

Support for young people to work in the environmental sector: A research review



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1. Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Our Bright Future¹ to consider the need to establish long-term support from government and funders, for employment training schemes that give young people the opportunity to secure meaningful employment in the environmental sector, considered here in the broadest sense². Support to get into environmental jobs is the second of the Three Asks co-developed with young people (Appendix 1). The report is intended for audiences interested in the impact of involving young people in employment schemes, and how this could be improved going forward, with a specific focus on the environmental sector.

The report explores:

- The impact of past and current employment schemes to improve the employability for young people
- Current government initiatives that support young people's employability
- The current job market for young people
- Barriers for young people entering the environmental sector
- Diversity in the sector and the impacts this has on young people
- Gaps in current knowledge

Key learning points are highlighted at the end of each session and practical next steps and recommendations directed to both governments and environmental organisations are indicated at the end.

Our Bright Future is a UK-wide programme with projects based across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In its policy and advocacy work, the programme recognises the devolved contexts of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The use of the term 'governments' in this research report refers to the governments across the UK.

Methodology

The report draws on a range of data sources:

- evidence submitted from over 20 organisations ([Appendix 2](#)) responsible for delivering youth training projects in the environmental sector
- young people's feedback from workshops
- telephone interviews with project managers
- case studies submitted by Our Bright Future projects
- Our Bright Future mid-term evaluation report produced by ERS Ltd and Collingwood Environmental Planning
- literature review and desktop research

¹ <http://www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/about/>

² Sectors include nature conservation, corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental assessment, environmental science, forestry, rural skills, sustainable development, waste management, water and air quality.

About Our Bright Future

Our Bright Future is a programme of 31 individual projects across the UK (listed in [Appendix 3](#)) that brings together the environmental and youth sectors. Projects are united by the common aim of empowering young people (aged 11-24) to lead future environmental change. Ranging in scale, from local to national, projects focus on activities such as involving young people in practical environmental conservation, engaging them in vocational training, supporting them to develop their own campaigns around environmental issues and helping them to start their own sustainable enterprises.

The National Lottery Community Fund has invested £33m to support the programme which is governed by a consortium of eight organisations³ led by The Wildlife Trusts (TWT).

Our Bright Future's vision is for young people to get what they deserve: a healthy planet, a thriving greener economy and a bright future. The underlying goal of all its activities is to empower and inspire young people to make their future brighter and lead progressive change in their communities and local environment.

³ The Wildlife Trusts (TWT); Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE); Field Studies Council (FSC); The Conservation Volunteers (TCV); Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT); Friends of the Earth; Uprising and National Youth Agency.

2. Executive Summary

In 1978 the Youth Opportunities Programme was launched and over 29 youth employment training programmes supported by the UK government have followed. Many have been shelved before completion and others revamped often due to a lack of demonstrable outcomes. This is linked to inadequate evaluation or changing political and economic priorities.

There is, however, strong evidence to suggest that providing young people with a full package of support and the right kind of work experience – ideally with additional pay and the hope of a job at the end of it – is crucial⁴.

At present there is no specific government scheme targeted at supporting employment traineeships or apprenticeships for the environment within the commercial or statutory sectors. The gap is being filled by the charity sector and direct delivery organisations often working in partnership with National Lottery funded programmes and EU social fund programmes.

However, the world is facing a climate emergency and for the UK to effectively respond to the environmental challenges and transition to a low carbon economy, new skills will be required in addition to the creation of new jobs⁵. Strong evidence from the present report suggests this can be achieved providing young people with the right training schemes to work in the environmental sector.

Successful training programmes demonstrate key attributes at three different levels:

1. Strategic level

- Long-term reliable funding
- Strong partnerships and collaboration between organisations to share best practice
- Trustee and senior leadership support in breaking barriers to youth involvement
- Common approach on data gathering and key performance indicators to enable meaningful impact reporting
- Skills needs analysis and workforce plan for the environmental sector
- Connections with schools and Further Education Colleges
- Recognised career progression post training

⁴ Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Available in LSE Research Online October 2012

⁵ [Friends of the Earth: Tackling climate change, reducing poverty](http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk)

<http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk>

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2014/09/climate-change-unemployment-clean-jobs/>

2. Organisational level

- Recognition of the need for a diverse workforce reflective of the local community, including ethnicity, physical and mental health, gender identity
- Recruitment and retention strategies that are youth-friendly
- Inclusive recruitment processes and policies which support the needs of a diverse workforce
- Organisational culture which recognises specific needs of young people
- Focus on life experience and potential as opposed to academic qualifications in relation to entry requirements
- Positive work training environment

3. Participant level

- Personalised and intensive support offered by high quality staff
- Entry level living wage for trainees
- Focus on confidence building, soft skills, team working and varied work experience
- Stable employment both in training and in employment
- Ability of scheme to flex in order to meet individual needs (flexible working and 4-day week placements)
- Recognition of the difficulties accessing transport to training and work
- Clarity on career progression opportunities post-training

The report also provides recommendations to environmental organisations to ensure that, while planning future training opportunities for young people they respond to young people's needs and offer the most effective and inclusive experience.

Environmental organisations are called to:

- engage with governments and funding organisations to secure long-term financial support for a new employment training scheme
- develop a collective approach to training, accreditation and impact measurement
- develop clear actions that deal with the combined issues of diversity and lack of inclusivity through engagement with the National Union of Students, National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), and others to hold a sector wide conversation on diversity and inclusivity
- secure the right talent and reflect modern society, increasing the social and ethnic diversity of its people
- develop a collective approach to future workforce planning working

Our Bright Future is calling for governments across the UK to fund new training schemes that would allow the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers. The evidence gathered for this report demonstrates how environmental organisations play an important role in helping young people's access to work, especially for those who are not in education, employment and training and come from a disadvantaged background. It demonstrates that well-funded, dynamic training programmes

provide young people with the skills and experience they need to secure employment.

There is now an opportunity for the environment sector to work with governments across the UK to develop new environmental training programmes built on fairness and equality, enabling a generation of young people to work in jobs that both benefit the environment, the individual and wider society.

Perhaps more than at any other time, there is a need to invest in both the next generation and the environment through improving the skills required to support the transition to a low carbon economy and in doing so reinforce the nature's foundations on which much of our wealth, health and wellbeing depend.

3. Impacts of past and current schemes to improve employability for young people

Over the last 20 years there have been numerous government and non-government funded schemes aimed at improving the employability of young people. Successive UK governments have used large-scale geographically targeted, vocational training schemes to address youth unemployment and the charity sector has engaged with funders to design and deliver specific training schemes. Many of the schemes have been short-term due to funding availability or cancelled at short notice due to changes in government policy.

This section looks at a representative sample of previous and current schemes.

Previous Schemes

The V inspired scheme started in 2008. There were many examples given demonstrating how this scheme supported young people into employment, many of whom are now in leadership roles in the environmental sector. Its success is summed up by the example of one individual who began her placement in 2008 and is now leading an Environmental Education program with a major conservation charity, managing a budget of over £650,000 and responsible for 21 staff⁶.

The Future Jobs Fund (FJF) was introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2009 as a response to significant concerns about the long-term effects of rising youth unemployment. The Coalition Government made the decision to end the FJF shortly after taking office in May 2010, citing high costs despite a positive DWP assessment in 2012 that concluded the fund was successful in helping people succeed in the labour market long-term⁷. By March 2011, when the last FJF jobs were filled, the programme had placed 105,220 people in temporary employment⁸.

When the fund closed Groundwork, in partnership with the National Housing Federation, created over 6,000 jobs, including: energy efficiency advisors, neighbourhood caretakers, land management workers and recycling workers. Of the 6,259 individuals employed through the programme, 73% worked the full 26-week placement, and over 1,400 individuals went on to secure jobs with employers outside of the fund⁹.

Between 2009 and 2010, The Wildlife Trusts provided over 1,090 Future Jobs Fund placements, delivering a range of work experience for young people ranging from those with no qualifications or skills to graduates. It was estimated that 35% entered full time work or education from placements¹⁰. This compares well with the most directly comparable figures in the evaluation report on the FJF as a whole,

⁶ Lancashire Wildlife Trust

⁷ [Department for Work and Pensions. Impacts and Costs and Benefits of the Future Jobs Fund: 2012](#)

⁸ [Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion: Future Jobs Fund: An independent national evaluation: 2011](#)

⁹ [Youth Unemployment and the Future Jobs Fund: Written evidence submitted by Groundwork UK: 2010](#)

¹⁰ The Wildlife Trusts, The Natural Deal report. Growing our human and natural capital together: 2013

conducted by CESI¹¹. The CESI evaluation identified a job outcome rate varying from 21% to 41% across their case study areas, based on forms filled out on completion of an FJF job.

The DWP Work Programme was introduced in 2011 by the UK's coalition government as a partnership with public, private and voluntary sector contractors with the primary aim of helping the long-term unemployed or those at most risk of becoming so into work for sustained periods of time.

In July 2014, the National Audit Office reported on the progress of the Work Programme, highlighting that around 296,000 people had achieved job outcomes, and 687,000 had completed two years on the Work Programme.

From 2014-17, the **Wildlife Skills Training for a Career in Nature Conservation** programme funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Skills for the Future delivered 57 training placements in a range of conservation skills for people from diverse backgrounds across 4 Wildlife Trusts in the South West of England; Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. Forty-seven (82%) highly trained individuals are now employed in the sector, with the other 10 in further training¹².

Talent Match was a £106 million programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to support young people aged 18 to 24 who required extra support to help them along their path to employment. Talent Match targeted young people considered furthest away from the labour market. This includes long-term unemployed youth and young people who have complex lives and face multiple barriers to employment.

Talent Match (TM) worked on a youth-centred approach, placing the wishes and aspirations of young people first, before those of the services there to support them. Talent Match was implemented in 21 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas across England with high levels of youth unemployment. The programme ran for five years from 2014 to 2018.¹³ 22,230 young people engaged in the first 3.5 years of the programme and 5,362 new jobs secured, including over 260 new businesses/self-employed.

Current Schemes

Over 20 organisations provided feedback and inspiring stories from current schemes. There were individual examples of outstanding impact evaluation and the qualitative data from participants provided a veracity to the information gathered and a greater understanding of the perceptions and needs of young people.

A consistent theme was that schemes benefit young people in terms of confidence building, skills development and experience and a number of consistent threads emerged, including:

¹¹ <http://www.cesi.org.uk>

¹² [Wildlife Skills – Training for a Career in Nature Conservation. Evaluation Report November 2017](#)

¹³ [Talent Match - achievements and lessons for programme and policy design, briefing report 2018](#)

- A broad range of experiences through training schemes is as much important if not more important to the individual than gaining qualifications. A review of the National Trust's Volunteer Management Traineeship¹⁴ scheme reported that the top outcomes for people were all experiential and more important than accreditation (i.e. experience working for the Trust, better understanding of how the heritage sector works, experience in the world of work).
- Young people from NEET backgrounds are generally under qualified and seek accredited certification as well as practical experience of that certification to help them gain entry into the workplace.
- Giving young people the chance to develop "soft skills" as part of training programmes was a critical component of the training.
- Positive work training environments make people feel good about themselves and improve individual motivation and self-esteem leading to enhanced personal and professional skills.
- High quality support staff and project officers were key to a programme's success¹⁵.

At the time of writing, the **Our Bright Future Programme** has engaged 85,788 young people, far exceeding its overall target of 60,000 young people. Highlights to date include:

- Almost 4,000 qualifications or awards gained by participants, around 80% of which are accredited.
- 758 young people have entered into employment, training, and volunteering. Of these, 283 have gained paid employment and many of the roles appear to be in the environmental/sustainability sector.
- 214 entrepreneurial projects started (50 businesses and 164 enterprises)¹⁶.

Below is a selection of Our Bright Future projects demonstrating the programme's impact on young people's employability:

- The Uprising Environmental Leadership programme is designed to help young people navigate the jobs market and find rewarding jobs. In 2018, 60% of participants¹⁷ in the programme moved into full-time employment and 98% of participants felt more confident about moving into full time work
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts Tomorrows Natural Leaders Programme aims to up skill and empower young people to take action on environmental projects and campaigns in Yorkshire. From the first-year intake 19 out of 21 young people were in employment or further education and of these 13 went on to a career in the environment sector.¹⁸
- The Fife Rural Skills Partnership Our Bright Future programme equips 11-24 year olds with skills and experience to make a difference in their local community and for the environment. Of the 31 apprentice trainees, 28 achieved the Modern

¹⁴[Skills for the sector: An evaluation of the accreditation of the Volunteer Management Traineeship \(VMT\) at the National Trust; 2017](#)

¹⁵[Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Tomorrows Natural Leaders](#)

¹⁶[Our Bright Future Mid-Term Evaluation Report 2019](#)

¹⁷[Uprising Environmental Leadership programme](#)

¹⁸ Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Tomorrows Natural Leaders Year 2 Report: 2018

Apprenticeship qualification and three months after completing the training, 24 were in employment and four into further education.¹⁹

- The Middlesbrough Environment City²⁰ One Planet Pioneers programme aims to develop the skills of young people through environmental projects, events or one-off activities and equip them with a range of experiences that can be taken to prospective employers. Apprentices gained seasonal employment on waste disposal, grounds maintenance operatives, stock control operatives and active travel trainers

Other grant funded training programmes reported the following:

London Wildlife Trusts Keeping it Wild project²¹ funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund aims to empower and inspire 600 young people aged 11-25 from backgrounds currently under-represented in natural heritage, to gain vital skills while discovering, conserving and sharing their experiences of the capital's wild spaces. After one year the project reported that 9 trainees (95%) stated they have learnt new skills that will help with employability and three have so far secured employment in the environment sector.

The Conservation Volunteers Natural Talent UK traineeship programme, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, aims to increase expertise to reduce the ecological skills gap facing the UK. Following the scheme, 92% of trainees either went onto employment in the conservation sector or into further education²².

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Skills for the Future Programme²³ supports organisations that provide work-based training placements to meet a skills shortage in the heritage sector and help diversify the workforce. From 2014-17, the Wildlife Skills Training for a Career in Nature Conservation programme funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Skills for the Future delivered 57 training placements in a range of conservation skills for people from diverse backgrounds across 4 Wildlife Trusts in the South West of England; Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire. Forty-seven (82%) highly trained individuals are now employed in the sector, with the other 10 in further training, or expected to gain employment very soon. The Wild Paths training programme supported through the same fund focuses on trainees who do not have any prior formal training in the conservation sector. Trainees join a comprehensive work-based training plan, including key industry qualifications such as chainsaw and brushcutter training, and a bursary of £1000 per month to pay for living costs whilst they are in training. Overall, 15 out of 21 (71%) trainees recruited to date are from excluded backgrounds (i.e. with disability or long-term health condition, BAME or not educated to degree level). The target was 50%²⁴.

¹⁹ [Centre for Stewardship: Fife's Our Bright Future project](#)

²⁰ [One Planet Pioneers, Middlesbrough Environment City](#)

²¹ [London Wildlife Trust Keeping it wild Year 1 Evaluation Report 2019](#)

²² [The Conservation Volunteers](#) Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Case Study 2018

²³ [Heritage Lottery Fund Skills for the Future](#)

²⁴ [Dorset Wild Trust, Wild Paths Training Programme](#)

Ulster Wildlife Nature Skills trainee scheme²⁵ provides a best practice example of a year-long paid and accredited programme, which for 5 years has achieved high post scheme employment rates in the environment sector. Belfast Hill's Partnership also provide a shorter voluntary Trainee Ranger Scheme which again has proved to a very valuable stepping stone for young people wishing to obtain environment related employment. **Venture Trust** has a focus on moving group-based personal development in Scotland's wilderness and outdoor communities and offers **young people** core skills development, with employability support aimed at those looking for further training and progression to employment²⁶. In the past six years the group has worked with almost 1000 young people. It has seen 78% of participants improve their confidence, 75% increased their range of employability skills and as part the programme (supporting 644 women), 60% of women who completed the wilderness journey went on to achieve at least one 'positive destination' (education, employment, training or volunteering)²⁷.

The EVOLS Project (Environmental Volunteers Outdoor Learners) helps vulnerable people aged 13 to 18 develop their skills through practical conservation work such as tree planting and activities including climbing, abseiling and kayaking. As a result, 100s of young people in Edinburgh have improved their health, wellbeing and job prospects²⁸.

Key learning points

The schemes reviewed have shown that:

- Training schemes are critical feeder routes for young people to get into employment.
- Young people build confidence and maintain motivation through personalised and intensive support and through training that allows them to learn transferable skills by moving around roles and tasks. Working in teams is also considered a vital part of any training programme
- High quality support staff and project officers were key to a programme's success²⁹
- Training placements must be tailored to the young person's needs and circumstances. This includes finding out what the young person wants to get out of the placement, which skills they want to develop, what barriers they face and what their career aspirations are.
- Organisations need to think about the level they expect young people to be at when they join them. Are they expecting too many qualifications? Is there room for additional training?
- Strong and effective partnerships have been one of the most important factors for these programmes, often because each of the organisations contribute something different and each one benefits from the projects enough to invest in them

²⁵ [Ulster Wildlife Nature Skills trainee scheme](#)

²⁶ <http://venturetrust.webfactional.com/>

²⁷

http://www.venturetrust.org.uk/media/uploads/files/SMCIA_Next_Steps_Evaluation_March_2018_3.0_2.pdf

²⁸ <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/article/outdoor-classroom-helps-young-people-build-better-futures>

²⁹ In line with findings from the evaluation of Talent Match that found that one-to-one support plays a fundamental role in helping young people transition into the labour market

- A common approach to sharing best practice, data gathering and key performance indicators of employment training schemes is essential for environmental organisations and their funders
- Work experience is often more important to individuals than gaining qualifications

4. Current Government Initiatives

Although not specifically for environmental jobs there are a range of current government initiatives supporting young people into employment.

Work experience organised by Jobcentre Plus enables young, unemployed people to volunteer for placements lasting between 2 and 8 weeks, or longer (up to 3 months). It is open to people who are aged 16 to 24 years old and, in some cases, people aged 25 and over who do not have any recent work history³⁰.

There are also a range of training programmes in place to develop the education and skills of learners and the workforce nationally. There are apprenticeships available to those who wish to train in vocational skill-based work and there are a range of further education training grants in place³¹.

The **Education and Skills Funding Agency** offers economic support for colleges, private training organisations and employers in England to provide skills training for further education. £3.2 Billion in funding is spent each year on this, so the scheme is well developed and is available for a range of applicants. The National Careers Service is part of the Skills Agency which imparts professional advice on careers, training and skills. Many of these organisations can be accessed directly but also through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)³².

The **Youth Investment Fund (YIF)**³³ is designed to provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their communities, support to their personal development and achieve the skills and confidence they need. The fund is made up of £40 million of government and National Lottery funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the National Lottery Community Fund. The fund supports projects in six targeted areas across England.

Jobs Growth Wales is a national scheme in Wales which provides young people aged 16-24 who are not in full-time education or employment with a six-month paid job opportunity. Employers receive up to a 50% contribution towards the wages of the young person that they take on for 6 months. Jobs Growth Wales is funded by the Welsh Government with support of the European Social Fund³⁴.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)³⁵ is the national skills body supporting people and businesses of Scotland. The aim of SDS is to support unemployed people to move towards and into work, with many strands including skills development, research and insight and training. It supports the Youth Employment Strategy by delivering over 9,000 new opportunities across Scotland and also works with employers and employer groups on a national, sectoral, regional, local and individual basis, supporting them to recognise and articulate their current and future skills requirements.

³⁰ [UK Government: Help with moving from benefits to work](#): 2019

³¹ [The Grants Hub, Government Funded Training, 2019](#)

³² [Education & Skills Funding Agency](#)

³³ [What is the Youth Investment Fund](#)

³⁴ [Jobs Growth Wales](#)

³⁵ [Skills Development Scotland Employability Fund](#)

The political landscape in Northern Ireland, like other parts of the UK, centers around devolved government. Since 1998 the Northern Ireland Assembly, commonly referred to as Stormont, has been the devolved legislature of Northern Ireland. It has power to legislate in a wide range of areas that are not explicitly reserved to the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Recently the Assembly had been suspended for a period of three years, but in February 2020 it reconvened under the “New Decade New Approach” agreement. This agreement includes important references to a number of key environmental objectives including the declaration of a climate emergency in Northern Ireland, the establishment of an independent Environmental Protection Agency and proposals for green jobs through a local Green New Deal. In relation to advocating for more support for young people to work in the environmental sector, key local government departments, their Ministers and overseeing Stormont committees should be high on the list of those to target. Priority needs to be given more specifically to engage the local Government Department focusing on jobs, the Department of the Economy and the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural affairs (DAERA).

Key learning points

Governments across the UK have a range of training programmes in place to develop the education and skills of learners and the workforce. There are apprenticeships available to those who wish to train in skill-based work in addition to a range of further education training grants. There appears to be scope for the environmental sector to engage with The Education and Skills Funding Agency, Jobs Growth Wales, Skills Development Scotland to discuss a future skills-based environment employment training programme in England, Wales and Scotland respectively. In Northern Ireland priority should be given to the Department of the Economy and the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural affairs.

5. Current job market for young people

The latest ONS Labour Market Overview for January 2020 shows the UK employment rate was estimated at 76.3%. The UK unemployment rate (the proportion of the economically active population who are unemployed) was estimated at 3.8%.

The unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds was 11.3% in September-November 2019³⁶. 482,000 young people aged 16-24 were registered as unemployed in September - November 2019³⁷.

There were 800,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in July to September 2019 of which 39.6% were looking for, and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed; the remainder were either not looking for work and/or not available for work and therefore classified as economically inactive.³⁸

Key learning points

The ONS data is extensive and provides detailed breakdowns by geographical area, social and ethnic background. The environmental sector can utilise this data to be more strategic and tactical to target different groups of young people to develop training schemes that are accessible to all.

³⁶ [ONS Labour market overview, UK: January 2020](#)

³⁷ [House of Commons Library Youth Unemployment Statistics January 2020](#)

³⁸ [ONS Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK: November 2019](#)

6. Barriers for young people entering the environmental sector

This area generated the most interest and passion from the people interviewed for this research. Unless stated much of the material is from the Summer 2019 Countryfile Live workshop³⁹. There are many interrelated barriers facing young people seeking careers in the environmental sectors as detailed below:

Money: By far the biggest single barrier is money. The lack of a living wage whilst training is one of the main barriers to young people's involvement in the sector. This is particularly so for low income families. Many of the people reported that trainees could earn more claiming benefits and that their training often suffered because they were employed in a number of zero-hour contracts to make ends meet. People cannot afford to do unpaid work.

Qualifications and experience: Many of the traineeship vacancies are geared towards graduates. This excludes large sections of young people who are currently unemployed and available for work. A person cannot get a job without experience, but getting experience is not possible without a job⁴⁰.

Health and disability: Health and disability issues had acted as a barrier to engaging in education and training. In particular, many found mental health problems as being particularly challenging.

Many of traineeships involve outdoor/physical work which are issues for people with physical disabilities. The view from Diane Lightfoot of the Business Disability Forum⁴¹ is that *"whilst charities talk positively of inclusion in relation to disability, they are less likely to make the hire. I suspect the same is true when it comes to social background. I suspect people working in the charity sector – particularly in large organisations, are more likely to be the children of wealthy, well-educated individuals than is the case in society as a whole."*

Competition: There is intense competition for traineeship positions, a flood of unpaid internships, a prevalence of short-term work and high student-loan debt. This, together with the uncertainty of the labour market and the limited availability of jobs mitigates against those who do come from economically supportive families and therefore can discriminate against NEETs⁴².

Lack of awareness: There is a lack of awareness among young people about training schemes or careers in the sector. Many found it difficult to obtain information about courses; inaccurate information resulted in provision not meeting their expectations and they subsequently dropped out. The environmental sector is not recognised in schools or discussed in career planning meetings. There is no clear pathway for young people to begin considering a career in the environment sector.

Organisational culture: High educational attainment and experience of many current employees in the sector creates an elitist, unwelcoming culture to those less

³⁹ [Countryfile Live workshop Summer 2019](#)

⁴⁰ Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Tomorrows Natural Leaders Year 2 Evaluation Report, July 2018

⁴¹ [Diane Lightfoot: Charities can lead the way on disability employment](#)

⁴² [Learning and Work Report, 2011](#)

qualified.⁴³ Experience, empathy and therefore capability in working with young people is lacking in host organisations and many working practices have not responded to changing societal expectations⁴⁴.

Recruitment and retention strategies: Recruitment processes remain wedded to a traditional way of working. Vacancies are placed within printed rather than social media which is unlikely to reach those furthest away from the labour market.⁴⁵

Job security and transport: Many roles are part-time and on short-term contracts leading to people leaving organisations before their training has completed. Transport and access to work was also cited as a barrier as many young people cannot drive and public transport is often non-existent in rural areas.

Key learning points

A range of barriers to young people's involvement in the environmental sector have emerged from the current research. The lack of a living wage whilst training is one of the main barriers, limiting particularly young people from a disadvantaged background. It was also noted a lack of diversity in age, socioeconomic and education background in the hosting organisations as well as cultural barriers limiting opportunities for young people. Actions must be considered to address the barriers and unlock the full potential of young people seeking careers in the environmental sectors. The main ones are listed below:

- The environmental sector as a whole, including its leadership, needs to ensure equality of opportunity and become more representative of UK society, by valuing potential rather than experience.
- Trustees, CEOs and senior managers must show leadership and conviction in breaking down barriers for young people entering the environmental sector and tackling the issue of inclusivity. A campaign of practical action whereby a cohort of CEOs and Chairs publish what inclusivity means for the environment sector and steps they will take to progress it, could stimulate action.
- The sector must consider entry level living wage for training programmes, shifting away from the unpaid internship model and striving to incorporate training schemes and the cost of certified qualifications into their "business as usual" budgets.
- Employers must adapt through training and development to be more youth-friendly. Consideration needs to be given to initiatives attractive to younger workers that do not impact on the business case but improve work/life balance. Examples include flexible working and 4-day week placements.
- A training needs analysis should be undertaken across the sector to develop a pathway into work, and beyond, onto a recognised career progression ladder.
- Schools career advisors need to be made aware of training programmes and job opportunities in the environmental sector.

⁴³ Comments from four of the people interviewed for this research

⁴⁴ [The Young Foundation, The Way to Work report, 2011](#)

⁴⁵ [Effective outreach to NEETs Experience from the ground, Ruth Santos-Brien \(ICF\) for the European Commission, 2018](#)

7. Diversity in the sector and the impacts this has on young people

Many respondents felt very strongly about this issue. Perception was that the sector favours the white middle class. The lack of diversity was linked to governance, leadership and management cultures that had not recognised the need for equality, diversity and inclusion within their organisations.

A recent New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) report stated that the charity sector has a diversity issue and as a result it is missing out on talent⁴⁶. This will apply equally to the environment sector.

In June 2018, the voluntary sector employed 865,916 people representing almost 3% of the total UK workforce⁴⁷. 9% of the sector is non-white, compared to 12% of the private sector and 11% of the public sector.

In 2017, Policy Exchange⁴⁸ measured the extent of ethnic diversity across occupations in England and Wales, finding that ethnic diversity has been unevenly distributed across different sectors and that 'environment professionals' were the second least diverse profession in the UK. See Appendix 4.

In 2018, Students Organising for Sustainability conducted in-depth research with the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, and The Equality Trust⁴⁹. Key findings from their research included:

- 3.1% of environment professionals identify as minorities compared to 19.9% of all occupations.
- 9% of UK students in higher education studying direct feeder subjects to environment professions identify as non-white minorities compared to 22% of UK students in higher education.
- White British respondents were more likely to have visited natural areas, with the exception of local parks than respondents who identify as Black, Asian or from other ethnic minority groups in the past academic term (37% compared with 17% have visited a country park).
- When thinking about future career options, respondents who identify as Black, Asian or from other ethnic minority groups are more likely to say factors such as opportunities for progression, how well-respected the job is and whether roles contribute to helping the environment are important.

Young people from ethnic diverse backgrounds do not see a place for themselves in environmental organisations because "people like them were not in leadership roles"⁵⁰. A charity trustee is up to 400 times as likely to be a retired white man co-

⁴⁶ [New Philanthropy Capital, Walking the Talk, Putting workplace equality, diversity and inclusion into practice, 2019](#)

⁴⁷ [NCVO, How many people work in the sector and what do they do? 2018](#)

⁴⁸ [The Policy Exchange, The two sides of diversity, 2017](#)

⁴⁹ [National Union of Students, Students Organising for Sustainability, Race, inclusivity and environmental sustainability, 2018](#)

⁵⁰ [BBC Wildlife Magazine, Discover Wildlife](#)

opted into the position compared to a working black woman who was recruited through an open process⁵¹.

Key learning points

- There is a clear call for equality, diversity and inclusion within the charity sector, which is now engaging more actively in this issue⁵². The sector must strive to ensure that trustee boards are inclusive and representative wherever possible, and there is a critical need for diversity training amongst leaders and members of staff⁵³.
- Organisations need to ensure recruitment processes are inclusive ensuring that the people who work in organisations reflect the variety found in local populations⁵⁴.
- To operate effectively, organisations need an appropriate mix of skills and knowledge (for instance financial management, safeguarding, or knowledge of the area of work); background and life experience; and ways of thinking⁵⁵.
- Governance and leadership training and resources should integrate the reasons for, and benefits of, diversity and inclusivity
- The environmental sector can look to other sectors who have been on this journey including the Museum network⁵⁶. Leaders in the environmental sector should come together to consider a collaborative approach to the Dormant accounts youth fund, designed to support bold approaches to increase youth employment in target areas, decrease black and minority ethnic youth employment gaps nationally and create a solid base for targeted interventions supporting the most disadvantaged young people.⁵⁷

⁵¹ [Civil Society, Who sits on the typical trustee board? 2017](#)

⁵² [#Charity So White Campaign](#)

⁵³ [Sustainability Exchange, Research on lack of ethnic diversity on sustainability](#)

⁵⁴ [National Trust Resource Pack, Inclusive Recruitment, 2017](#)

⁵⁵ [Hewlett, S.A. et al. \(2013\) 'How diversity can drive innovation', in Harvard Business Review](#)

⁵⁶ [Museum Detox – a networking group for BAME professionals in museums and heritage](#)

⁵⁷ [Dormant accounts youth fund - Statement of intent 2018](#)

8. Gaps in current knowledge

A number of key gaps have been identified and require further collective investigation by environmental sector organisations.

The present report has shown that training schemes are critical feeder routes for young people to get into employment. However, the evidence gathered across the sector lacks consistency. The sector needs to agree a common set of metrics and indicators, for example the cost of training programmes, the skills and knowledge gained, jobs secured, health and wellbeing outcomes. This would enable to streamline reporting to governments and funders on the impact of training programmes. NPC have developed a Journey to Employment framework which provides an effective starting point for this conversation⁵⁸.

Environmental leaders and their staff need to be representative of the complex communities that they serve to better respond to their needs. Current evidence indicates a significant gap between the demographic profile of the United Kingdom and that of environmental organisations. Additional research is needed to understand the state of the sector, the challenges to achieve a more diverse and reflective workforce across the sector and how these can be addressed.

The environment sector has not adequately looked at long-term workforce planning requirements – in terms of future needs, skills, supply and demand. However, a 2014 research forecast for land-based and environmental industries described an ageing workforce and increasing employment opportunities across the sector. To meet these demands, 595,000 entrants would be required to work in sustainability and environmental sector by 2020⁵⁹. Since the most recent skills needs analysis for the environmental sector was in 2014, there is a pressing requirement for the sector to develop a comprehensive workforce plan.

⁵⁸ [New Philanthropy Capital, The Journey to Employment \(JET\) framework, 2013](#)

⁵⁹ [Lantra Skills Assessment Update Research Forecast: April 2014](#)

9. Conclusions

This report has analysed the need to establish long-term support from government and funders, for employment training schemes that give young people the opportunity to secure employment in the environmental sector.

The report draws on a range of data sources, including interviews with project managers, feedback from young people collected via workshops and evidence submitted by over 20 organisations responsible for delivering youth training projects in the environmental sector.

The evidence reviewed has shown that training schemes are critical feeder routes for young people to get into employment. However, in order to make a real difference to young people and the environment, investment needs to be long term.

Successful training programmes demonstrate key attributes at three different levels:

1. Strategic level

- Long-term reliable funding
- Strong partnerships and collaboration between organisations to share best practice
- Trustee and senior leadership support in breaking barriers to youth involvement
- Common approach on data gathering and key performance indicators to enable meaningful impact reporting
- Skills needs analysis and workforce plan for the environmental sector
- Connections with schools and Further Education Colleges
- Recognised career progression post training

2. Organisational level

- Recognition of the need for a diverse workforce reflective of the local community, including ethnicity, physical and mental health, gender identity.
- Recruitment and retention strategies that are youth-friendly
- Inclusive recruitment processes and policies which support the needs of a diverse workforce
- Organisational culture which recognises specific needs of young people
- Focus on life experience and potential as opposed to academic qualifications in relation to entry requirements
- Positive work training environment

3. Participant level

- Personalised and intensive support offered by high quality staff
- Entry level living wage for trainees
- Focus on confidence building, soft skills, team working and varied work experience
- Stable employment both in training and in employment
- Ability of scheme to flex in order to meet individual needs (flexible working and 4-day week placements)
- Recognition of the difficulties accessing transport to training and work
- Clarity on career progression opportunities post-training

The report also provides recommendations to environmental organisations to ensure that, while planning future training opportunities for young people they respond to young people's needs and offer the most effective and inclusive experience.

Environmental organisations are called to:

- engage with governments and funding organisations to secure long-term financial support for a new employment training scheme that supports young people into careers in the environment sector, which will contribute to the transformation of the UK economy to meet the future challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. There appears to be scope for the environmental sector to engage with The Education and Skills Funding Agency, Jobs Growth Wales, Skills Development Scotland to discuss a future skills-based environment employment training programme in England, Wales and Scotland respectively. In Northern Ireland priority should be given to the Department of the Economy and the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural affairs.
- develop a collective approach to training, accreditation and impact measurement through engagement with New Philanthropy Capital to update their journey to work framework and with the National Trust to build on and share its 2017 Inclusive Recruitment resource pack. This must be underpinned by a renewed effort to tackle the linked issues of a lack of diversity and multiple barriers facing young people wishing to pursue careers in the sector.
- develop clear actions that deal with the combined issues of diversity and lack of inclusivity through engagement with the National Union of Students, NCVO, ACEVO, WCVA, and others to hold a sector wide conversation on diversity and inclusivity and then develop a clear set of objectives, outcomes, timings and targets that hold the sector to account in addressing this vital issue.
- secure the right talent and reflect modern society, increasing the social and ethnic diversity of its people. Measures to address this must be built into future training programmes and organisational development plans. In parallel organisations must review organisational culture, policies and working practices to ensure they are aligned with progressive, inclusive working practices.
- develop a collective approach to future workforce planning working with Greener UK to assess future employment needs across environmental organisations in the UK and with Sustainability Exchange to seek support from other sectors

There is a growing skills and labour gap in the environment sector and there is a shortage of secure employment opportunities for young people, particularly for those from a disadvantaged background. This is a rare opportunity for the environment sector to make a major contribution to tackling these challenges through the development of high-quality routes into work for young people that enhances their job prospects and delivers solutions to the climate emergency.

Our Bright Future is calling for governments across the UK to fund new training schemes that would allow the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers. The evidence gathered for this report demonstrates how environmental organisations play an important role in helping young people's access to work, especially for those who are not in education, employment and training. It demonstrates that well-funded, dynamic

training programmes provide young people with the skills and experience they need to secure employment⁶⁰.

There is now an opportunity for the environment sector to work with governments and other funders to develop new environmental training programmes built on fairness and equality, enabling a generation of young people to work in jobs that both benefit the individual and wider society.

⁶⁰ This is in line with findings from the evaluation of Talent Match, that found that voluntary organisations are very effective in leading large, strategic youth employment partnerships. They are also in a unique position to act as advisors, advocates, role models, promoters, mentors, connectors, outreach workers, feedback facilitators and trainers.

Appendix 1 - The three key changes young people want to see



Our Bright Future collected more than 700 ideas from young people and youth workers during eight events and youth-led research, involving more than 300 people across the UK. The main questions was: "If you could change one thing for you and the environment, what would this be?" Young people replied that they wanted three key changes.

These Asks have been developed by young people at a UK-level. The specific calls under each Ask will be made bespoke to each nation and jurisdiction, following a process of consultation with young people and projects.

Ask 1: More time spent learning in and about nature

Our Bright Future is calling for Government to produce guidance to schools stating that at least an hour of lesson time per day should be spent outdoors.

Ask 2: Support to get into environmental jobs

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

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

Our Bright Future is calling on Government to create space for young people to be heard and play an active role in society. Therefore, the programme urges Government to:

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

Appendix 2 - Acknowledgements

The following organisations contributed to this review, providing evidence and invaluable comment:

The Wildlife Trusts
Belfast Hills Partnership
Cornwall Wildlife Trust
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Dorset Wildlife Trust
Centre for Stewardship
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London Wildlife Trust
Middlesbrough Environment City
The National Lottery Community Fund
National Trust
The National Youth Agency
Office for National Statistics
Students Organising for Sustainability
The Conservation Volunteers
The New Museum School
The Orchard Project
The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside
UpRising
Wild London
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
Ulster Wildlife
Youth Cymru
YouthLink Scotland

Appendix 3 – List of Our Bright Future projects and location

- Building Sustainable Communities (Swansea)
- Youth In Nature (Hull)
- Belfast Hills Bright Future (Belfast)
- Your Shore Beach Rangers (Cornwall)
- Our Wild Coast (North Wales)
- Vision England (Cumbria, Shropshire and Surrey)
- Growing Confidence (Shropshire)
- Bright Green Future (Across the UK)
- Green Leaders (Northamptonshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and the North East)
- Green Academies Project (Birmingham, London, Greater Manchester, North East and Wrexham)
- Grassroots Challenge (Across Northern Ireland)
- From Farm to Fork (Across the UK)
- Fife's Our Bright Future (Fife)
- Spaces 4 Change (Across the UK)
- Green Futures (Yorkshire and Lancashire)
- One Planet Pioneers (Middlesbrough)
- Growing Up Green (Lincoln)
- Avon and Gloucestershire Our Bright Future (Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury)
- Creative Pathways for Environmental Design (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire)
- BEE You! (Liverpool)
- Myplace (Preston, Chorley, East Lancashire and West Lancashire)
- My World My Home (London, East Midlands, Wales and South West England)
- Environmental Leadership Programme (London, Birmingham, Manchester and Cardiff)
- Fruit-full Communities (Across the UK)
- Tomorrow's Natural Leaders (Yorkshire)
- The Environment Now (Across the UK)
- Eco Talent (England)
- Milestones (Wiltshire)
- Welcome to the Green Economy (London)
- Putting Down Roots for Young People (Bristol, Oxfordshire and London)
- Student Eats (Across the UK)

Appendix 4 - From the Policy Exchange Report: The two sides of diversity

Table 3. Ten least diverse occupations

Rank	Occupation	Diversity
1	Farmers	0.03
2	Environment professionals	0.06
3	Animal care services occupations n.e.c.	0.11
4	Police officers (sergeant and below)	0.11
5	Gardeners and landscape gardeners	0.11
6	Engineering technicians	0.11
7	Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades supervisors	0.12
8	Purchasing managers and directors	0.13
9	Roofers, roof tilers and slaters	0.14
10	Metal working production and maintenance fitters	0.14

Appendix 5 - Stories behind the stats

My confidence has improved massively - after three years of unemployment I was cut-off - some confidence has improved. Overall mental well-being is a lot better than it was. I will probably head into the agricultural industry...it's something I always wanted to do but never has the basic skills or confidence"

I have learnt so much through the programme, not only about employment but my own personal development. I now have the confidence to volunteer myself for projects. I am willing to try new things"

The programme has been great, I've definitely grown as a person and am more confident in my abilities as well as gaining industry recognised certificates that have helped me secure my new job"

Before I took part in the programme I thought a career in conservation would be far fetched, that only people with degrees would be suitable. But through the programme I developed the key skills needed in order to help me gain a great job in a field I love with a well-respected conservation charity".

Appendix 6 - Case Studies

Jack, Developing Rural Skills programme, The Centre for Stewardship

Jack has a natural enthusiasm and positive outlook on life but had struggled to engage in the structure of the education system and to find a way to develop and learn that would allow him to achieve his dream of becoming a forester.

"School wasn't for me, I found it hard to learn in the classroom and just wanted to be outside doing practical things, so I left but not really knowing what to do next."

That's where the Fife based Our Bright Future programme was able to help. The programme is delivering a range of Modern Apprenticeships in Rural Skills, Horticulture and Trees and Timber from its Partner sites across Fife. The programme enables young people to gain industry-recognised certificates and access to a formal qualification alongside real practical work experience, all whilst they are earning a wage.

"I applied and was accepted onto the programme which I've really enjoyed, especially working with the chainsaws. I now have my NTPC chainsaw maintenance, crosscutting and felling (up to 380mm) ticket as well as aerial rescue and use of chainsaw up a tree, which lets me chainsaw on the ground and at height. My favourite bit is when you make a really nice cut and you hear the crack as the tree falls without snagging on anything on the way down! I've also surprised myself in that the paperwork side of the apprenticeship has been OK, they are definitely the way forward."

In fact Jack has done so well that he was nominated as a finalist in Lantra Scotland's Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year Awards in the Trees and Timber category narrowly missing out as runner-up. The training and experience he has received has allowed him to enter into the rural sector as skilled professionals in his chosen field.

"I've just secured my first permanent job as a Lead Operative Special Arborist!"

This is critical at a time where we have an aging population and not enough young skilled people entering into the rural sector to take over from them in maintaining and developing our local landscapes.

Farhad, From Farm To Fork, Foodcycle

18 year old Farhad is an Afghani from Helmand Province who arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied minor in 2016. He was living in the care system and on top of his college studies, wanted to find active ways to participate in community life. He heard about the gleaning opportunities through Brighton Table Tennis Club, who organised a minibus to take volunteers to a sweetcorn farm. Gleaning is the harvesting of produce that would have gone to waste. Farhad went on to attend two apple gleaning days in the autumn too. He was described by the team as a 'gleaning machine' as he always harvested much more than his share. He recently gained a table tennis coaching qualification and is planning to attend more gleaning days this year. Despite personal adversity, he is very capable and determined to help others.

Ellie, Green Futures, Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust

25 year old Ellie had recently gained a postgraduate degree in biodiversity and conservation from the University of Leeds. She had returned home to the Yorkshire Dales and was looking for opportunities to get involved in local environmental projects as she was working in a local supermarket stacking shelves. She was lucky enough to land herself a position as a graduate trainee at Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT). Working in the fundraising team, she got stuck into organising the Flowers of the Dales Festival. She went on to become a youth representative on the Green Futures Steering Group, which directs the project. In addition to taking part in regular Steering Group meetings she sat on the interview panel for a new Green Guardians Project Officer and helped to plan and run the Green Futures Youth Environment Summit. She has now progressed to become a YDMT Trustee and has secured a job at Ribble Rivers Trust.

Rebecca, Fastlaners Programme, UpRising

24 year old Rebecca had been travelling and doing poorly paid creative work for small sustainability charities, prior to coming to the Environmental Leadership Programme. She felt that she didn't have professional skills and wasn't where she wanted to be in life. Once she joined the programme she was given great opportunities to network and improve her knowledge of environmentalism. She particularly enjoyed the campaign training and being able to get her own ideas off the ground. Being on a course with other like-minded individuals gave her a real boost, and she now counts many of her course colleagues amongst her closest friends. She is now writing a business plan for her environmental enterprise and applying for long term jobs.

Ravi, The Environment Now, The National Youth Agency

23 year old Ravi is a Leeds University environment and business graduate. He set up a company called Filamentive and joined The Environment Now project. Filamentive recycles and processes plastic waste to make 3D printer filament. He found out about The Environment Now through the enterprise society at his university and decided to apply. The funding Ravi received has allowed him to experiment with the manufacturing of recycled 3D printer filament and improve his marketing of the company. He has even been recognised by Leeds University as 'Entrepreneur of the Year'.

"Not only has The Environment Now allowed Filamentive to grow, it also projects the trust in backing young entrepreneurs who are pioneering innovative solutions to the environmental problems we face as a planet"

Alana, Belfast Hills Bright Future, Belfast Hills Partnership

The Our Bright Future project has helped change my life dramatically! Before starting the programme I had just given birth to my daughter and was working a menial part time bar job. Trying to juggle family life and late-night shifts soon took its toll and I realised I needed to make a drastic decision.

I joined the project and immediately fell in love with all things outdoors. The team at Belfast Hills helped us achieve so much in such a short time, from soft skills such as working as team, communication and confidence, to practical skills such as working with different tools and conserving natural spaces.

Alongside this we also took part in the John Muir Award, this allowed us to gain qualifications while working outside. We learned key transferable skills such as surveying using kick samples, transects and visual surveys.

Because of this programme I realised my love for nature and became driven to help conserve and protect our green spaces. With the skills and qualifications I gained from the project I was then able to go on and get an assistant ranger job with the National Trust and now help take care of some of the most stunning and wildlife rich areas.

I am now able to take young people like myself in guided walks and introduce them to wildflowers, butterflies or bumblebees which beforehand they would have walked past. Without this programme and the help of the Belfast Hills, none of this would be possible!

Beach Rangers, Your Shore Beach Rangers, Cornwall Wildlife Trust

This year, 18 Bodmin College sixth form students, alongside their BTEC Work Skills qualification, have successfully achieved their Your Shore Beach Rangers Bronze Award. With Brender Willmott's support in organising activities and specialist trainers, the students have experienced workshops including diet and nutrition along with mental and physical well-being. They have also enjoyed surfing, rock pooling and coastal walking over the last 12 months. Furthermore, four year 13 students have successfully achieved their emergency first aid certificate prior to entering employment – a fantastic boost to their CV.

As part of the environmental element, the groups have taken part in beach cleans at Par Sands and Porthpean alongside learning about the impact of plastic ending up in our oceans. Items collected were identified and the data was used as part of the Marine Conservation Society Great British Beach Clean Weekend held in September last year.

From this, the students were inspired to consider the college's environment and wanted to put steps in place to make improvements. Research and investigations followed and the groups have taken part in visits to the local recycling facility in Bodmin as well as the Energy Recovery Centre in St Dennis. Natalie Chard, senior community liaison manager for SUEZ, has also been instrumental in supporting the project and SUEZ have recently donated reusable cups to all Year 12 students in a drive to reduce waste as well as an incentive to get money off from high street coffee houses!

A whole host of ideas and initiatives are being discussed across the college with local community groups and local businesses culminating in a newly formed Eco-Committee. Bodmin College have recently signed up to the Foundation for the Environment and Education Eco-Schools programme, with the aim to gain Eco-Schools Bronze status by the end of the year. This will be achieved by forming the Eco-Committee, putting together an environmental review and creating an action plan with steps in place.

Alison Perrin, Bodmin College's Work Skills Tutor said; *"The Your Shore Project has been the inspiration for Bodmin College to work towards becoming an Eco-School. Through the activities and workshops organised by Brender and her team, the*

students have really been the driving force for improving our environmental commitment– it will be quite the legacy for them."

Joanna, Natural Talent programme, The Conservation Volunteers

My traineeship is with Buglife Scotland in Stirling, working on their Marvellous Mud Snails project which began last year. This is largely a public engagement project and so I will be involved in a lot of outreach and educational events, including working regularly with local primary schools and getting people to love our pond snails and other freshwater species! As pond mud snails are a rare species, a major part of the project is to conserve and expand the current populations in Scotland.

We will be doing this through surveying the seven current populations, creating habitat management plans and running a captive breeding programme with local schools and communities, after which the snails will be released into newly-created habitats. As well as assisting with the project I will be able to work on my own development; improve my knowledge of freshwater habitats, build up my invertebrate identification skills and from time-to-time work with TCV and the other trainees on their projects too.

After a year in this traineeship I am going to come away with an enormous variety of skills. I am hoping to build my confidence in public engagement and public speaking, learn how to effectively plan and run events, coordinate with other organisations and gain experience running workshops with children and volunteers. I will build up a strong knowledge of freshwater habitats and species and refine my identification skills. I am also going to be involved in writing habitat management plans for the pond mud snail sites, which will be a completely new skill as I have never done this before. I will also learn some administrative skills such as how to manage budgets and write risk assessments.

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