



greenminds

greenminds evaluation

**Devonport/Stonehouse
Neighbourhood Management
Trial Evaluation**



Methodology

Evaluations were carried out by an independent contractor through interviews with key staff involved in project delivery during August/September 2023, site visits, and review of project monitoring information.

The neighbourhood management trials took place in four contrasting areas:

Central Park

Central Park was created in 1928 as a park for the city as a whole. It is highly valued by the people of Plymouth, holding a treasured place in many family memories. It is large and complex, comprising many spaces of different character attracting a diversity of users.

Derriford Community Park

Derriford Community Park is a new green space, wilder than Central Park. It lacks a longstanding community of users, and its value to the community is still being tested and developed.

Devonport and Stonehouse

Social Enterprise trails in Stonehouse/Devonport communities focused on the wilding and development of under-used spaces. Their aim was to develop alternative approaches to management and financing that added value for the local community in a sustainable way.

Trees and Rewilding Corridors

Keyham Green Spaces were selected for evaluation as components of the Urban Trees and Wilding Corridors management trial. Keyham suffered a traumatic shooting incident in 2021 which led to calls for improved safety and to make green spaces more welcoming to overcome the fear of going out. Five spaces were reimagined by their users, mostly living in the immediate vicinity. A strategic plan brought a coherence to this work within the context of nature recovery.

Tree planting at Snapdragons, Victoria Park



What was proposed?

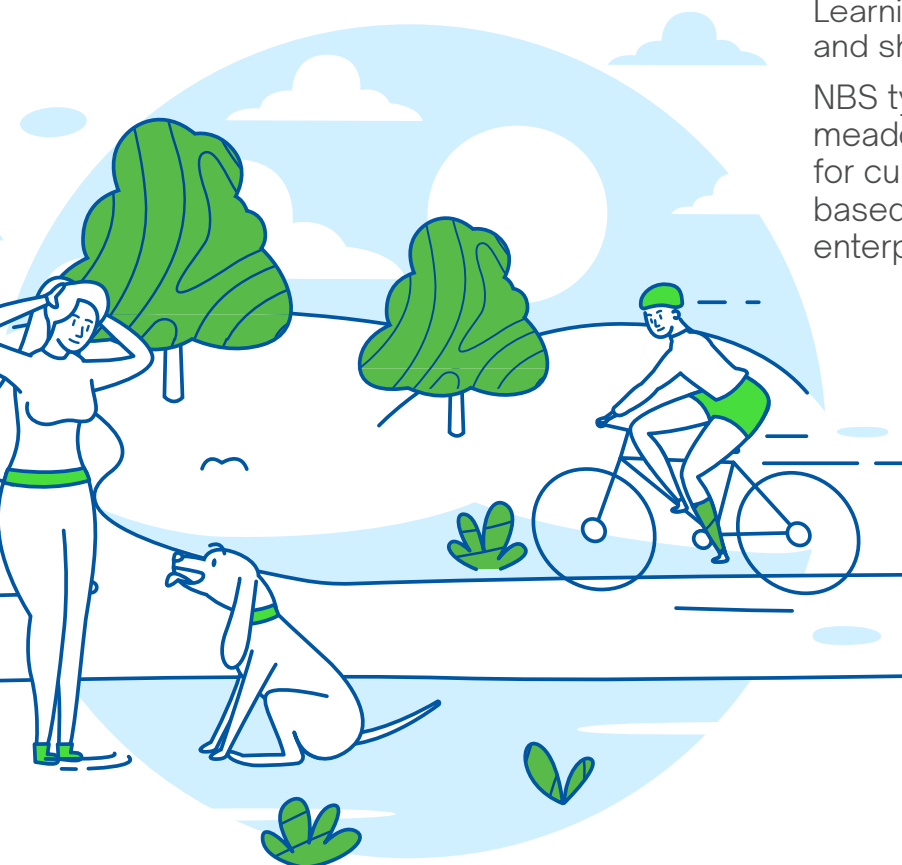
The investment will create greater community ownership, improved management and social enterprise activity across public green space and public sites in Devonport and Stonehouse, two of England's most deprived neighbourhood. As the UK's first Social Enterprise City, there is strong culture of social enterprise, where many buildings, streets and heritage assets have been subject of successful community-lead development. Combining this challenge/opportunity of socio-economic need and a successful track record of community led regeneration, Teal Futures will deliver an action research process to develop and implement a set of new, redeveloped community led green spaces across the neighbourhoods.

The activities will deliver a three-stage process:

- 1 **Mapping engagement** - mapping public spaces, ecological data, local assets/builds, community groups/businesses and key data around health and economics. It will take co-construction approach engaging local communities.
- 2 **Feasibility co-design** - based on the mapping a cohort of community members and sector experts will undertake a co-design programme. Supported by inspirational and taught content they will co-design new approaches to the development and management of these spaces.
- 3 **Development delivery** - based on the co-design of a set of sustainable capital interventions, new social enterprise activities and ways of work will be put in place.

Learning and evaluations will be captured and shared

NBS type: Tree planting, wildflower meadows and habitat improvements in parks for cultural ecosystem services (nature-based education and training, and social enterprise).



Assessment against Urban Wilding Principles

Support people and nature together	In these social enterprise investments, nature is developed as the basis for enterprises that will sustain both people and nature. Excluding the Illuminate Festival (which engaged with 22,000 people), 5,423 people from Devonport/Stonehouse communities participated in Green Minds events with 43% being new participants. 44% of participants were volunteers, primarily through the social enterprises who received grants from Green Minds. In relation to Green Minds events, the following of 113 people asked strongly agreed or agreed that spending time in nature in Devonport / Stonehouse was good for their: • Physical health - 98% • Mental health – 100% • Socialising – 98% • Feeling closer to nature – 98%
Promoting nature-inspired leadership	The investments were developed with support from Green Minds (Partner Real Ideas Organisation) to demonstrate how nature can be developed sustainably to enable and support social enterprise.
Changing values and attitudes to nature	The investments showed how nature can be an asset for the community, in a very tangible way – supporting jobs and delivery of services.
Developing co-stewardship for land management	Making land in parks available for social enterprise use has enabled new forms of community-led management to be developed. Crucially, nature is fundamental to the business models, ensuring its sustainable management. 2,479 people were involved in volunteering, contributing over 4000 hours.
Secure benefits for the long-term	Leases/licences and asset transfers give social enterprises the security to develop and grow over the years.
Create purposeful data and information supported by digital infrastructure	Some activity is digitally recorded and mapped. For example, Pollenize encourage people to map wildflower meadow seedings, on a dedicated map linked with a programme of community-run beehives for plant pollination.
Create resilient local economies	These investments demonstrate how urban nature can provide the foundation for social enterprise, supporting new jobs and acquisition of new skills
Deliver nature recovery at multiple scales.	Investments in nature by social enterprises should be consistent with the local nature recovery strategy.



What was achieved?

10 community businesses were supported, including more established and larger scale enterprises.

- 7 new enterprise projects seeded or started during Green Minds, including Stiltskin Soapbox Theatre, who expanded their outdoor theatre offer, and Hamoaze House, who introduced an ice cream truck serving Mount Wise Park.
- Development pipeline of community enterprises and projects: Plymouth Pie Club, Yoga Loft, Food Plymouth, and Be:Unique Wellbeing and Fitness are all hoping to add community offers within the next six months in Devonport and Stonehouse parks.
- These businesses are growing the local economy, trading with one another, and creating jobs, with 5 additional FTEs introduced.
- They are taking on and transforming land and buildings in partnership with PCC. There have been 5 asset transfers (lease and licences), with another in development.
- This work provided a platform to bring in additional funding for wider economic impact: £322,000 was secured from other funding sources equating to £7 for every £1 spent through Green Minds grants
- Enterprises are embedded within and working for their communities, with over 200 active volunteers from some of the most deprived neighbourhoods, and 500 people engaged through free events and activities.
- 10 businesses are introducing natural improvements, increasing biodiversity, and reducing impacts. This includes wildlife ponds, native hedge and tree planting, wildflower meadows, community composting, solar energy production, and compost toilets.



What was a success?

The projects showed how Nature can be a core element of the business model, an integrated model, that helps to sustain and develop nature as an integral part of business development. For example, the Soapbox's Art Garden is the setting for events and courses. Expanding and improving the garden drives up sales.

The availability of flexible, start-up grant funding was crucial to a successful enterprise creation. It enabled individual needs to be met, such as for equipment, professional services, capital works etc. before revenues were being generated. It helped social innovators to make decisions to invest their own time and energy into these enterprises.

What could be improved/what challenges were encountered?

The process of gaining consent and securing access to land is complex. Local authorities are complex organisations and securing a lease in public parks at the same time as securing planning consent for enterprise activities requires considerable time and effort on the part of the applicants, at a time when they are not generating any revenue. The support of Real Ideas Organisation during this period was crucial to enable the social enterprises to complete this phase.

Small or start-up social enterprises have little capacity to respond to procedures involved in asset transfer, planning consent, etc. More support or simplified procedures would help to lessen this significant barrier to social enterprise.

What lessons have been learned?

Start-up grants should be seen as investment delivering intangible returns. More conventional investment (loans) are not viable for many of these social enterprises as their risk return profile is poor. Nevertheless, they deliver important social benefits which are not normally part of the investment calculus.

Plymouth City Council have improved procedures as a result of this experience, opening better communication channels between the respective departments.

Following learning from the management trial the need for continued coordination their emerging nature-based enterprise model and further expanding their nature/ neighbourhoods approach was identified. As a result PP1, PP5, PP4 and PP3 have secured additional funding to create a People's Plan for Nature in this neighbourhood – one of 18 UK Neighbourhoods (See <https://peoplesplanfornature.org/nature-neighbourhoods>) and the development of our Community Cultivators approach into a Green Community Hubs programme, with the aim to support a community-led approach to nature recovery. These initiatives will be delivered in partnership with PP1, PP5 and PP3 from September 2023 to March 2025 and support the legacy development of the management trial.



(Pollenize apiary, photo credit Dom Moore)





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