedures, e.g. safeguarding policies; sharing ideas about how to respond to the COVID 19 restrictions; and exchanging practical know-how about IT such as software solutions.

Online engagement was effective and invaluable during the pandemic which dominated 2020 and 2021. However, face-to-face interactions appear to have been better at achieving benefits such as peer to peer emotional support, camaraderie and boosted motivation.

Creating a movement with a shared identity

It is hoped the network of people and organisations created by Our Bright Future will be a key legacy of the programme (see Chapter 8). The sense of being more than a network, but a movement of people reportedly increased over time.

"[It has] been wonderful to feel part of a bigger movement. Achievements can be bigger than the sum of our parts. We have been able to inspire a lot of people and been able to pick each others' brains on how to do things too. [We have] hopefully built links that will last beyond the programme." Project manager

Some involved in the programme felt passionately that *"there is a really powerful narrative as an overall programme"* (internal stakeholder), however others reported that the programme *"felt like 31 individual projects, rather than a single force driving forwards"* (project manager). Project managers also noted the difficulty in communicating the 'wider perspective' of the programme to the young people involved.

"I think we [the project] do feel more a part of the movement. I'm not sure we manage to get that across to our young people. I think they're more interested in the immediate surroundings." Project manager



The wording of the Our Bright Future outcomes was agreed in 2017 having been refined after the portfolio had been selected to better reflect the range of activity they represented. Each of the four outcomes were multi-faceted and collectively represented several interrelated aims. Some of those involved found it difficult to succinctly articulate what Our Bright Future stood for. Feedback suggested that a clearer, shorter mission statement could have been beneficial.

"I think that the four outcomes were quite complicated. [There was] a lot around building confidence and improving the environment but there weren't any main goals, or a good way that those outcomes linked together. Overall, I found [the outcomes] difficult to interpret."

Internal stakeholder

Whilst some spoke highly of the wider benefits of the network, this was not a universal perspective. Some described their disengagement with programme activities over time, or that they did not recognise any benefits from a shared identity.

"We didn't fit in with other projects so well. We can't learn from each other as well. Our delivery is still quite different. This has led to [our] disengagement." Project manager

Some project managers commented on feeling that their project was "different" or "in the minority". Whilst this was partly a result of the diversity of projects, some projects found it difficult to work together and collaborate towards common goals. Project managers also noted that staff turnover was a key challenge in projects' ability to embed programme learning and develop networks. As project staff turnover was a key challenge, the programme team provided resources to help with staff handover.

"We have had a high level of staff turnover during the life cycle of this programme. This has made embedding programme knowledge amongst the staff delivery team difficult, as well as having an impact on building networks in particular regions which has had an impact on key aspects such as recruitment and stakeholder engagement." Project manager

The Policy Function facilitated the process of co-developing three Policy Asks with organisations and young people. The Policy Asks were widely felt to unite the projects, as well as offer an opportunity to raise awareness of the values of the programme.

"The policy piece helped weave a more coherent story amongst the varied and quite different projects. [It] helped to solidify the outcomes they're aiming for." Project manager

Evidence from Our Bright Future indicates that for future programmes, if there were a desire to create a movement of people, joint actions taken early in the programme delivery could have the potential to create momentum and establish a common purpose (see Chapter 4).

How the programme approach added value for young people

There have been many positives associated with the youth representatives sitting on programme groups, specifically the opportunities it has created for those young people. Despite some considering the programme to be youth-informed rather than youth-led as discussed previously, stakeholders noted that Our Bright Future had focussed on youth engagement at “an impressive scale” (internal stakeholder).

Throughout the programme project managers reported that there was somewhat limited awareness of the programme amongst participants outside the Youth Forum. For some young people, particularly those with the most acute learning and engagement needs, it was not always deemed useful or relevant to place their project in the context of the Our Bright Future programme or movement.

“When working with [our] participants, it is often hard to communicate that the project they attend is a part of the wider Our Bright Future movement. The complex and vulnerable nature of some of the participants has resulted in the project’s focus on the use of the outdoors as a therapeutic setting and on nature connection. Introducing more in-depth information or opportunities about the wider Our Bright Future movement can sometimes be inappropriate or confusing for those involved.” Project manager

Projects reported that where opportunities existed to introduce the programme perspective, e.g. via a common action, this was done appropriately. However, for some projects, providing the space, flexibility, and opportunity for all young people to excel on their own terms was the primary objective. This is a particularly relevant learning should future programmes seek to engage young people with complex needs.



6. PROGRAMME PROCESSES

This chapter seeks to present lessons across Our Bright Future's programme processes, focusing on: management and communications; budget management; governance; and evaluation.

Key messages

- **Our Bright Future delivered effective programme and grant management processes throughout the lifespan of the programme.** Whilst the programme could have been more strategically responsive to external changes, project managers did very much value flexibility at a grant management level, with many referring to how important flexibility in budget management was in particular.
- **The Our Bright Future Steering Group and CEO Advocacy Advisory Group were proactive and engaged** however the groups were, at times, more transactional than strategic.
- **Involving young people in governance was very positive** (see also Chapter 7).
- As well as producing evaluation tools that will continue to be used by portfolio organisations, **the programme has produced a wealth of evidence which could be further utilised to share learning and impact.** Our Bright Future's Evaluation Panel steered the programme's evaluation effectively, thanks to the engagement of members, and the breadth of their expertise.

Programme management and communications

Feedback throughout programme delivery confirms that Our Bright Future was well run. The programme management was described by those directly involved as: solid, effective and appropriate. The team were praised for communicating well, being responsive and supporting projects at the right times and in the right ways. Project managers also noted that the programme team was very encouraging about the work projects do.

Communication was praised by project teams, specifically that the programme team kept projects up-to-date and were proactive in maintaining contact with projects. Requests for information from the programme team were described as timely and reasonable.

From a strategic perspective, it was noted that communications did not always reflect the level of change happening and the external environment. Feedback suggested that processes could have been more agile and evolved over time as the programme progressed, specifically that strategic reporting and governance procedures changed very little over the seven years and were somewhat "rigid".

"The programme probably should have changed a bit more given how rapidly the world has changed." Internal stakeholder

Budget management

Budget and financial management were consistently described as “extremely good”, with an appropriate balance of clear reporting, scrutiny, and flexibility. However, one reflection was that programme budget (i.e., programme over and/or under spend) was not fully discussed at a programme or Steering Group level, in turn highlighting that the Steering Group was not a decision-making forum.

Project managers welcomed the approachability of the programme team to discuss budgeting. This allowed projects to have open conversations about budget management and make reasonable adjustments to spending profiles, for example to reflect changes in context (the most significant being COVID-19). Overall, project managers felt “very well supported” to deliver their aims.

Governance: Steering Group and CEO Advocacy Advisory Group

Representatives from across the programme reported that the Steering Group was not without challenges. The key issue raised was that, whilst the Group was engaged, supportive and meetings were extremely well managed, the scope for steering the direction of the programme was limited.

The consensus was that “*we shouldn't be there only for signing off/ticking boxes*”, however in practice this was difficult to achieve. Specific concerns were raised about the depth of discussion about legacy and a lack of progress made in maximising the potential of the consortium/programme in relation to ‘big questions’ and ‘agenda setting’.

Similarly, reflection on the CEO Advocacy Advisory Group were that it was “*a little functional and transactional*” even though it was an “*exciting and fascinating*” group with the potential to create a “*really powerful narrative*”. In terms of tangible outcomes, a joint letter to Ministers from the CEOs was produced; however the process was reportedly not as smooth as it could have been.

The Fund’s involvement in governance groups was unanimously described as positive, providing timely and regular input. The example most frequently cited was funding and delivery guidance during the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The involvement of young people was similarly described as very positive, with one Steering Group member describing it as “*a revelation, it just worked!*” However, when the young people reflected on their role, they noted that their presence did not make a difference in terms of the outcome of the meetings. On the other hand, Steering Group members noted that the presence of young people changed the tone, with other participants being gentler with each other and clearer when explaining discussion points (see [Youth Governance Learning Paper](#) [paper 6] and Chapter 7).

“[The programme has] missed an opportunity to make noise and friction in the streets of power” and “[the programme] has not done anything wrong but has not flourished as a whole package.”

Internal stakeholder

Evaluation

Overall, the evaluation process was described as democratic and having a good approach. The longitudinal evaluation was commissioned in Autumn 2016 during the early stages of the programme, steered by an Evaluation Panel. The Evaluation Panel has been described as “productive” and “positive”, which benefitted the evaluative research overall. There was a clear sense that the Panel was engaged, contributing considerably and thoughtfully to evaluation plans and outputs.

The Panel benefited from a breadth and range of people from different organisational levels and expertise. Whilst project representatives sit on the Panel, it was noted that it would have been most useful to have projects involved in the design of the programme evaluation.

The tool that proved most useful to projects was the Outcomes Flower survey tool. The tool has been described as “enlightening” and has been adopted longer-term by some projects.

Project and programme evaluation included such a volume and range of data and evidence that there is a sense that this data has not been fully utilised, both in terms of learning, and demonstrating impact. In terms of impact however, as noted, the diversity of objectives and activities across the portfolio also meant that cumulative impacts were difficult to define and evaluate. Furthermore, greater connection could have been made between project and programme evaluations.

“I have a feeling that we could do a lot more with the collective data.” Internal stakeholder

It was acknowledged that on-going dissemination of data and learning was a challenge and, at this point, not as progressed as it could have been. Internal stakeholders noted that there were powerful and emotional stories that could, and should, be shared about the considerable personal impact that some Our Bright Future projects had on participants and their families.



7. YOUTH-LED APPROACH

The Our Bright Future programme was clearly committed to engaging young people in shaping the programme. This chapter examines the youth-led aspect of Outcome 4, focussing on the outcomes for young people and the programme that emerged from the youth led approach.

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.

Key messages

- **The Our Bright Future programme was wholly committed to youth engagement.** The Consortium continually evolved, refined and embraced ways to bring young people to the core of the operations and management of the programme.
- **There is a need to find a balance between the level of responsibility given to young people and the level of support provided.** Recognising this, many projects helped participants gradually build leadership skills in a supportive environment.
- Young people with more complex needs require more time and support before they are able to progress to leadership roles.
- Barriers to young people engaging in the Youth Forum/Youth Function included the **age and vulnerability of young people, length of delivery, location of meetings/ability to travel.**
- Management and communication of the Youth Forum was a key challenge throughout the programme; however, this reportedly improved over time.
- **Specific youth-led governance models and formats at the project level varied** and approaches taken by projects evolved throughout the programme, often being developed with input from the young people themselves. A balance between structure and flexibility was an important success factor.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic challenged some project's ability to involve young people in project and/or organisational governance roles.** However, one project reported shifting to online youth council meetings made it more accessible.



Overview of Youth Led Approach

From the outset a key ambition of the programme was to empower young people to lead change. A range of steps were taken by the project and programme to enable young people to take the lead. Examples of specific youth-led activities at the programme and project level include:

- Programme level:
 - The Youth Forum;
 - Youth involvement in the programme Steering Group and Evaluation Panel;
 - Regional and annual youth seminars;
 - Youth input into the Policy Function.
- Project level:
 - Young people representing projects at events;
 - Structured youth-led social action campaigns;
 - Young people being encouraged to lead as part of project activities;
 - Young people participating in a youth board for their project;
 - Young people designing activities and inputting into event programmes;
 - Young people speaking publicly about their experiences.





Figure 7.1 Logic model of the youth-led ethos
Source: ERS Ltd and CEP

Youth voice context

The [Baseline and Context](#) Report cited a survey that found 62% of young people in the UK said climate change made them fearful for the future²⁵. The Baseline and Context Report also identified other studies suggesting that young people are concerned about environmental issues but do not know what actions to take²⁶, and that young people do not feel empowered to lead or make change around climate change issues²⁷.

The wider context around youth involvement in the environment and particularly action on climate change has moved on dramatically since the start of the programme. Young people are increasingly engaging in environmental action. Global youth climate movements, such as the #SchoolStrikeforClimate movement, has been a wake-up call for leaders, proving that young people can no longer be dismissed when it comes to paving the way for change. Promoting 'youth voice' was not a key concept when Our Bright Future was launched. Although the Youth Function was always a component of the programme, the way that young people were involved in governance developed over the life of the programme from a somewhat 'tokenistic' participation, to fully embedding them in decision making processes.

The outcomes for young people are considered in terms of youth leadership and youth governance.

Youth Leadership

Here 'youth-led' is defined as activity where decision-making is initiated and directed by young people, i.e. rungs seven and eight of Hart's ladder of participation. Where young people have been consulted and informed by the programme, rather than initiating and directing change, this activity is described as 'youth-informed', i.e., rung five of the participation ladder²⁸.

²⁵Broadbent et al. (2017)

²⁶Ajaps et al. (2015)

²⁷Hibberd & Nguyen (2013)

²⁸<https://frechild.org/2016/01/07/ladder-of-youth-participation/>

Forms of youth leadership seen across the programme were diverse and projects facilitated youth leadership in many ways. Some projects focussed on structured or formal routes to developing young people's environmental leadership capabilities, ranging from accredited qualifications to leadership-residential. Aside from project and organisational governance roles, projects also offered alternative leadership roles, such as ambassadors and peer mentoring. Informal routes to developing leadership capabilities were also common, and included progression through confidence-building, provision of informal opportunities to lead, and supported progression to leading events and activities for peers (within and outside the programme).

"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 [I have] done a TV feature about natural flood management and am really enjoying engaging with MPs about the EU Withdrawal Bill."

Participant

Evidence of the outcomes and impacts for young people

Our Bright Future has placed a strong emphasis on youth leadership and the empowerment of young people to lead future environmental change. Some themes emerged from the [Environmental Leadership Thematic Study](#) when asking young people how being involved in their Our Bright Future project made them feel more able to lead environmental change. These themes included:

- **Engaging with other like-minded people:** Immediate intended outcomes for young people engaging in youth-led activities included: meeting other like-minded people, sharing their views with peers, and having a sense of collective identity. There was strong testimonial evidence of these outcomes from Our Bright Future project participants involved in the Youth Leadership study. This in turn led to young people feeling more confident and empowered to lead environmental change (see following sections).

"I feel more confident and have made connections with other environmentalists. I've participated in many things I otherwise wouldn't have been able to and have developed my campaigning skills. I'm also more aware of environmental issues." Youth representative



- **Confidence:** Based on interviews with project managers, confidence was a frequently mentioned outcome for young people as a result of them being given opportunities to lead. This was often a key step towards developing leadership skills and aspirations, as well as wider skills, such as mentoring, public speaking, and project management. Confidence also appears to be an important contributor to empowerment and a pre-requisite for young people taking further action, responsibility and developing their own projects. For example, project managers reported that having the confidence to lead has provided young people with a desire to take on additional responsibility and opportunities. These ‘building blocks’ and pre-cursors to effective action resonate with frameworks described in the Baseline and Context Report and Environmental Leadership Thematic Study.

“It is a joy to see them exude confidence, leadership and become green mentors and role models in their communities and social circles.” Project manager

- **Youth empowerment:** A key outcome of the youth-led approaches taken by projects was young people feeling empowered to lead future environmental change. Testimony from young people, project managers, teachers and parents provided good evidence of empowerment outcomes for young people involved in Our Bright Future. In addition, the young people who participated in the Environmental Leadership Thematic Study felt that the Our Bright Future programme made them better equipped and motivated to lead environmental change. Indeed, many of the participants felt that taking part in Our Bright Future was the most significant factor in influencing their feelings of confidence and empowerment to lead environmental change.

As a result of feeling empowered, evidence suggests some young people have gone on to engage in and lead a wide variety of awareness-raising activities, in turn, engaging a range of actors. For example: involving the general public in nature-themed activities; speaking at conferences; engaging policy influencers in local and national government; establishing their own networks and groups; and, organising events. A few projects reported that as a result of feeling empowered, young people felt equipped to lead activities which engaged and supported their peers, including other, newer recruits to the Our Bright Future projects. Some participants in the Environmental Leadership Thematic Study also planned to lead or take environmental action through career and educational aspirations, campaigning, and becoming involved in other projects similar to Our Bright Future.

Once young people were able to take on leadership responsibility at a project-level, they reportedly went on to lead a range of campaigns, task days, events and activities to engage their peers. Moreover, in some cases as a result of young people being given the chance to demonstrate their leadership skills, their leadership potential was subsequently recognised, which led to them securing leadership positions in settings external to the programme. For example, some individual project participants were invited to act as keynote speakers at national events, won youth leadership awards, and took on leading positions in student unions and a range of steering groups.

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

Reflections on Youth Leadership

The Environmental Leadership Thematic Study explored to what extent, and in what ways young people felt they are able and motivated to lead environmental change as a result of their participation in the Our Bright Future programme. Three projects that focussed on environmental leadership were chosen as case studies: My World My Home, Bright Green Future, and the Environmental Leadership Programme. All three projects took a youth-led approach and involved young people working in groups to develop their own local campaign or social action project chosen by them (for example a campaign related to air pollution on roads outside the participants’ school), while providing the young people with support (such as mentoring) and networking opportunities²⁹.

The types of support and activities most mentioned directly by young people involved in the [Environmental Leadership Thematic Study](#) as being particularly effective in empowering them / making them feel better equipped to lead environmental change are summarised below.

- **Campaigns:** Evidence at both the programme and project level has shown that campaigns represent a key opportunity to incorporate a youth-led approach. [The Mid-term Evaluation Report](#) found that enabling young people to design and deliver campaigns provided them with a strong sense of ownership and engagement. This in turn led to more positive outcomes, for example, more community- 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 (see challenges). Many participants also spoke about the valuable ‘real life’ experience and skills they gained from organising a campaign or local project that mattered to them.

²⁹Young people and project staff from a number of other projects (Grassroots Challenge, My Place, One Planet Pioneers, and Tomorrow’s Natural Leaders), were also interviewed to provide additional perspectives from projects which are not specifically focused on leadership.

- **Engaging with peers in group settings:** Developing a sense of empowerment often depended on young people having the opportunity to engage with peers in group settings, either intensively as part of a residential or event, or regularly as part of a group project, campaign, or initiative. The chance to interact with peers who are 'like-minded', as well as keen to positively impact the environment, appeared to contribute to empowerment. Having the opportunity to interact with a 'wide range of people' was also considered to support young people to develop the skills and confidence to then 'use their voice' in a range of subsequent settings.
- **Mentoring support:** Each case study project had some kind of mentoring scheme, and this was something that many participants said helped build their confidence during the project. One participant said that the trust that their project manager had in their abilities made them feel confident to progress things independently and without having to always check things with them. Providing an environment of support is a key element seen across several frameworks for youth empowerment and leadership development.³⁰
- **Networking:** Participants found opportunities to connect with environmental professionals or people in power particularly helped them to gain confidence and leadership skills, for example panel discussions with industry experts and meeting and negotiating with politicians or decision makers. Networking with other young people who had similar interests and cared about the environment also made participants feel confident/empowered to lead change.

"Support from mentors (they are amazing) has made me feel confident in my own abilities."

Participant

- **Opportunities to speak in public:** A few participants said that through their projects they had the opportunity to speak at events and the support and encouragement they got to do this helped them feel more confident to do more public speaking which then led to further opportunities. The opportunity to contribute their own views and ideas at regular meetings as well as practice certain skills in a safe environment was valuable to many Our Bright Future participants. A safe environment was not defined but is assumed to include being given time to prepare properly, be encouraged and reassured that their voice and opinion is valid, given constructive and fair feedback when required, and supported in accessing or understanding any matters discussed.

"Being shown that environmental organisations really value youth voices made me feel like I should actively be using that voice." Participant

³⁰Kahn et al (2009); Hart (1992); Treseder (1997)

- **Having access to training and skills development:** Many participants felt they had gained valuable knowledge about environmental issues and that this helped them feel empowered to engage in environmental action and lead on environmental issues. Participants found specific workshops and skills training sessions available through their projects to be very effective at helping them feel better equipped in this way.

The mechanisms for engaging young people, although fully supported in principle, were challenging to implement in reality. Key challenges experienced by projects in engaging young people in leadership were:

- **Engaging young people with complex needs:** Projects reported that young people with more complex needs often required more time and more support before they felt able to progress to a leadership position. One project manager commented that the longer duration of the programme is a key factor which enabled this.
- **Balancing guidance from adults with young people's autonomy:** Project manager interviews suggested that greater levels of responsibility tend to lead to greater outcomes for young people such as gaining confidence and skills and that young people are ambitious and capable, often exceeding expectations in developing and delivering ideas. On the other hand, 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" (project manager).

Recognising this, most projects helped participants gradually build their leadership skills in a supported environment. For example, UpRising's project manager said they learned the importance of carefully managing the transition to Social Action campaigns so that a sudden jump from 'participant' to 'leader' was avoided. Other projects used a mentoring approach, recognising the time needed to build up participants' skills and confidence prior to taking on more significant leadership responsibilities.

"For young people to take the lead on a forum or project etc., the two most important aspects are for them to have been with the group for a period of time, for project officers to have built their confidence and knowledge, and then (most importantly) it is for the project officers to have the confidence to take a step back! When the project officers were furloughed this year, the group took it upon themselves to keep activities going and to keep the group active." Project manager

Youth-led governance

This section explores the outcomes and lessons learned from activities to embed a youth-led ethos in the governance of the Our Bright Future programme and projects.

Evidence of youth-led governance at the programme level

The goal of the Our Bright Future Youth Function was to offer 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 underpinned a primary value of Our Bright Future which was for both the programme and projects to be youth-led with an emphasis on empowering young people.

There were three 'seats' on the Our Bright Future Steering Group for young representatives, which met quarterly to steer the delivery of the programme. The Evaluation Panel had two 'seats' for young representatives and met quarterly with the evaluation contractors. The young representatives on both groups changed over time and participated by providing feedback on evaluation reports, made suggestions on the processes, format and ongoing findings, with a different perspective of how they were relevant and beneficial to the programme's youthful audience.

Young people gave their own perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of the youth-led ethos:

Perspectives of the youth representatives:

"I suppose the biggest [benefit of youth engagement] is the opportunity. Being made to feel like our views were important and given the time to speak." Youth representative

"[I've] definitely grown exponentially in confidence. [It is] 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. [I] can't think of anything else in my life where I've been given the same opportunity." Youth representative

"There can be an expectation that [youth engagement is] all about the young people coming up with ideas, but you have to remember that young people have joined the programme because they're interested in the environment, not necessarily because they know all of the ins and outs of it. You have people working on the projects, and the environment is their whole life. It's useful if they say 'you haven't considered this factor or this challenge', because why would we? I think it's about guiding up, not in a patronising way, but I think there can be an unrealistic expectation that youth-led means the young people have to come up with everything, rather than being inspired and then having support from others to consider how [their ideas] might be taken forward." Youth Forum member

Evidence of youth-led governance at the project level

Many projects provided formal routes for young people to engage in governance and decision-making at a project or organisational level. This included a variety of youth forums, councils, boards, advisory and steering groups, over and above the Youth Function connected with Our Bright Future programme-level governance. In some cases, membership of these groups was comprised of a mixture of project alumni and current participants. Some project managers anticipate this approach being a key organisational legacy post-programme.

"We have done quite a few youth consultations via surveys, asking young people on their thoughts about new projects and directions." Project manager

Roles and responsibilities of these youth governance functions typically included:

- Providing input on decisions around project strategy and activity;
- Planning and delivering events, summits and workshops;
- Engaging key policy influencers and decision-makers externally; and
- Representing the organisation with external stakeholders.

Outcomes and impacts of youth-led governance at programme and project level

The Mid-term evaluation report found that key outcomes and impacts associated with a youth-led governance approach included:

- Youth perspective being shared with the programme;
- Young people being actively involved in programme design and delivery;
- Increased programme momentum towards aims; and,
- Youth-led governance becoming more embedded in the sector.

Measures to actively involve young people in programme and project governance somewhat achieved these intended outcomes. Interview evidence found that the youth-led governance approach was considered integral by the programme team and the input of youth representatives was highly valued. However, as noted previously some youth representatives and Steering Group members questioned the extent to which the programme was "truly youth-led". One youth representative said in an interview that involvement did at times seem tokenistic:

"I am still not clear about why young people are here other than for tokenistic [reasons], illustrated by times I have not been able to attend but there is no impact on the operation of the meetings. [This is] not a criticism, just a fact. What is the involvement of young people other than just sitting there in the meetings? We could convey [messages] to the young people in a youth friendly role. [I am] not clear of my role on panel. [I am] not clear on who we are representing."

Youth representative

However, the Youth Forum appears to have become more 'youth-led' as the programme progressed. At the same time, more projects went on to report having Youth Forum representatives suggesting that it may have become more representative over the life of the programme.

Similar outcomes and impacts for young people involved in youth-led governance were reported as outlined in the above section on youth-led activities. For example, reported positive impacts of young people's engagement with the Youth Function included improved confidence, independence and skills and helping them with university and job applications. The Youth Governance Learning Paper (paper 6) found that additional benefits for young people achieved through youth-led governance within Our Bright Future projects and associated organisations included leadership skills, appreciation of teamwork, gaining work experience, developing awareness of environmental issues and what they can do to make a positive difference.

The youth-led governance approach did lead to young people being more actively involved in design and delivery of some projects. Although the extent to which delivery was youth-led varied across the projects.

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.

The success of youth-led governance approaches within some Our Bright Future projects influenced some organisations to develop youth-led roles or processes outside of their Our Bright Future project (i.e. at organisational level). Specifically, some organisations reported that the youth-led approach of the programme helped raise awareness of the importance of youth governance and further motivated them to better include young people in governance at an organisational level (see Youth Governance Learning Paper, paper 6).

Reflections on youth-led governance

Aspects of the Our Bright Future youth-led ethos which were considered most successful by projects were:

- **The Youth Forum:** The Mid-Term Evaluation Report found general consensus that the existence of a Youth Forum was positive for the programme. Annual face-to-face events were found to be particularly valuable in terms of engaging and inspiring the Youth Forum members. The Youth Forum was described by young people involved as a welcoming and comfortable space, despite many being initially nervous about taking part. In the later evaluation reports (2019) it was found that the NYA made the Youth Forum more inclusive by effectively communicating with young people in different and interactive ways.

- **Flexibility:** Specific governance models and formats at the project level varied. For example, one project had their youth forum meet six times a year and always integrated a practical conservation activity into the proceedings. A balance between structure and flexibility was an important success factor. One project noted that assigning young people specific 'roles' increased their sense of ownership, commitment, and responsibility. Setting clear and achievable deadlines and topic areas for discussion was also considered effective by another project.
- **Structured links to decision-making bodies:** In some cases, formalised processes and mechanisms allowed programme participants to feed into the development of practice and policy at a national-level and within each devolved nation. For example, this included a steering group connected with a key environmental funding stream, and inputting into formation of environmental policy with opportunities to meaningfully contribute 'youth voice' and guide the development process and conversation.

Key challenges in delivering youth-led governance at a programme and project level were identified as:

- **Management of the Youth Forum:** The Mid-term Evaluation Report found that management and communication of the Youth Forum was reported as a key challenge and many project managers reported not knowing what it involved and therefore found it difficult to communicate the benefits of involvement to young people on their projects. However, evidence showed that this improved under the NYA. Updates (email and video) and face-to-face meetings were effective at keeping projects updated. On the other hand, some projects felt that the Youth Forum updates were too detailed, overwhelming and found the process daunting and uncomfortable.
- **Young people's capacity to be involved:** Commitment of members of the Youth Forum also varied. Barriers to young people engaging in the Youth Forum/Youth Function included the age and vulnerability of young people, limited contact/length of delivery for young people on projects, location of meetings/ability to travel.
- **COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic challenged some projects' ability to involve young people in project and/or organisational governance roles. For example, one project reported that the youth roles on the Steering Group were affected as they had not been in contact with their youth group since early March 2020. However, another project reported that due to the lockdown in 2020, they moved their Youth Council meetings online which actually made meet-ups easier to arrange than face-to-face meetings, and that geographical and travel barriers to participation in the activity were removed.

One project reported that it became apparent that the Youth Council needed more support than they had capacity to provide. To overcome this challenge, they employed a Youth Advocacy Officer in 2021, using remaining Our Bright Future funds, who was tasked to further develop the Youth Council. The project reported that this helped the Youth Council become an important permanent addition to their organisational governance.

PART 3: CONCLUSIONS AND LEGACY

8. Legacy: secured, expected and hoped for from the programme

9. Conclusions & reflections: collective conclusions and overarching evaluation themes

*"It's been one of the best things I've been involved in...
There's a movement that needs to continue"*
Internal Stakeholder



8. LEGACY

The evidence suggests that Our Bright Future has created a legacy of positive change for the environment, young people and the environmental and youth sectors. This chapter summarises the views of internal and external project stakeholders on what Our Bright Future's legacy has been for: 1) project sustainability and legacy; 2) the youth and environmental sectors; and 3) young people and the environment. The chapter also outlines some outstanding programme legacy aspirations that stakeholders hope to see achieved in future.

Key messages

Evidence from those directly involved in the programme and external stakeholders shows that Our Bright Future has created a positive legacy for young people, the environment and the youth and environmental sectors. The key features of the Our Bright Future legacy are:

- **Young people, communities and the environment will continue to benefit from projects' learning, resources and activities.** Despite the challenges COVID-19 led to for sustainability planning, 17 Our Bright Future projects have secured funding to continue in some form. Some projects won new contracts, whereas others shared resources or passed delivery on to partners. Other projects secured grant funding or developed self-funding activities.
- **Our Bright Future's joint-sector approach has created a legacy in the youth and environmental sectors by influencing organisations' policy and practice.** Environmental portfolio organisations developed, or are in the process of developing, projects for young people and introduced youth voice to decision-making structures. Youth organisations are creating new pathways for young people to engage in environmental action and are working more collaboratively with environmental organisations.
- **Young people intend to use the skills and experiences they have gained to create a legacy for the environment.** Young people reported a shift towards pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours and are already engaging in environmental action outside of the programme. Evidence from young people and project managers shows that young people intend to use their skills to influence environmental policy.



Project sustainability and legacy

Our Bright Future's legacy at the project level appears to be twofold: first, the continuation of project activities to support young people and improve the environment (either in part or in full); second, the influence that projects have had on external organisations through sharing Our Bright Future learning.

Impact of COVID-19 on sustainability planning

Project managers and external stakeholders noted that the outbreak of COVID-19 created challenges for legacy and sustainability planning. As indicated in the [Mid-term Evaluation Report](#), many projects aspired to secure further funding to continue project activities beyond the programme. However, project managers noted that many funding applications were paused or delayed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, creating a significantly more competitive funding landscape. Project managers noted the challenge of balancing work on responding to this new funding environment whilst re-establishing safe face-to-face delivery with young people. Some projects were required to furlough staff and, in some cases, end delivery early, which also impacted sustainability planning.

Project Sustainability

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and associated national lockdowns, 17 projects have secured further funding. Of these, one project is continuing delivery, three have expanded, and 13 are delivering some project activities. Project managers and internal stakeholders attributed this success to projects' participation in Our Bright Future. In summary, those projects which have secured some form of sustainability have done so in the following ways:

- **New contracts:** Some projects obtained funding through contracts with external bodies, such as local authorities. For example, Milestones established a Care Farm as a financially self-sustaining legacy project for its organisation Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. Project managers attributed this success to the positive partnerships and reputations projects established during the programme.
- **Grant funding:** Several projects will continue activities in full or in part thanks to successful funding bids. Project managers noted that being able to demonstrate a youth-led approach and existing partnerships with other projects had added value to their funding applications.
- **Scaling up:** Other projects have achieved sustainability by securing commitment from portfolio organisations to continue and expand activity (discussed further below).
- **Commercialising project outputs:** Other projects are continuing certain activities through self-funding models. For example, Hill Holt Wood (the organisation responsible for the Growing Up Green project) is intending to fund further activity on a certain site by selling timber and other resources.

“Any other funding pots we get put into now, we can say that we have been part of Our Bright Future. Being young person led really adds value – that ethos will stay with us going forward. Before, we were an individual project and that collaboration wouldn't be there without Our Bright Future.” Project manager

Sharing learning and resources with partner organisations

Outside of portfolio organisations themselves, there are numerous examples of where and how projects have created a positive legacy by **sharing learning and resources with partners**:

- Some project sites are now being used by external partners. For example, since Putting Down Roots for Young People closed, local colleges and schools have continued to use the site to grow vegetables and build young people's outdoor skills.
- Projects shared learning with community organisations so that communities can continue activities for themselves. For example, From Farm to Fork trained communities to continue gleaning (collecting crops that are deemed not economically profitable to harvest).
- Projects have supported partners to work with young people. For example, Your Shore Beach Rangers has supported the UK marine conservation network to start engaging young people.
- Projects developed learning resources which continue to be used. For example, qualifications created by Your Shore Beach Rangers and Putting Down Roots for young people will continue to be used by local colleges and schools.

Legacy for the youth and environmental sectors

There is evidence that the youth and environmental sectors are embedding learning from each other as a result of the programme's joint sector approach. Programme evidence shows that both sectors are changing their policies and ways of working as a result of engaging with the programme. Some environmental portfolio organisations have recruited young trustees/governors to their governance boards, whereas others have established 'youth boards' to work with and influence existing governance structures. See the Youth Governance Learning Paper (paper 6) for further information.

Embedding youth voice in the environmental sector

Both project managers and external stakeholders reported that environmental organisations are more open to the voices of young people, with some organisations having taken steps to engage young people and hear views for the first time. Although there have been wider contextual changes in young people's engagement and voice, through for example the Fridays for Future / School Strike for Climate movement, there is evidence that Our Bright Future has had a role in enhancing youth engagement in the environmental sector.

"There is a legacy for Our Bright Future: environmental NGOs, both individually and collectively, are more genuinely interested in putting more effort into engaging youth in a two-way conversation. Our Bright Future is likely part of the reason for that. That's the most valuable legacy to have." External stakeholder

New programmes for young people in the environmental sector

As a result of the experience and perspective gained from being part of Our Bright Future, environmental organisations have developed, or are in the process of developing, projects and pathways specifically for young people.

- The Green Academies Project is to be scaled-up by **The National Trust** from six hubs to 15. The Trust is also establishing a young people's network.
- **Friends of the Earth** has established a youth programme, as well as a Youth and Families Team and a youth network. The organisation is also now engaging more with young people from ethnic minority and disadvantaged backgrounds, and disabled young people.
- **Ulster Wildlife** and the **Belfast Hills Partnership** have secured joint funding for a new four-year programme, 'Wild Youth', focusing on young people's health and wellbeing.
- **North Wales Wildlife Trust** has secured funding from the Climate Action Fund to contribute to the 'Stand for Nature Wales' project, which will progress and expand their youth forum and run until 2024.

New environmental pathways in the youth sector

Since being involved in Our Bright Future, youth (and creative) organisations have embedded environment-focussed projects as part of their core delivery and report that they will continue to work closely with environmental organisations (however it is worth noting that youth-focussed organisations make up the minority of portfolio organisations). For example:

- **Impact Arts** will continue Our Bright Future funded activity into 2022 and beyond. Activities will remain unchanged and the environment will continue to be explored as a core theme of delivery.
- **Uprising** is continuing the Environmental Leadership programme, having secured funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to run a shorter programme online in the West Midlands.

- Although the Spaces 4 Change project will not continue under this name, **UnLtd** will continue to make grants to create environmental change and promote awareness of climate issues as part of their wider deliver.
- As well as continuing some activities of the Youth In Nature project (**Probe Ltd**), Youth Work undergraduates who worked on the project have moved on to deliver environmentally-focussed activities with project partner ChildDynamix, a local childcare and family charity.

Through participating in the programme, youth organisations have seen positive outcomes for young people from involvement in environmental action. In addition, stakeholders from youth organisations also reported that they have an increased appreciation of the importance of the environment to young.

“I think over the years we have also understood more the importance of nature in young people’s lives for physical and mental health as well as nature connectedness and how that can encourage pro-environmental behaviours. I think we will continue to deliver environmental projects and work with partners in the environmental sector especially when the decisions made will influence the lives of young people to a greater extent than previous generations. It is not just a local need; it is now a global need.” Project manager

Our Bright Future has also influenced external youth organisations to work more in partnership with environmental organisations. One external youth organisation reported that awareness of the programme, and of its success in bringing together the youth and environmental sectors, had demonstrated the value of working collaboratively with environmental organisations. They also commented that the joint-sector approach of Our Bright Future had confirmed to them that collaboration between the sectors is possible in practical terms.

Legacy for young people and the environment

As discussed in Chapter 2, there have been a variety of outcomes for young people participating in the programme. Beyond improved skills, employment prospects and wellbeing, internal stakeholders hoped that the programme had created a cohort of young people with skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve environmental change. There is some evidence to suggest that this legacy aspiration has been achieved, with participants reporting an increase in pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes.

Young people's involvement in environmental action

As discussed in Chapter 3, results of the Outcomes Flower survey show that involvement in the programme has led to an increase in young people's pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours.

"I am a lot more conscious of how my actions impact the environment and also the connections between social issues and environmental issue." Participant

As well as adopting new habits, such as reducing use of single-use plastic, participants have also engaged with environmental action outside of the programme in a variety of different ways, taking part in activities such as volunteering at local nature reserves. 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 activities³¹.

Young people pursuing education and employment in the environmental sector

The programme has led to participants pursuing education and / or employment in the environmental sector. [The Participant Impact Study](#) surveyed young people who had participated in Our Bright Future and found that 40% of respondents felt that the programme had influenced them to pursue a career or further education in the environmental sector or related to their project. This represents a potential long-term programme legacy as these young people develop their careers or studies.

Young people's ability to influence environmental policy

Stakeholders hoped that equipping young people with the confidence and skills to hold decision-makers to account would lead to environmental policy outcomes in future. Participants did express their intention to continue to use skills developed through programme activities, such as interacting with policymakers, to continue to influence environmental policy.

"Something that's really stuck with me is that I know that my voice can be heard by people that you're often made to feel like you can't be heard by... And to see a tangible change come from that, especially from people that you're meant to see as these higher figures is important knowledge to have. [To know] that nobody's really immune to being spoken to, and the power of that." Participant, quoted by project manager

³¹ Pye, J., James, N. & Stobart, R. (2014)

Legacy Aspirations

Stakeholders also shared the following aspirations for the programme's legacy that they felt had not yet been achieved. To address this, a Legacy Working Group has been established by the Consortium. The group is developing a visioning document to set out the next phase for Our Bright Future, which may address some of the themes below.

Continuing the Our Bright Future Youth Forum

Some stakeholders hoped that the Youth Forum would continue in some form. However, there were concerns regarding practical challenges such as funding and safeguarding. Stakeholders also noted the challenge of ensuring the network remained relevant to future cohorts of young people. Legacy options are now being discussed by the Youth Forum, with one option being to signpost members to other relevant youth governance groups.

Maintaining a network of portfolio organisations

Stakeholders also hoped to see programme communication channels remain open in some form so that partners and portfolio organisations can continue to collaborate and share learning. Even if a full network is established, it seems likely that many of the connections made between individuals involved in projects, and between organisations involved in the portfolio (including formal partnerships), will continue after the programme.

Influencing policy and practice in other sectors

Although stakeholders acknowledged the positive legacy that Our Bright Future has created in the youth and environmental sectors, some felt that there was still work to be done to influence other sectors. Some stakeholders wanted to see Our Bright Future go further to influence funders and government agencies to embed youth voice in their decision-making structures.

"I would really hope that funders would take on a more youth participation approach [and be] looking for that in organisations. It would be amazing if the government, or even Defra, were to... change their structures or bring on young people or connect with these networks to hear everyone's voices. Maybe in a year or two, the government might open up positions for young people." Internal stakeholder



9. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This Final Our Bright Future Programme Evaluation report sought to address the objectives set out within the original evaluation commission. These can be summarised as:

- The **collective impact** of the 31 projects;
- The **added value** of the programme i.e., the value derived from bringing 31 projects together under the Our Bright Future umbrella (e.g., upon learning, influence on policy and practice, etc.);
- Whether the programme has achieved its **long-term ambitions**; and,
- Evidence to demonstrate impacts, effective practice and lessons learnt to **support programme learning** and improvement.

This section provides a discussion of the core themes that have emerged from the Our Bright Future programme. The scope of this evaluation focusses primarily on the programme level learning, with project learning documented in project evaluations (see: <https://ourbrightfuture.co.uk/project-evaluation-reports/>).

Supporting young people to achieve their potential

Our Bright Future has demonstrated that engaging young people in the environment and conservation has resulted in many and varied positive outcomes for young people. Across all evidence sources, participants reported they were more confident, skilled, happier and had clearer career paths or aspirations due to their participation in the programme. Overall, 128,495 young people took part in activities that have nurtured or challenged them to achieve their goals. Some individual accounts demonstrate life-changing - even lifesaving - stories of young people who have been supported by the dedicated project teams funded by Our Bright Future. The individual testimony suggests that these benefits will continue to have a lasting impact on their lives.

Core to many of the personal outcomes for young people was improved self-confidence, with participants noting subsequent improvements in their mental health and wellbeing. 86% of respondents to the Outcomes Flower survey felt that their mental health and wellbeing improved at least somewhat, with 40% reporting that their mental health and wellbeing had improved 'a lot'. As noted in chapter 1, historically low levels in young people's mental wellbeing formed a key part of the original rationale for the programme. There continues to be a long-term trend of increasing mental health disorders in young people³² and evidence suggests that the lockdowns associated with the coronavirus pandemic during 2020-21 are linked to an increased incidence of young people experiencing anxiety and depression³³ and, distressingly, suicidal thoughts³⁴.

³²<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>

³³<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/supporting-young-people-s-mental-health-through-the-covid-19-crisis-84e143e5/>

³⁴Wise, J. (2020)

Young Minds highlight that:

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on many of the young people we heard from – some told us that they are deeply anxious, have started self-harming again, are having panic attacks, or are losing motivation and hope for the future. We know that some young people will be dealing with multiple pressures, especially those who have been bereaved or experienced other trauma during this time. [Young Minds, 2021](#)

Methods proven to achieve mental health benefits in young people will be invaluable as society seeks to recuperate and recover from the wide-ranging impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Achieving outcomes for the environment and communities

The environmental benefits resulting from Our Bright Future were numerous, however ultimately too disparate to be described at a programme level. They have included project activities to improve local green/urban spaces, establish sustainability enterprises, tackle resource use and waste, increase biodiversity, and to build sustainable homes. Communities have already benefited from the improved aesthetic condition of public spaces (e.g., community gardens or recreation grounds), as well as improved understanding and relationships between generations.

There was considerably less evidence about the benefits to wildlife and nature than the benefits to young people themselves across this diverse programme. Whilst this would not apply to all projects, stronger exemplars, and a programme requirement to carry out wildlife monitoring with associated activities, could have generated better evidence. Furthermore, wildlife monitoring could also support the development of skills and build even stronger connections to nature.

The portfolio of activity created a rich variety of outcomes for the environment and communities. Clearer clusters of similar project activity, and a stronger requirement for wildlife monitoring could have supported a clearer understanding of the programme impacts.



Engaging young people in environmental action

Early in the programme, a link was made between the Our Bright Future aims and preparing young people for jobs in the environmental sector³⁵. As the programme has progressed there has been a move away from this narrative and connection. Some programme stakeholders described a realisation that it would be inappropriate, perhaps even irresponsible, to steer young people towards jobs without control over demand for environment sector jobs, or without full information about future growth of the sector.

Whilst evidence suggests that scarcity of resources, the degradation of ecosystems, and the disruption of the climate crisis will influence the UK skills needs/mix³⁶, as the Our Bright Future programme evolved, the narrative shifted away from directly increasing the supply of young people for the green economy. This can be considered an appropriate shift for the programme as it would be out of scope to, for example, systematically try and match the supply of young people to the demand for environmental jobs/skills.

Whilst participants did progress to a range of higher education and employment opportunities within environmental sectors, the emphasis evolved into educating young people to be environmentally conscious citizens. Our Bright Future provided young people with opportunities to learn skills, take the lead, develop professional networks and encouraged them to 'green' work in other sectors - of which there are tangible examples. Positively, providing experiences that connect people to nature increases the likelihood for longer-term pro-environmental behaviours and pro-nature behaviours³⁷. Alongside this evidence, wider data also shows that the frequency of childhood visits to natural environments is a strong precursor of visits in later life^{38, 39}.

Young people who have engaged in Our Bright Future activities have reported that the programme made them more environmentally aware: over 90% of respondents to the Outcomes Flower survey stated that they felt that the programme had increased their knowledge and awareness of environmental issues. These young people will carry this with them into adulthood as consumers and in their career choices, whether that be in business, science & technology, or policy making.

Supporting young people to be environmentally aware is an evidence-based way to promote longer-term pro-environmental and pro-nature behaviour and choices.

³⁵ The original OBF outcome 2 read: "Young people gain new skills relevant to finding jobs, training, volunteering opportunities or starting entrepreneurial projects that contribute to the green economy". Outcomes were revised in 2017 following approval of the ³¹ projects.

³⁶https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/571675/ER5_The_UK_s_Skills_Mix_Current_Trends_and_Future_Needs.pdf

³⁷<https://findingnature.org.uk/page/3/?fbclid=IwAR08lXk6qbr4aEuvivtEitdzoT3pSGWqmrDPcFDfHyrS7qDIWzPN9bTEv1g>

³⁸Thompson et al. (2007) Thompson, C.W., Aspinall, P. & Montarzino, A., 2007. The Childhood Factor: Adult Visits to Green Places and the Significance of Childhood Experience. *Environment and Behavior*, 40(1), pp.111-143.

³⁹Asah et al. (2012) Asah, S.T., Bengston, D.N. & Westphal, L.M., 2012. The Influence of Childhood: Operational Pathways to Adulthood Participation in Nature-Based Activities. *Environment and Behavior*, 44(4), pp.545-569.

Reaching young people

The number of young people engaged on a one-off, short-term, and longer-term basis, at 128,495, is more than double that anticipated at the outset of the programme⁴⁰. A consistent message throughout the programme was that, whilst reach is important, it is crucial to engage the right people in the right way and not focus solely on engaging a high volume of young people. Our Bright Future projects did achieve deep engagement with those 18,148 young people participating in projects for over 3 months. Overall, project teams agreed that young people are more likely to achieve significant outcomes through longer, regular, in-depth activities.

Over the duration of the programme, projects have tried and tested approaches to reach and maintain engagement with young people. These experiences have been documented within [Learning Paper 4: Engaging young people in the environment](#).

Future programmes seeking to engage young people in the environment could draw on the learning generated by the Our Bright Future programme, as set out in Learning Paper 4.

Equality and inclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant effects on classrooms, workplaces, and the labour market. It has also affected the extent and range of inequalities experienced across genders, ethnicities, and generations. As well as exacerbating existing disparities across educational attainment and access to employment, gaps have opened up along dimensions that were not previously considered; for example, the ability to work or learn effectively at home⁴¹.

The British Medical Journal highlights that some young people have been disproportionately affected by lockdown measures such as social distancing and school closures, specifically highlighting children and young people with neurodevelopmental differences such as Autism Spectrum Disorder⁴². Furthermore, in April 2021, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities highlighted the need to be alert to the effects of the pandemic across ethnic groups. Noting an increased likelihood of educational disparities, the Commission recommended targeted, evidence-based programmes, and highlighted the importance of vocational routes⁴³.

Future programmes would benefit from carefully considering many dimensions of inequality, how these may have altered during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what they can do to support young people who may experience barriers to opportunity.

⁴⁰The original engagement target was 60,000 young people

⁴¹<https://ifs.org.uk/inequality/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BN-Inequalities-in-education-skills-and-incomes-in-the-UK-the-implications-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

⁴²https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355953229_The_failure_of_provision_for_neurodiverse_children_during_the_covid-19_pandemic

⁴³<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/education-and-training>

Youth engagement in governance

The Our Bright Future programme was wholly committed to youth engagement. The Consortium continually evolved, refined, and embraced ways to engage and bring young people to the core of the operations and management of the programme. Based on a theory of youth participation (namely Hart's ladder of participation⁴⁴), the programme has provided young people with opportunities to inform, at times substantially, the opinions of, and decisions made by adults. The programme stopped short of being 'youth-led' as the structures in place are driven by adults.

A particularly interesting insight provided by a youth representative was that young people themselves do not always seek to be in leadership roles. When forming ideas and making decisions, young people may look for direction from adults who have built up expertise over their work and life experience. In short, ideally there is a balance between experts sharing what they know and ensuring young people have their voices heard.

Overall, the programme's youth representation has suffered from attrition and a lack of consistency in attendance at programme governance meetings. This supports the assertion that asking young people to join pre-existing governance structures is less effective and only suits a minority of young people. Should future programmes aim for a greater breadth of engagement in governance, a wider range of opportunities or activities could enhance the engagement at a programme level. It may however continue to be the case that for some young people it is not appropriate to extend project activities into programme governance.

Future programmes working with young people could seek to include co-production into design phases, specifically to ensure that governance structures have young people at their heart and are both accessible and interesting to young people. Furthermore, building in continuous review and feedback mechanisms so that governance structures can adapt and flex over time.

Policy influence

The programme's Policy Function emerged as one key area providing a focus for joint working and, for the projects that engaged, creating a sense of being part of a collective movement - rather than a portfolio of 31 separate projects. The policy strand of activity provided opportunities for young people to structure their opinions and meet decision-makers in supportive environments. Three Policy Asks were launched in 2019, the third year of the programme, having been co-produced between young people, Consortium members and projects during 2018. The Policy Asks would have benefitted from more frequent review in order to retain ownership by the changing cohorts of young people over time.

⁴⁴<https://freechild.org/2016/01/07/ladder-of-youth-participation/> (Further discussed in the Our Bright Future [mid-term report](#))

It is important to reflect on whether the Asks themselves were strong enough and well-conceived. Ask 1 was described as “unachievable” by one internal stakeholder when considered in terms of the how education and curriculum policy is developed. The emphasis of Ask 2 does not appear to reflect the shift away from green jobs within the Our Bright Future programme delivery. Ask 3 was considered to be a very broad ambition rather than an ask. There have been key successes at a programme and individual project level in influencing policy makers to consider the youth voice, however, the wording of Ask 3 could have benefitted from specificity to focus activity and demonstrate impact.

Whilst there was a desire to ensure that the Policy Asks were youth led, it would appear the Asks might have been improved via drawing upon specific expertise in activism, particularly to aid in identifying influencing opportunities, targets (key people and/or post-holders to influence), and innovation in activism methods⁴⁵. Interestingly, the emphasis and narrative used by the Policy Function has evolved over time, shifting away from policy change to raising youth voice.

A learning from internal and external stakeholders was that gaining traction nationally, specifically in England, was more challenging than in the devolved nations. This led to some project teams feeling that the focus should not necessarily have been national; rather, local and more practical to better reflect the pace of change young people were seeking to achieve. The learning from the development of the Our Bright Future Policy Asks and the associated activity will provide valuable lessons for others who seek to raise the youth voice in the policy sphere.

Programmes looking to support young people to raise their voice in policy decision-making should consider two dimensions: 1) draw on **campaigning and activism expertise** to develop specific policy asks, with clear targets and measurable outcomes; and, 2) empower young people by equipping them with the **skills and providing opportunities** to influence policy in a supported way.

Approach to the programme

A legacy of the programme has been the closer collaboration and partnership working between the youth and environment sectors. As a result of participating in the programme, portfolio organisations from the environment sector have widened their engagement policies to target young people. Likewise, portfolio organisations from the youth sector have adopted and embedded environmental themes in their work, with some reporting that their environmental offer/(s) now represent some of their most popular programmes.

⁴⁵The gentle protest movement e.g. <https://ideas.ted.com/how-a-gentle-protest-with-hand-embroidered-hankies-helped-bring-higher-wages-for-retail-employees/>

The original rationale was to scale up and replicate existing activity to new audiences and/or into new areas, as distinct from testing innovative methods. It is not clear whether projects were markedly more **effective** at supporting their young people than they would have been as 31 individual projects, as the 'scale up' requirement meant many projects were already delivering outcomes. Projects did share learning, and thus could have delivered more **efficiently**, as they were able to benefit from real-time learning and quality resources. It is a safe assumption that having a consortium and Programme Team to manage the portfolio for The Fund was a more economical way to manage a programme than to fund 31 projects separately. For some young people, specifically those involved in either youth governance or the collective policy work, the programme offered **added value** to a project operating alone.

Our Bright Future was a complex programme. The programme was consistently praised for being well-managed but tended to revert to a grant making model rather than true partnership working. This was strongly linked to the programme design, most particularly the limited ability of the programme to flex and adapt over time. This reduced the scope for strategic decisions and the ability to explore new partnership opportunities.

A specific channel for sector learning from the evaluation would have been beneficial. The Evaluation Panel were highly committed, applied rigour, and thoughtfully examined research findings to identify meaning. However, the group itself had a limited role in sharing the findings with the sector beyond their own personal networks. A dissemination group was established but has since been disbanded, with the Steering Group taking on the role.

Highly effective programme management strengthened delivery. The extent of partnership working suffered from the inability to pursue new opportunities. Space for active learning and adaptability may have further supported continuous improvement across the partnership.

Projects reported practical challenges such as lack of budget and time, preventing them engaging further in programme level activities. This was overcome by making further resources available. Whilst this was a practical solution, a key lesson was that establishing expectations more fully during the initial phases would have been beneficial. This would serve two benefits: firstly, effectively resourcing partnership activities, and secondly, establishing expectations in terms of the level of interaction, the required input of expertise, and level of collaborative activity would have aided project teams' clarity.



Our Bright Future developed mechanisms for managing a programme of diverse projects which, in many cases, worked well to promote a sense of purpose and added value by sharing learning. Future programmes could consider agreeing and establishing mechanisms for partnership working during a design phase. This could help create a collaborative programme and to develop a shared understanding of the benefits of, and their roles within, the programme structure.

Concluding messages

The achievements of Our Bright Future were many and varied, having successfully brought the environment and youth sectors together in a way which had not been done before. The challenges of the Consortium approach did not curtail project delivery and were by no means unusual in a partnership programme. The overall learnings from Our Bright Future have the potential to create further value for future programmes, building on what has gone before. There are a range of legacies for the programme, for young people, the environment and youth sectors, the portfolio organisations, and the environment. Most crucially, the Our Bright Future programme has made a positive difference to many individual young people's lives, across the UK, and this will stay with them for some time to come.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Methodology and Sources of Evidence

The below summarises the various primary and secondary data collection and analysis methods connected to the core evaluation, across both the mid-term and final evaluation phases. In addition, details of the focus and methodologies of the series of thematic studies and learning papers, carried out in the final evaluation phase, are summarised in the sections which follow. Full methodologies are typically provided within each individual report and paper referenced.

Secondary Data

- **Annual project monitoring reports:** submitted by project managers reflecting on project activities over the previous year and providing records of key outputs achieved. Some of the same data is also collected through end of project reports.
- **Quarterly project monitoring reports:** submitted by project managers to provide regular progress updates and analysis of outputs and to allow for timely identification of challenges and learning.
- **Project evaluation reports:** produced internally by projects and in some cases by external partners. Some projects produced these throughout the duration of the programme while others produced them only at the end of their project.
- **End of Grant Reports:** submitted by project managers reflecting on project activities over all six years of the programme and providing records of all outputs, outcomes and impacts achieved.

Collection	Data analysis	Reported/summarised elsewhere?	N=
Annual project monitoring reports	Qualitative: thematic analysis using NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics	Summary reports at end of each quarter	Quarterly reports (2016, 2017 & 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)
Quarterly projects monitoring reports		Mid-Term Evaluation Report & Annual Evaluation Reports 2019 and 2020	2017 x 31 projects 2018 x 30 projects 2019 x 31 2020 x 31
End of Grant Reports		N/A	2022 x 31
Project evaluation reports and participant case studies	Separate qualitative analysis	N/A	N/A

Primary data

- **Annual (semi-structured) interviews:** undertaken with individuals (most often by telephone) within and outside the programme comprising project managers, the Programme Team and key internal (Evaluation Panel and Steering Group members) and external (within the youth and environment sectors) stakeholders.
- **Outcomes Flower survey results:** quantitative and quantitative responses gathered from participants by projects managers and through an online survey designed to capture attitudes on the environment and personal attributes before and after participation in the programme.
- **Case studies and case study conclusions:** project case studies were produced throughout the evaluation for the Baseline and Mid-term Reports, developed through site visits and project data. Young person case studies were subsequently developed as part of the thematic studies and also developed separately by projects throughout the programme.
- **Supplementary primary research:** undertaken through thematic studies/ learning papers referenced below.
- **Influence log:** data provided by the Policy and Advocacy Manager on project and programme activities to influence policy on the national and local levels.

Collection	Data analysis	Reported/summarised elsewhere?	N=
Annual interviews	Qualitative: transcript notes analysed using thematic analysis (supported by NVivo)	Mid-Term Evaluation Report Annual Evaluation Report 2019 Annual Evaluation Report 2020	2017 and 2018 Project managers: x31/31 per year Internal stakeholders x30 External stakeholders: x11 2019 and 2020 Project managers:30 (2019), 31 (2020). Internal stakeholders:10 (2019);16 (2020). External stakeholders: 18 (2019); 16 (2020).
Outcomes flower paper or e-survey of participants	Thematic analysis using NVivo Descriptive statistics and significance tests for quantitative likert scale and single qualitative response	Summary papers 2018, 2019 and 2021	x909 participants completed “before” and “after” results (891 after cleansing)
Case study observation and research notes	Seperate analysis and reporting on notes and interviews	Mid-Term Evaluation Report Conclusion paper and Case Study Reports	13 projects x2 visits in 2017 and 2018
Influence log	Separate qualitative analysis		N/A

Supporting Reports

The following reports provide supporting analysis to the conclusions of this report.

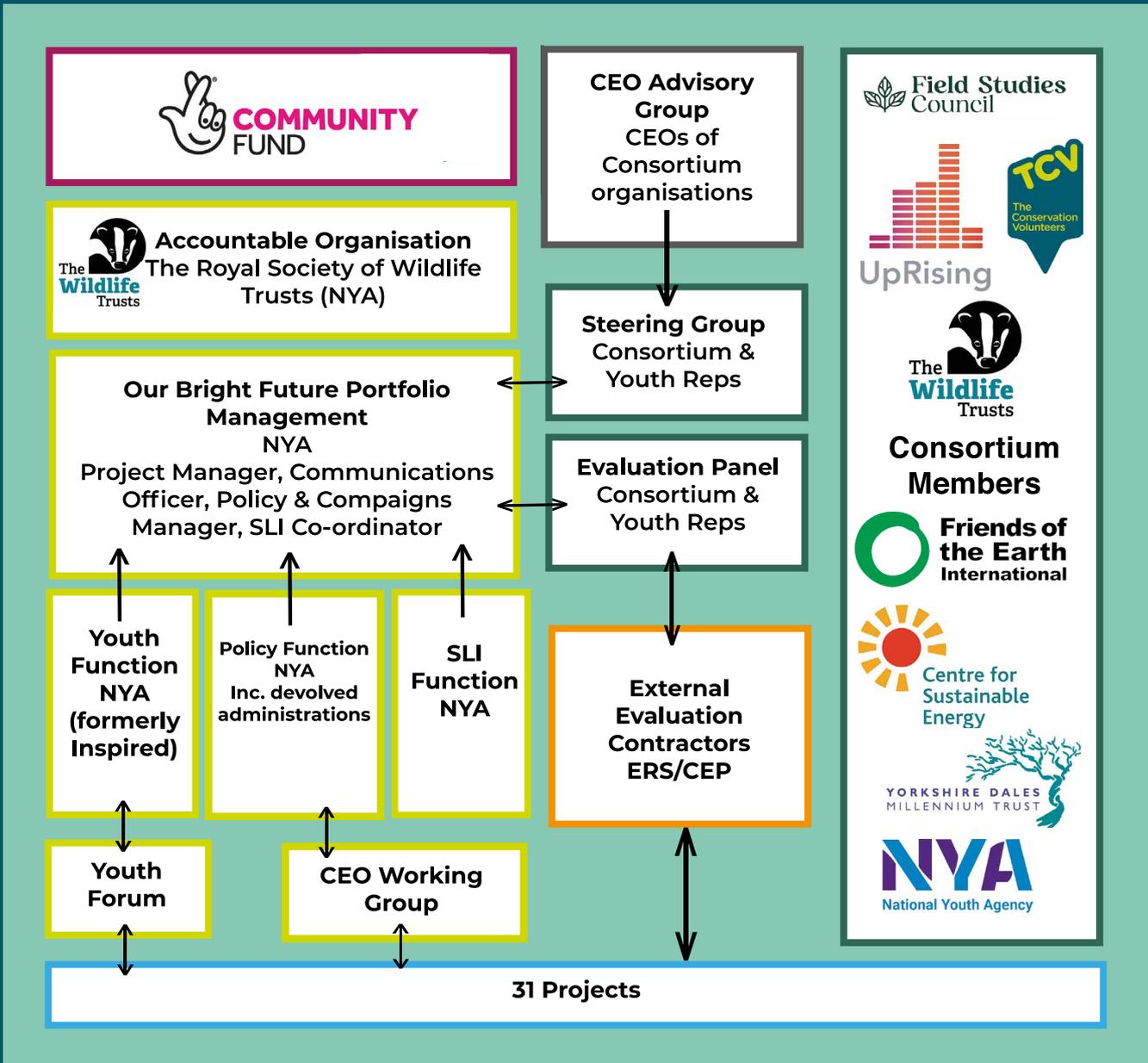
Should any of the reference or hyperlinks within this report be broken, please contact evaluators ERS via <https://www.ers.org.uk/>.

Supporting Report	Summary of Content	Methodology
Baseline and Context Evaluation Report 2017	This report sets the scene for the rest of the evaluation, outlining Our Bright Future's starting position both from a Programme and policy perspective and in terms of the portfolio of projects. The report provides a baseline against which subsequent reports can assess progress and achievements.	<p>Secondary document and data review</p> <p>Literature and policy review (desk-based)</p> <p>Interviews with members of the Steering Group and Evaluation Panel</p> <p>Interviews and secondary data analysis for a selection of 13 case study projects.</p>
Mid-term Evaluation Report 2019	This report presents the findings of the mid-term evaluation of Our Bright Future. The Mid-term Evaluation Report covers the first three years of the programme focussing on the period from set-up in June 2016 to December 2018.	Full methodology is detailed in the Mid-Term Report.
Outcomes Flower Report 2021	This report captures changes in attitude and outcomes for young people as a result of their participation in Our Bright Future, specifically changes in young people's wellbeing and feelings about the environment.	Bespoke Outcomes Flower tool developed by ERS and shared with Project Managers, distributed to participants across the portfolio on an annual basis. 909 responses were collected in total (891 after cleansing), between 2018 and 2021. Qualitative analysis, and statistical testing of responses (chi-squared and t-tests) was carried out.
Environmental Leadership 2021 (Thematic Study)	This study examines to what extent, and in what ways, the young people involved in Our Bright Future feel that they are able and motivated to act as environmental leaders. It explores activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts related to Programme Outcome 1 (see above). Methodology comprised:	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Focus groups with young people, and semi-structured interviews. 28 young people and six project staff were consulted.</p> <p>Qualitative responses were coded to highlight themes.</p>
Key Impacts for Participants Study 2021	This study examines how Our Bright Future has directly affected young people's lives, looking specifically at the link between participation in Our Bright Future and employability, employment, participation in social action, improved wellbeing and self-confidence for young people.	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Online survey of participants (and ex participants) distributed by project managers. 258 responses were received (after data cleansing).</p> <p>Qualitative telephone interviews with 12 survey respondents, used to develop 9 participant case studies.</p>

<p>Skills Development in Our Bright Future projects 2021 (Thematic Study)</p>	<p>This study sought to explore young people’s development of skills across the Our Bright Future portfolio and explores which skills participants have gained as well as how this was achieved.</p>	<p>Literature and evidence review</p> <p>In-depth telephone interviews with a sample of project managers (n= 10), selected based on involvement in delivering skills-based outcomes.</p> <p>Review of supporting, secondary evidence collated by the same projects.</p> <p>E-survey data from the above Participant Impacts study</p>
<p>Our Bright Future Learning Papers</p>	<p>Our Bright Future has generated about how outcomes were achieved in the following areas:</p> <p>Paper 1: Skills and employability: learning from Our Bright Future</p> <p>Paper 2: Engaging young people in the environment: benefits for mental health and wellbeing</p> <p>Paper 3: Outcomes and impacts for the environment and communities</p> <p>Paper 4: Engaging young people in the environment: achievements, what worked, lessons learned</p> <p>Paper 5: Reflections on the Our Bright Future programme approach</p> <p>Paper 6: Young people in governance roles: achievements and learning from Our Bright Future.</p> <p>The aim of these papers is to use the Our Bright Future learning to inform future interventions for young people and the environment.</p>	<p>Paper 1: Synthesis of primary and secondary evidence gathered throughout the evaluation</p> <p>Paper 2: Synthesis of primary and secondary evidence gathered throughout the evaluation</p> <p>Paper 3: youth-led research, conducted by two programme participants, supported by ERS to undertake primary research within their project (mixed-methods).</p> <p>Paper 4: Synthesis of primary and secondary evidence gathered throughout the evaluation</p> <p>Paper 5: Synthesis of primary and secondary evidence gathered throughout the evaluation</p> <p>Paper 6: broader evaluation evidence; a survey of Our Bright Future portfolio organisations (21 responses); and, two case studies of young people.</p>

Data References

Referenced source of data	Description
Project manager (PM)	Manager of any one of the 31 projects within the portfolio.
Project partner / project delivery team member	Others involved in the delivery of projects referenced by project managers.
Internal stakeholder	Members of the Programme Team at the Wildlife Trusts and National Youth Agency + members of the consortium i.e. Evaluation Panel and Steering Group.
External stakeholder	Organisations and departments within the youth and environment sectors as well as The Fund and Defra who are not directly involved in the programme).
Participant	Collected via the Outcomes Flower survey, thematic studies and learning papers. (Noted where quoted from elsewhere)
Youth representative	Youth representatives on the Evaluation Panel or the Steering Group, or members of the Youth Forum.



Appendix 3 Programme Targets and Indicators

Outcome One 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	
	Achieved
1a. 140,000 (originally 60,000) young people have participated in Our Bright Future activities One off engagement: 97,000 Short-term engagement: 27,000 Long-term engagement: 16,000	128,495 young people engaged One off: 83,221 Short-term: 27,126 Long-term: 18,148
1b. 60,000 (originally 26,000) young people have increased environmental skills and knowledge <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 7,000 (originally 4,000) environmental qualifications or awards gained e.g. OCN, NVQs, John Muir, DofE Award, academic qualifications 2. 1,000 (originally 900) young people have entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships 3. 250 (originally 400) young people have started entrepreneurial projects as part of the programme 	1. 8,674 young people gained qualifications 2. 1,627 young people entered into internships, work experience, work placements or apprenticeships 3. 203 young people started entrepreneurial projects/activity
1c. Young people participating in the programme have improved their health and wellbeing	Participant Impacts survey : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% of respondents felt that mental health and wellbeing improved at least somewhat; • 40% saw 'a lot' of improvements in mental health and wellbeing.
1d. Young people participating in the programme feel more engaged and empowered to lead change in their local communities	148 young people engaged in programme governance (Evaluation Panel, Steering Group, Youth Forum)

⁴⁶An online survey of ²⁵⁸ participants of Our Bright Future.

Outcome Two

The Our Bright Future programme has had positive impacts on the environment and local communities

Indicator	Achieved
<p>2a. The creation and/or improvement/increased sustainability of 3,500 (originally 450) community and wildlife spaces. Spaces improved: 3,185 Spaces created: 315</p>	<p>Spaces improved: 3,071 Spaces created: 355</p>
<p>2b. Local communities have improved community cohesion</p> <p>2c. Local communities have increased awareness of and engagement in the environment</p>	<p>See qualitative evidence in Chapter 3.</p> <p>See qualitative evidence in Chapter 3.</p>

Outcome Three

The Our Bright Future programme has influenced change and created a legacy

Indicator

3a. Policy and decision-makers, businesses, NGOs have been engaged and informed about the programme

3b. The programme has created evidence that has been used to influence policy and decision making locally, regionally and nationally

3c. The programme has stimulated new thinking and dialogue about young people and the environment and led to a change in policy and practice

3d. All projects engaging with the Policy Function

3e. A wider range of influencers engaged (e.g. political, sector, funder, NGOs): both at a project and programme level.

3f. At least 10 sector groups/external networks on which Our Bright Future is engaged e.g. #iwill campaign group.

3g. Programme findings and evidence are shared with similar programmes or initiatives, funders, government departments etc.

3h. Young people have been involved in organising and taking part in policy/advocacy events and activities

3i. At least 30 organisations have changed policies or practices and attribute this to Our Bright Future

3j. At least four actions or events organised by the Programme Team per year to promote the Three Asks

3k. At least 70% of projects of projects taking action to promote the Three Asks at a local level.

3l. Actions are taken at a government level, NGOs level and funders related to the Three Asks (e.g. guidance produced to encourage schools to undertake more classes outdoors/ one hour a day.

3m. At least two national or local strategies or policy consultations per year to which Our Bright Future has contributed

Outcome Four

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

Indicator

4a. All projects have utilized the Share Learn Improve Function to share best practice, collaborate and develop relationships with organisations that they may not previously have worked with

4b. Third sector organisations have increased collaboration, awareness and sharing of knowledge and experience across the youth and environmental sector

4c. The Youth Function enables young people to influence the management and direction of the programme which is acted upon by the Steering Group, partnership and National Lottery Community Fund

4d. Good practice on how to work best with young people is shared with stakeholders such as NGOs, funders, young people and policy/decision-makers. Good practice will be shared in a variety of formats tailored to each stakeholder.

Appendix 4 Overview of Projects

Project ID	Project Name	Lead Organisation	Location(s)	Total grant requested	Project Start Date	Project End Date	Activity Focus						Target Group						Engagement Total	
							practical/vocational	campaigning	entrepreneurial/grant giving	those with physical disabilities	NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	those with poor mental health	those with special education needs	open to all	those with physical disabilities	NEET or at risk of becoming NEET	those with poor mental health	those with special education needs		open to all
1	Building Sustainable Communities	Down to Earth	Wales	£945,000	16/8/16	30/6/21	x				x									859
2	Youth in Nature	Probe (Hull) Ltd	Yorkshire	£913,519	4/4/16	31/8/21	x				x	x	x	x						2,943
3	Belfast Hills Partnership	Belfast Hills	Northern Ireland	£713,036	1/1/16	31/12/21	x											x		20,084
4	Your Shore Beach Rangers	Cornwall Wildlife Trust	South West	£989,546	1/1/16	31/3/21	x												x	34,266
5	Our Wild Coast	North Wales Wildlife Trust	Wales	£935,324	1/1/16	30/9/21	x												x	1,531
6	Vision England	RNIB	England-wide	£856,533	1/1/16	1/1/22	x				x									307
7	Growing Confidence	Shropshire Wildlife Trust	West Mids	£898,190	1/4/20	30/6/20	x					x								6,499
8	Bright Green Future	CSE (Centre for Sustainable Energy)	UK-wide	£989,168	1/3/16	30/6/21			x										x	1,978
9	Green Leaders	Groundwork UK	South East, North West, East	£993,000	1/1/16	30/6/20	x					x								980
10	Green Academies Project	The National Trust	West Mids, North West, North East, London, Wales	£996,080	1/12/15	31/3/20	x												x	11,339
11	Grassroots Challenge Programme	Ulster Wildlife Trust	Northern Ireland	£999,995	1/1/16	30/9/21	x												x	9,130
12	From Farm to Fork	Global Feedback Limited	UK-wide	£983,245	14/1/19	14/1/19													x	12,313
13	Next Generation Fife	Falkland Stewardship Trust	Scotland	£929,000	1/1/18	31/12/21	x					x								720
14	Spaces 4 Change	Unlited	England-wide	£980,575	22/2/16	31/7/21			x										x	436
15	Green Futures	Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust	North West, Yorkshire	£819,827	1/4/16	31/7/21	x					x	x	x						8,051
16	One Planet Pioneers	Middlesbrough Environment City Trust Ltd	North East	£917,485	2/5/16	31/12/21	x	x				x							x	3,007
17	Growing up Green	Hill Holt Wood	East Mids	£991,959	15/1/16	31/7/21	x					x							x	5,328
18	Natural Estates	Avon Wildlife Trust	South West	£999,450	1/6/16	31/12/21	x					x	x							9,564
19	Creative Pathways Environmental Design	Impact Arts (Projects) Ltd	Scotland	£976,939	4/1/16	31/12/20	x					x								1,611
20	BEE YOU!	Blackburne House	North West	£869,900	4/4/16	31/12/21	x					x							x	3,682
21	My Place	Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside	North West	£927,139	1/4/16	31/12/21	x												x	1,142
22	My World My Home	Friends of the Earth Trust	London, Wales, East Mids	£999,074	1/1/16	31/3/21		x											x	12,474
23	Environmental Leadership Programme	Uprising	England-wide	£998,160	4/1/16	31/8/20		x											x	551
24	Fruit-full Communities	The Learning Through Landscapes Trust	England-wide	£857,240	4/1/16	30/6/19	x					x								1,117
25	Tomorrow's Natural Leaders	Yorkshire Wildlife Trust	Yorkshire	£998,003	30/9/21	24/12/21	x												x	2,855
26	The Environment Now	The National Youth Agency	UK-wide	£999,765	2/5/16	31/12/18			x										x	6,041
27	Eco Talent	Vinspired	London	£999,623	8/7/19	31/12/21	x					x							x	729
28	Milestones	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	South West	£999,364	1/1/16	31/8/21	x												x	2,157
29	Welcome to the Green Economy	Groundwork London	Greater London	£990,000	1/1/16	31/12/21													x	2,241
30	Putting Down Roots for Young People	St Mungo Community Housing Association	South of England	£941,000	1/1/16	31/12/20	x												x	775
31	Student Eats	NUS students' Union Charitable Services	UK-wide	£998,000	1/3/16	31/8/21	x												x	3,151
Programme Total				£29,405,139			24	3	3	2	13	4	6	16					167,861	
Programme Average				£948,553																