

Case Study: Next Generation Nature Schools Project



Green Communities is an exciting, Plymouth-based partnership project which is shaping neighbourhoods in Devonport, Central Park, Keyham and the West of the City.

We have written a series of case studies to highlight the breadth of work taking place with these nature neighbourhoods. You can read these case studies at greenmindsplymouth.com/greenhubs

Overview

Green Communities collaborated with the National Trust to support delivery of the Next Generation Nature programme in Plymouth, funded by Starling Bank. To complement the work being carried out by the National Trust at Saltram, Green Communities focused on working with a diverse range of children and young people in their own neighbourhoods, supporting those who have least access to nature.

What were we trying to do?

Our ambition was to help young people and their families feel more connected to place and to each other. We supported children and young people's health and wellbeing by making green spaces more accessible, developing biodiversity, and reframing attitudes towards grey areas which had the potential to be good for nature.

Through a range of activities, we helped young people to:

- connect with nature in their local green spaces/ neighbourhood/ school grounds
- work together to make their green, local spaces a better place for wildlife and people
- explore opportunities for increasing green skills and knowledge.



LEFT: Year 3 pupils at Shakespeare Primary School learn about tree care at Central Park.



Why did we do it?

We offered schools and youth groups a suite of climate education sessions which were linked to the National Curriculum and the Government's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy: they were developed by a qualified teacher. We incorporated the sessions into three, key themes: Nature Knowledge, Supporting Nature, and Connecting to Nature, and linked them to the Green Communities' aims. We retained a flexible approach and adapted sessions to suit a range of learning styles and age groups. This proved effective as we successfully engaged with a wide range of students aged 4-19 years old.

As part of the Nature Knowledge theme, we delivered 'Improving Biodiversity in your School Grounds' sessions where students focused on nature recovery through ecological monitoring and planting pollinator-friendly plants. For Supporting Nature, we taught students to develop and create habitats for wildlife in their local area and explored ways to protect and nurture these spaces within the community. For Connecting to Nature, we offered sensory walks and nature-themed yoga sessions, working with local businesses and experts to develop students' health and wellbeing through nature connection.



Who was involved?

The Next Generation Nature project was led by the Green Communities team. We worked with local businesses such as Yoga Blend and Harpers at Plymouth Argyle to support the delivery of wellbeing sessions, as well as a range of schools in Devonport, Stoke, Central Park and Keyham.

Our focus was children and young people, and we worked with a range of schools, colleges and youth groups:

- University Technical College
- Stoke Damerel Community College
- Keyham Barton Primary School
- Marlborough Primary School
- City College
- Shakespeare Primary School
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary
- PL2 KYDZ Youth Group
- Wellbeing Warriors Youth Group
- Mount Wise Youth Group



"Enjoyed taking care of life", student from Stoke Damerel Community College during the 'Improving Biodiversity in your School's Grounds' session.

LEFT: City College Plymouth students learn how to carry out an ecological survey at Paradise Road.

Who funded it?

Next Generation Nature is a National Trust initiative, funded by Starling Bank.

When did it happen?

The Next Generation Nature Project is a three-year programme, running from 2023-2026. During year 1, we started planning the project in November 2023 and delivered the sessions between February and May 2024. After presenting our programme to the National Trust National Team, we secured funding to deliver the next two years of the project. We are excited to be in delivery stage 2 and have created a long-term project plan throughout July-September 2024. We will be leading and delivering a range of sessions, including Art Workshops and Green Skills Development within Saltram's grounds. We will also continue to deliver sessions in school grounds and local green spaces between October 2024 – July 2025.



What were the results?

We have experienced such positive results from the Next Generation Nature programme. The Green Communities Team have strengthened existing relationships, created relationships with new partners and businesses, formulated more funding and further collaboration with the National Trust.

Our team has shared skills and developed an open, knowledge exchange network to observe and learn from each other. Our collaborative sessions with the National Trust have reached new audiences and improved accessibility to properties for people in the communities we work within.

We have created and maintained positive relationships with a wide range of schools, youth groups and colleges within Plymouth.

Our strong, collaborative network will provide a platform for continued learning and relationship building over the next two years of the project.

Our flexible, professional approach proved effective as we successfully engaged with students aged 4-19 years old.



'Phenomenal'

-student from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School at the 'Connecting to Nature through Creativity' session.

LEFT: At Shakespeare Primary School we delivered a Connecting to Nature through Creativity session, where students listened to stories and created clay sculptures. The children also learnt about wildlife meadows and created artist palettes to take home.

How successful was it?

We made 19 visits to different schools, youth groups and green spaces and successfully engaged with 387 young people.

Our sessions encouraged students to continue their lead actions independently, within their schools. After taking part in a planting session with Green Communities, students at Marlborough Primary school learnt about how to support wildlife in their local area. As a result of this, they took independent action to support a local project, 'Clean Our Patch' and regularly take part in litter picks to support and nurture habitats.

Key learnings

- Having a point of contact and lead for the project worked well, as we have maintained a coordinated and professional approach to planning, organisation and communication with schools and the rest of the team.
- Having a qualified teacher lead communication with schools ensured we used specific language which maximised engagement.



- Creating lesson plans and linking all nature connection activities to the National Curriculum ensured our climate education sessions were relevant and purposeful.
- We learnt that students appreciate and enjoy having autonomy and taking positive action against climate change.
- It was effective working in partnership with the National Trust as we could offer collaborative sessions. It was also successful for continued professional development within the team as we could learn from each other's teaching styles. We hope to create some sessions to carry out at Saltram in the future and develop further opportunities to work together.
- The project provided continued professional development and learning for the team. Each team member has gained confidence and has found it useful to work from an established lesson plan format.



"My knowledge blossomed like a wildflower"

-student from Stoke Damerel Community College during the 'Improving Biodiversity in your School's Grounds' session.

ABOVE: Year 2 at Shakespeare Primary School take part in a 'Budding Naturalist session, where they learn about some of the different species which live at Central Park

Key learnings continued...

- We received positive feedback from businesses we collaborated with-Yoga Blend want to work with us again and have asked us to put them in touch with schools to offer sessions to support students' mental and physical wellbeing. Yoga Blend enjoyed working with a different target audience and sharing the positive effect yoga can have on physical and mental wellbeing. It enabled them to create contact with young people and offer their services to a different section of society. It is important to maintain an ongoing positive relationship with a range of stakeholders and businesses to ensure the communities we work with have access to a range of new and diverse opportunities.
- We increased the perimeters of knowledge sharing to students and coached placement students working at Plymouth City Council, ensuring nature connection practices are sustained.
- Remaining flexible, consistent, and having the confidence and expertise to offer a range of activities to students was fundamental to the project.
- Linking learning to the curriculum and being specific about the language we used in sessions and communication with schools was essential.
- Van availability was key for transporting equipment and staff safely.
- We instilled the good practice of organising a run-through session before each lesson to ensure everyone was confident in their roles and what they were sharing (an opportunity to practice and ask questions). This was a core practice throughout the schools' project and has continued in other areas of Green Communities planning. The Next Generation Nature programme provided structure, and organisation and modelled good practice.
- Having communication with teachers and finding out details about the class and students before sessions was essential. This ensured we could tailor sessions to suit the needs of learners (the City College ESOL class were a great example- students had signed up to complete a 'story doors' activity at Central Park but, as we knew students were aged 16-19 and learning English as an additional language, this activity was less suitable. We planned and delivered another session centred around wellbeing in nature to support students who had experienced trauma-many were refugees).
- We set up a clear process in the schools' project to ensure professionalism and a consistent approach: collaborate with team, plan, check with lead, and then send communications externally/upload on the system. This was a success because schools were informed at the same time, and they received a professional, consistent message.
- The project provided a template to structure and support innovative ideas within the team.



green
communities

**"Fabulous, great, amazing
and joyful"**

**-student at Keyham Barton
Primary school during the
'Improving Biodiversity
in your School's
Grounds' session.**



green
communities

How have we met our objectives?

Nature Recovery: We improved biodiversity in several schools' grounds by planting wildlife meadows and specific species which are good for pollinators.

Nature Connection: Each session included sensory activities and actions to improve nature connectedness for young people.

Health and Wellbeing: We specifically tailored climate education sessions which explored health and wellbeing, for example yoga lessons and mindful, creative projects.

Next steps?

- We will use the reflections and learning document, as well as evaluation, to develop and plan for next year.
- We will use saved resources to continue with youth work.
- We are bringing schools and communities together to support one another.
- We are connecting community groups and school groups to enable opportunities for volunteering and green skills development.
- We will continue to work in partnership businesses and stakeholders on joint projects for example the micro tree nursery project.
- We have received sustained contact from schools who want to take part in the next two years of the project.
- We have organised continued reflection and planning sessions throughout the year.
- We are deepening our relationship with National Trust to plan and collaborate between Green Communities and Saltram. We want to see how we can most effectively improve accessibility to National Trust properties and encourage students' use of free passes. We also want to investigate further continuous professional development opportunities.



ABOVE: Connecting to Nature through Creativity session at Central Park

RIGHT: At Keyham Barton Catholic School we taught students about biodiversity through an educational game and replaced the plastic foliage in the playground with herbs and plants which are good pollinators.

