

CCC Next Generation project

December 2024 - November '25

Final Report

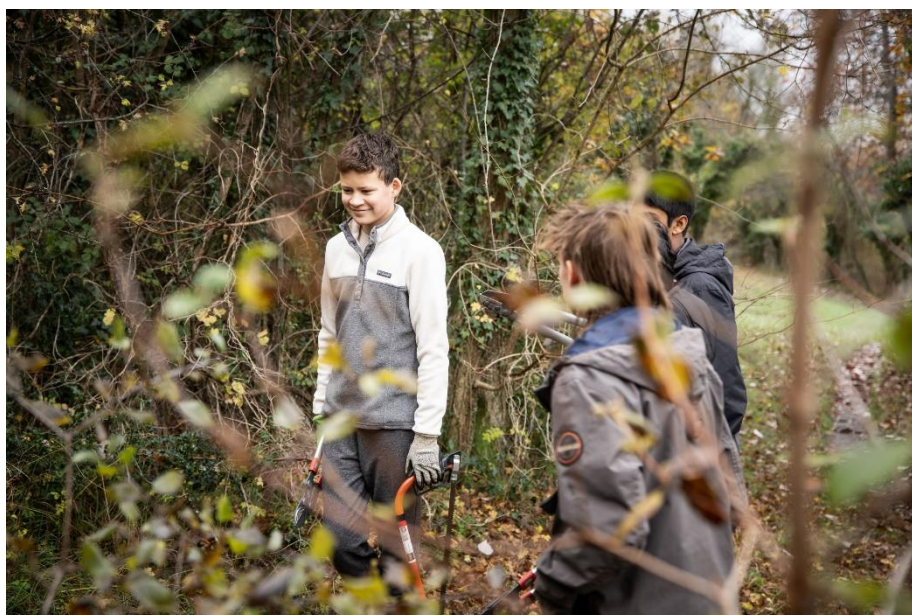


Sharing what we've learnt through our work with young people in the Chilterns, across nature and heritage

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Gomms Wood

Background

A key success of the [Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme](#) (CCC) which ran from 2019-2024 was the link established between heritage and nature, including the formation of new connections and relationships between organisations and individuals. Building on the significant legacy secured by the Scheme, partners were keen to keep this momentum going by building on research conducted within the latter stages of CCC. With permission of National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), some of the CCC partners were allocated a small amount of scheme underspend to deliver a follow on 'Forward Plan' project, since renamed 'Next Generation', as well as continuing the Partnership for a further year.

The project was planned to build on work done in the latter stages of CCC by arts consultancy INSTAR, which investigated how young people in and around High Wycombe felt about their local landscape and how they want to interact with it. These findings, along with expertise from Partners and other contacts, were to be explored further and used to test and trial some new approaches to engaging more and new young people in heritage and nature activities. The aim was to encourage others both in and out of the partnership to improve the way they develop and promote sessions for young people for the better, as well as further understand what resource this takes for an organisation to do it well.

What we delivered – introduction

The delivery team consisted of Briony Hudson – Director of Amersham Museum, Becky Downey – Community Organising Manager at BBOWT, Steph Rodgers – Senior Ranger at Chiltern Rangers, Annette Weiss - Head of Engagement & Partnerships at Chilterns National Landscape and Roz Currie – Director at Wycombe Museum, supported by expert advice from Trish Evans – INSTAR and managed by Anna Foster – freelance Project Manager. The team were given funding to explore ways of working with young people which they hadn't done before – based on some of the recommendations from INSTAR's work.

The partners all wanted to know more about engaging and working with young people in nature and heritage. With the £73,631 that was allocated to this 12 month project, the partners have spent time stepping out of their comfort zones – exploring new approaches and ways of reaching a more diverse range of young people, with fantastic results.

During an initial workshop in January 2025, the partners clarified a key aim of the project was to help organisations better connect with young people, making their work, voluntary opportunities, and offers more accessible and encouraging more young people to get involved in conservation and heritage activities and engage more with their local landscape.

In the early months of 2025, the partners worked with consultant Trish from INSTAR, the Project Manager and each other, to explore ideas and new ways of working. During this time, the partners looked at what provision for young people existed already both within and outside of their organisations, which organisations had youth engagement strategies and plans in place already, and what the gaps were.

Another consideration was the strong thread of combining heritage and nature, inherited from the main CCC project, and a defining feature of the partnership's approach. The partners also explored the concept of youth voice, and did lots of reflecting on their offers, or what they would like to offer, whilst taking into account their individual missions and, crucially, staff and volunteer capacities. This then led into the delivery phase, when during the spring and early summer of 2025, partners worked with youth organisations and young people themselves to develop and test out new approaches, aiming to build this into their offer for young people. This resulted in some fantastic activity and a huge amount of learning, that the partnership came together to review and reflect on in September 2025, before sharing everything in a public webinar in October '25, as well as in this final report.

What we did: Strategy development - Chilterns National Landscape

Background

Ensuring nature is for everyone is a core priority for the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL). Connecting with nature and the outdoors is vital to people's health and wellbeing, yet we know that access to nature is not equal, with some groups having few opportunities, or facing significant barriers, to accessing and enjoying the Chilterns landscape.

It is especially important to provide opportunities for young people to experience nature and green spaces. There are many factors contributing to young people becoming increasingly disconnected from nature, including increasing urbanisation, more sedentary lifestyles and reduced access to nature. This 'nature deficit disorder' is widely recognised, and has been linked to negative effects in mental and physical wellbeing and a diminished sense of place and cultural connection to the landscape. Yet, early life experiences can sow the seeds for a lifelong love of nature.

The CNL recognises the importance of focusing on young people and making this a priority audience. Our aspiration to working with young people is set out in our CNL Management Plan - (to be delivered collectively with partners, but with CNL have a key driving role), as well as in our EDI Ambition, and through our own work programmes.

The Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30 articulates the importance of engaging young people with nature and contains two policies around young people. These are high level policies for all partner organisations to deliver collectively.

Initially, during the development months of the project, Annette (Head of Engagement & Partnerships) and Raheed Salam (North Chilterns Partnership Officer) had discussions about the possibility of developing a skills based work experience programme for young people, as well as a few other ideas. Some of these new approaches are being piloted by partners, for example a skills-based work experience programme in Luton and by Chiltern Rangers. Learnings from this are being shared. At the start of the project, CNL did not have a youth engagement strategy (although it delivers and supports youth engagement in the Chilterns), but after discussions with the rest of the partnership and internally, CNL decided to work on an 'approach' to their work with young people, setting out their strategic approach priorities and objectives. Producing this plan was set as a strategic priority in their EDI Ambition and 2025-26 work plan, and this was something the partnership welcomed.



Desborough Hillfort – Castlefield School

Annette looked at areas such as:

- The strategic Context and Aspiration for engaging young people
- How is CNL currently engaging young people?
- Review of Chilterns provision, barriers, and opportunities for:
 - Youth volunteering and Work Experience
 - Traineeships and Green Careers
 - Youth Voice
- CNL approach and opportunities

What was delivered

This resulted in a document 'CNL Youth Engagement Approach Nov 2025' which pools together existing learnings, insights from partners, other organisations and the CNL EDI Task Group, as well as pilot activity. This can be found at www.chilterns.org.uk/flagship-projects/chalk-cherries-chairs/our-legacy/ccc-next-generation

"The CNL is a small organisation but we have a pivotal role to play in galvanising and supporting others to deliver, therefore it is important for partners and wider organisations to understand our youth engagement aspirations, for us to articulate this and to share learning and best practice." Annette

Annette presented the document and her work to the partnership, at the September review session. The partners were keen to hear how this work will be made available and communicated, and gave some feedback for Annette to incorporate. They were particularly interested in the idea of a 'hub' on the CNL website, which would give information for those young people looking for conservation and heritage experiences. The team said it was key that both angles were covered by CNL rather than just 'nature', as this is what Chalk, Cherries and Chairs has been all about.

What next?

- Create a dedicated area on CNL website on Youth Volunteering, Work Experience and Traineeships
- Support partners with testing skills-based approaches to volunteering/work experience, eg Skills Builder. Share learnings from new approaches currently being piloted
- Put out engaging comms, videos, blogs and podcasts created and co-created by young people
- Develop strategic partnerships – Youth Voice Bucks, Education Business Partnership etc
- Tap into national sources of expertise and opportunities – e.g. National parks New Perspectives project, Kids in Museums young trustees programme etc. Ensure youth expertise on EDI Task Group.
- Include youth engagement in new projects/opportunities (Nature Recovery, Landscape Connections)
- Continue Next Generation project's legacy- share learnings, signpost to resources, seek collaborative opportunities

Find out more

- ➔ Read the approach document at www.chilterns.org.uk/flagship-projects/chalk-cherries-chairs/our-legacy/ccc-next-generation
- ➔ Look out for the new web pages for young people, in Spring 2026 at www.chilterns.org.uk
- ➔ Read the Chilterns Management Plan at www.chilterns.org.uk/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/

What we did: Listening to young people - Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

Background

Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) has a bold vision of a wilder Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, with “more nature everywhere – for everyone”. Its mission is to bring about nature’s recovery by inspiring and empowering local people and partners to take action for nature.

In order to do this, BBOWT aims to connect people to nature, so they feel motivated to take action. BBOWT runs a range of inclusive activities and events, including lots for young people, such as their school visit programme, family events in holidays and Teen & Young Ranger sessions.

However, they identified there is a clear gap in attendance between the ages of around 14-25 years. They also found that it is very difficult to capture whether attending their events leads to taking action for nature in their local areas. Initial discussions were had about what work to do under this project – initially the team had an idea to run traditional ‘sessions’ for and with young people, perhaps at the Museum sites, but the team were given a challenge to think more widely, try some new approaches, to try to reach new audiences and learn as much as possible from this project.

BBOWT was also looking at ways to be able to support their Community Network of local groups and small organisations to help them learn from and engage with young people, so that their offer is more relevant, leading to more meaningful involvement with young people.

In addition, the team, as well as other colleagues within BBOWT, were keen to explore the voice of young people in the operation and governance of nature and heritage organisations to enable more relevance to young people. BBOWT was at a similar time starting to use a Community Organising framework internally, and as such, and decided to take on a ‘listening’ approach through this project. The thinking behind this was that people are more likely to take action where there is a self-interest, where it directly benefits them, rather than being something they do “because it’s good for nature or the planet”.

What was delivered

Becky Downey (Community Organising Manager) held 14 listening exercises with 67 young people over several months. She worked with partners to share connections and ran sessions with youth groups, college groups, teen ranger groups and Amersham Museum’s young curator group. The conversations had were with young people ranging from 9-25 years old.

Some meetings were held as “House Meetings” - this is where there is a nominated chair-person, minute taker and time-keeper. Open questions are posed to the group and it’s the chair-person’s job to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. Some meetings were conducted in small groups where the participants had an activity to do e.g. drilling holes into wood to make bee hotels. The idea behind this is that doing the activity reduces the intensity of the conversation and allows then participants to speak more openly. Some meetings were conducted as 1:1s where it was just Becky and the young person (although another adult would have been present if they were under 18 for safeguarding reasons).

Becky reports:

“I realised that ‘House Meetings’ were not really the best way of conducting these exercises, especially if the concept was new to the young people, as then it was a lot of new ideas at one time. The small group activities worked really well when used for

the Empower youth group, but it's a balance of time. I spoke to 6 individuals across 3 hours, as opposed to 10 individuals in 1 hour at a house meeting. As I was visiting other group's sessions, I have to take this into account, as these sessions may have only lasted an hour. The 1:1s were often the best way of conducting the listening, but they required people to be very open and interested in having the conversation in the first place. What I learned was listening is a skill that needs to be adaptable to each context."



Becky conducting a listening exercise

What we learned

Using all the content of the listening exercises, Becky conducted a thematic analysis to determine what the key themes were. These themes are summarised below - see Appendix 1 for further insights.

Young people find nature relaxing

"Sensory overload of nice senses – nice sounds, I feel relaxed and happy, not as much stress and want to chill and breathe. It's an indescribable feeling of freedom, no constraints, just taking it in"

There is a disconnect with nature and wildlife

"Dislike bugs, moths are possessed and bugs bite you"

There is a general fear of the unknown and desire for safety in young people

"[in town centres] More people are there to help if lost, why people prefer indoor spaces rather than outdoor spaces"

There is a lack of opportunities within nature spaces

"There is a lack of organised groups in nature for young people. In cities there is more activism and political ways you can get involved, less so in small towns"

Young people want to see more thrilling activities in their area

"I'd like an adult version of a playpark"

Young people have a sense of pride in their area

"Don't like muddy things and dirty, messy areas, areas that have been left derelict and have water and mud and dirt in them"

Council and money is perceived as one of the biggest barriers to areas being ideal

"Council don't care, they're spending their money in the wrong places"

Laziness is thought to be a barrier to ideal areas

"People are lazy with litter, they're disrespectful and don't care"

Some view social media as having negative impact

"Social media is an addiction and young people don't want to get involved – they don't find real life as exciting which is sad cause it's all fake these days."

Key outcomes

As well as gaining real insight into what young people think about nature, Becky and her team gained so much experience in the best ways to listen to young people, which will be passed on to colleagues and partners via this project. She states five key outcomes of the project as:

1. **Listening** is identified as one of the most important aspects of youth engagement – each young person is different, views change from person to person, across locations and over time.
2. How to go about listening is a **skill** - and needs to be **adaptable** to each context.
3. **Disconnection**, aspects of **safety** and lack of opportunities are reasons why young people don't engage with nature-based activities.
4. Young people do **care** about their areas and have relatively strong ideas and opinions on improving them.
5. The **community organising process** is a new concept for stakeholders to contextualise, and we as a team have learned about the **challenges** around this.

What next?

- The themes and information collated from listening will directly feed into the new Youth Advisory Panel work that is ongoing within BBOWT, so that young people have a voice within the governance of the organisation.
- BBOWT has new contacts – the team will continue working with these groups and individuals to build a power base within the area and communities they worked in, by connecting, organising and strategically taking action to get changes they seek and within that take meaningful action for nature.
- BBOWT will get better at explaining the community organising process to partners and others they are working with, to ensure cohesive collaboration and understanding from the start.

Find out more

- ➔ See further insights from Becky's listening exercises in Appendix 1
- ➔ Learn more about Community Organising at www.corganisers.org.uk/what-is-community-organising/our-framework
- ➔ Learn about BBOWT's community work at www.bbowl.org.uk/what-we-do/community-engagement

What we did: 'Bring it Back' for uni returners - Amersham Museum

Background

Amersham Museum is a small museum with 4 part-time staff and around 120 volunteers, which cares for around 12,000 items relating to the history of the town, its residents and the surrounding area. From photographs to maps, lace to agricultural tools, they look after a time-capsule of local stories.

The museum has a strong track record of running activities for families and children, and a successful Young Curator's group for age 14-18 year olds. However, the team identified a distinct group of young people around them – 'returners' – primarily those aged 21 plus, returning from university to their local area, and often feeling a little lost and not so connected with their community.

The museum aimed to engage this unrepresented group of young people (aged 18-25-ish) with Amersham Museum, but more importantly to provide them with a sense of place and belonging at a time in their lives where they might be feeling unsure and/or isolated.

What was delivered

Briony Hudson (Director of Amersham Museum) took swift action to develop the bones of a new project – working with very active local conservation group Wild Amersham (led by volunteer Marieke Bosman), with a geographical focus on the area surrounding the local parish church. The project was promoted as high-energy, a burst of action centred on exploring hidden wildlife, investigating the past, rediscovering a town space, and making a real impact.

To get started, she leveraged the museum's existing relationship with Wild Amersham, and engaged with existing contacts with the target age group including museum volunteers, freelancers, and family and friends of museum volunteers and supporters. The local churchyard (St Mary's, Amersham) was known to Wild Amersham, and was ripe for collaboration, being so close to the museum, a focal point of the town, and an area of land with lots of potential for increasing biodiversity and engaging with the local community. There were some practicalities to sort out, involving meetings with the Rector and Amersham Town Council (who manage the site on behalf of the church), promotion, and eventually a launch session with representatives from all partners in the churchyard.

Young people have shaped the programme itself, both in terms of name (they decided on 'Bring it Back' having ditched the idea the partners came up with, which was the very idea!), topics for sessions, plans for action, and how they might share their findings. As a result they have made a great start on uncovering forgotten history, boosting local biodiversity, and bringing fresh life to spaces, all whilst learning new skills and making connections with local people and places.

During the project delivery period, 15 sessions were held at the church yard, museum and around Amersham. Eight involved invited speakers/experts on topics ranging from graveyard archaeology to bats and botany. Over this period, there were 13 expressions of interest from participants, which led to 11 participants who have attended more than 1 session each. The Church and Amersham Town Council were kept engaged throughout. Areas covered were:





What we learned

- Communication was a challenge, as this age group typically use different channels than established organisations, and demands on their time mean they weren't always the best communicators. We eventually settled on a WhatsApp group to co-ordinate our efforts, although were interested to find that physical posters and signage were popular with the young people.
- Logistics were hard to set up! With two organising partners, working at a third party's site which was managed by another organisation, keeping everyone up to date and ensuring sessions would work practically relied heavily on our existing informal relationships. Trying to find a suitable times for sessions that fitted in the young people's lives (many working anti-social shifts, temporary jobs, freelance work or further study) and the more traditional working day of the museum team in particular, took some time. The flexibility and commitment of the Wild Amersham leader, Marieke, was key to the project's success.
- The spring/summer timing of the project, staff capacity in the museum team during the project period, and the attraction of working on site outdoors, meant that the programme was heavily tipped towards the biodiversity element. However, the 'unbalanced' nature of the sessions doesn't appear to have mattered to the participants, and future plans include more heritage content.

Key outcomes

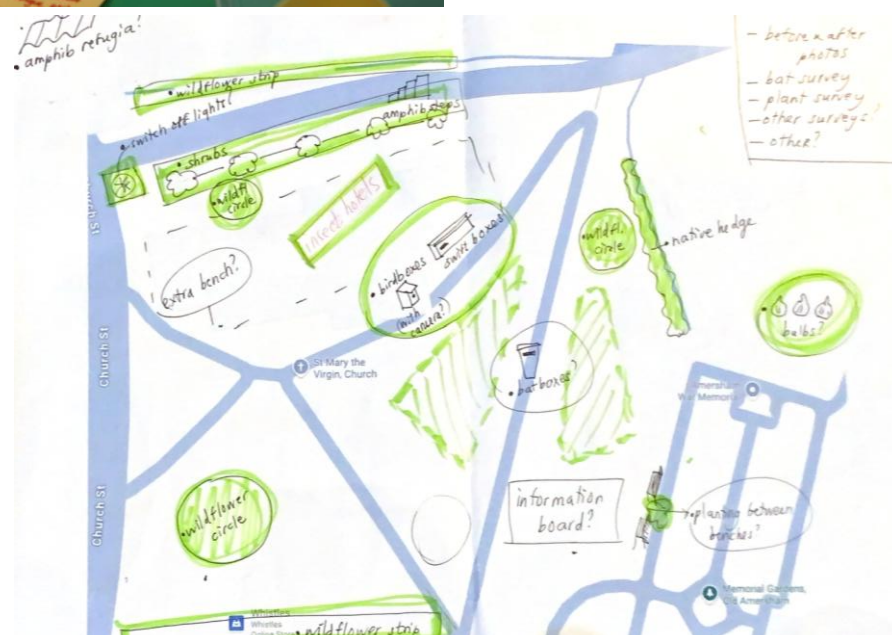
- An established group of young people who are keen to (and will!) continue
- 'Power' has been given to the group. Briony and Marieke provided the initial framework, and the young people have taken it and developed it, with ongoing support, specifically in terms of securing experts for sessions, liaison with the Church and Council, and managing the financial side of the project.
- There was a real building up of momentum, from a small initial group with tentative ideas about how to take the work on, to participants taking the lead in researching habitats, planting schemes and additional funding options – as well as getting hands-on installing fencing and signage for wildflower circles which they designed collaboratively.
- Fantastic relationship building – with the individuals involved, the external experts and speakers, and the partner organisations, which has already had knock-on effects such as discussions about collaborative events in 2026, and establishing go-to contacts for different subject areas.
- Feedback from those involved:
 - *"(it was great to) chat to people who are interested in similar things to me. I'm not alone!"*
 - *"How thoughtful and engaged people were in biodiversity sessions, even in the rain!"*
 - *"Such willingness to get involved and passionate people leading the sessions"*

What next?

- Based on the participants' requests, the initiative has stopped being a 'project', with the connotations of short-term defined activity, and is now a 'group' with the aim of longevity and ongoing support from the host organisations.
- A programme of sessions running through the rest of 2025 and into 2026 is planned with more expert input, alongside practical planting and installing of measures to improve biodiversity
- Plans to upkeep & monitor the interventions for nature are in place, working with the Church and Council.
- The focus of the upcoming winter sessions is sharing what the group is up to via signage in churchyard, through Church and Council communication channels, and considering the potential for podcast/audio outputs, guided walks, schools and university talks/activities, and social media.

Find out more

- Read feedback from the Bring it Back participants at Appendix 2
- Find out more about the group at amershammuseum.org/bring-it-back-group
- Read about the young trustees programme which the Museum is engaged in kidsinmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/engaging-your-first-young-trustees
- Find out about the Museums' Young Curator's group amershammuseum.org/young-curators



What we did: Work experience, volunteering and sessions - Wycombe Museum

Background

Wycombe Museum is a family friendly museum that explores the history of High Wycombe and the surrounding areas through hands-on galleries. Known to many as the chair museum, their collection not only spans Wycombe's furniture-making history, but also includes art, photography, and many varied artefacts documenting the area's rich social history. Wycombe Museum is housed in a Grade II listed building, with parts dating back to the 1600s. They have an on-site cafe and are surrounded by a big beautiful garden, great for exploring. Wycombe Museum is an independent charity managed by Wycombe Heritage and Arts Trust.

Similar to other partners, Wycombe Museum has an offer for families and younger children, but at the start of the project had a limited offer for teenagers – the museum was keen to fill the gap in their provision for young people, and their ambition was for young people in High Wycombe to feel ownership of Wycombe Museum and understand it's a place for them. With a small staff team, resource is a constant constraint, and as such, Roz Currie (Director at Wycombe Museum) was aware that any offer put in place needed to be manageable, sustainable and become part of a core offer.

What was delivered

During the project, Roz and the small museum team undertook focused pilot projects to allow them to build new relationships with local youth providers, develop new models for sustained youth engagement and discover their blockers to this ambition. The goal for this project was to allow for future meaningful youth engagement – rather than creating one-off engagement opportunities.

Initial steps reviewed previous work and existing contacts, as well as a trial event with BBOWT and local youth organisations. Research undertaken by INSTAR also fed into the programme. Wycombe Museum is familiar to all local young people, but why would they want to connect, participate or engage with the museum?

Roz focused on a few key principles for this work with young people:

- Open/loosely structured sessions for young people with a focus on their place in High Wycombe and what matters to them through the lens of Wycombe Museum collections
- Each session to have space for young people to follow their interest/needs and develop the work they wanted to undertake, while supporting them in engaging with the museum's collections
- Sessions to be iterative with learning from previous work fed in and allowing for development of the sessions

Ultimately, several sessions were delivered, with different groups and types of young people:

- Youth Groups: The Museum hosted Wycombe Youth Action for two evening sessions at the museum for 12 young people between the age of 11-14 - exploring Wycombe's story and young people's part in it, and building their own guide to Wycombe Museum
- Work Experience: Running two week-long work experience sessions, each for 2 young people aged 14-15 - sessions included meeting and working with all staff and then developing a personal project and producing work for the Museum – this was a new approach for the museum
- Young Volunteers: The museum had a few young volunteers already, but again a new approach was



A young volunteer pops up from behind a shield whilst creating content!

taken which saw 5 young volunteers aged 17-19 undertaking research projects around Museum collections, paired projects looking at the Museum itself and producing their own content for social media and the website, and reviewing current youth provision for the museum.

- Schools Engagement: Pebblebrook School undertook two week-long work experience sessions in the grounds and gardening - 12 young people. Alfriston School took ownership of the museum's Sensory Garden from April to July (10-15 young people)
- Upcoming: Still planned is a session with Wycombe Refugee Partnership working with an artist, for young people newly arrived to High Wycombe (10 young people)

Throughout all of these activities, Roz and the museum team listened to the young people they came into contact with, to further hone the offer.

What we learned

- Getting the structure right was a process: Some young people appreciated freedom. but others needed far more structure and advice. Our younger groups were (perhaps inevitably) far less able to engage with abstract ideas about Wycombe, and our co-created sessions focussed more on their interests. The museum needed to ensure the right level of support, co-develop structures and plans at the beginning of each project.
- Negotiated Relationships: To build on the above, each different group needed time so we could understand their needs and where we can match them. We need to build relationships and plan with our partners. There isn't an off-the-peg solution which will suit everyone. Some relationships are really hard! And it is not always possible to find synergy with all potential partners.
- Young people want to be involved: Some young people are desperate to be involved with Wycombe Museum (or other heritage sites) and we need to make space for them – how can their voices be heard?
- Resourcing: We have had real issues with no learning officer. This has been a major blocker for the project as the wider staff team are wary of these projects having seen them fail before.

Key outcomes

- Our principles are sound, now we need to continue the work!
- We wanted this project to explore the possible, not create unrealistic goals for the future. We definitely achieved this and now we need to build this into our everyday approach. Young people are just part of the audience, not an 'extra'.

What next?

- Youth Groups: The museum will continue to work with the groups and hold sessions at the museum to support their connection with our stories
- Young Volunteers: The museum will develop a new project to begin to rethink a gallery at the Museum, using their research work to display hidden objects
- Youth Online: The museum will finalise our future plans and make a new part of the website so it's really clear how individuals can engage. Also to ensure that young people are visible as part of our work – we have some incredible videos made by the young people, for example!

Find out more

- ➔ Look out for the new section for young people coming soon at wycombemuseum.org.uk



What we did: Research, practical sessions and conversations - Chiltern Rangers

Background

Chiltern Rangers is a High Wycombe based Community Interest Company delivering practical land management and advice, much of it via volunteering. The team aim to provide enriching experiences with local communities to conserve and enhance the local environment.

Chiltern Rangers' conservation-based volunteering is accessible and enjoyable for all young people, and they have for many years invited young people to work in the outdoors surrounded by nature, with no pressures or expectations from the outside world. Young people in Year 9 (age 13/14) or below must attend with an adult, and those in Years 10-13 can attend alone with an adult signing them in and out.

Despite already working with young people informally and through local schools, Chiltern Rangers were keen to establish stronger relationships and greater connectivity with local youth providers in our area, work with new partners, as well as trial "new to them" ways of working with young people.

What was delivered

- A survey to young people, with 27 responses, letting Chiltern Rangers know what they thought about their sessions, as well as their attitudes to nature and the environment
- A survey to adults, with 34 responses, helping Chiltern Rangers understand how nature fits into the lives of young people and how they can unlock barriers to enable young people from all parts of the community to participate in activities.
- 2 practical sessions with a new partner – Bucks College Group Accelerate Programme for young people 16+ plus who haven't yet met the Maths and English entry requirements for a course
- 1 with existing partner Mama Bee
- 1 nature photography session with Neil Marshment / Wycombe Arts Centre – this was a new approach and attracted a completely different and new group of people, despite being advertised in the same way as all other sessions
- 1 'Wild Tribe' session – again a new style session, more of a drop in 'forest school' for teenagers, where they could pick and chosen activities, based on feedback from young people. Unfortunately this didn't get very much take up, but this could be due to a variety of factors
- A 'Campfire Conversations' session for 26 local youth group leaders, teachers and other adults from 15 organisations providing some fascinating insights into barriers, fears, motivations to working with young people in nature – see Appendix 3 for the report.



Chiltern Rangers session for young people in Gomms Wood

- A presentation to a science leaders conference with around 45 schools
- Produced a leaflet to share with their partner schools detailing what they can expect from CR, and what they would like to see from staff, parents and young people!

What we learned

- Staff initially felt less confident working with 16-18 year olds, than working with younger year groups. Although some are easier to engage with than others.
- They worried about not knowing the individual abilities to know what the best task for them would be, and not being able to engage with them.
- We can't force people to engage, but we can provide opportunities.
- In some cases, we need to worry less about being 'productive' and not getting as much 'true' conservation done

Key Outcomes

- Sessions should be slightly differently planned – possibly more breaks, break it up for them so that young people don't get bored on task etc.
- Have a good variety of tasks planned, but also adaptability when things aren't going to plan. Understand each person's backgrounds and needs.
- Have an open mind and don't put too much pressure on completing all tasks
- Partnership is key.... MamaBee, CNL, BCG, BBOWT, the museums
- Building relationships over time is important to build trust and rapport
- Be careful of mission drift BUT don't be afraid to try new things

What next?

- Do more for young people, based on the feedback we have gathered
- Speak to staff team for more of their thoughts and aspirations
- Look to start (and find a funder for) a regular nature youth group (Forest School for teens) for 14 to 18 year olds

Find out more

- ➔ Read insights from the Campfire Connections session at Appendix 3
- ➔ Read the leaflet for schools and parents at Appendices 4 & 5
- ➔ Read the survey results at www.chilterns.org.uk/flagship-projects/chalk-cherries-chairs/our-legacy/ccc-next-generation
- ➔ Explore Chiltern Rangers' offer for young people at www.chilternrangers.co.uk/young-people



Chiltern Rangers 'campfire conversations' session

Key themes

This project has been fantastic at allowing partners time and space to test new approaches with new groups of young people - to try things out and see what works and doesn't. Here we detail the key themes that have come out of the delivery work – although, as we have all learned so much, and so many things overlapped, it has been challenging to keep this to just a few!

Partnerships & working together – Chalk, Cherries and Chairs was a partnership in every way – although perhaps unconventional from the start with the cross between nature and heritage. Although it had some challenges and bumps in the road, it ended as a really successful partnership scheme, which has carried on into this project. This follow on project has allowed the partnership to strengthen, and for the partners to make a start on things that they've wanted to achieve for a while.

Shared discussions have been a key part of this – time given to meetings and workshops between us and the wider partnership have allowed us to not only develop the myriad of ideas each partner had, but also reflect on the work which has been done, alongside of other people's - in peer support way, learning from others. There's been a change of mindset and way of working – working with partners and experts to fill resource, expertise and confidence gaps; encouraging each other, and being kind.

The group has found that they haven't had to directly deliver together to get these benefits – this wasn't necessarily what we thought it would be like, but it has worked – we've been open to the process! The work hasn't all been about immediate / tangible results – but all building a case for work in the future - especially in the case of the Chilterns National Landscape.

Throughout the project, we have talked a lot about the introduction of young people into the governance of the organisations in the partnership, and the partners have learnt to allow young people to take on areas themselves, which benefits everyone, but it can be a long road to get there.

All this provides an interesting example of how working together can help in a variety of ways. For example, there is now an ambition for several partners to work together to provide work experience, traineeships – to allow for lack of capacity in individual organisations. Of course, this all depends on a partnership with a funder as well – we are grateful to NLHF for allowing us to extend for a year in this way.



A chatty Delivery Team meeting (missing Briony!)

Barriers – through various sessions we were able to dig deeper into barriers from a variety of angles. We often think about the barriers facing young people, and this has been a key theme during this project especially discovered via Chiltern Rangers' and BBOWT's work. Things like lack of equipment, wanting safety and light, not wanting to get dirty, have all been reported. Equally, as 'grown up' individuals, we don't always feel we've got the capacity or the skill even to engage with young people - but also there can also be barriers cross sector, cross organisations as well, not to mention a whole host of resource constraints!

Reframing 'engagement' – seeing young people not just as participants / receivers of a service - but recognising their identities. There is a need to actively listen to young people to ensure they can be more integrated into an organisation's offer, not just running workshops etc because you feel you should or you can. Think about what you can offer a young person and vice versa. Can they be involved in governance in some way? Instead of being receivers, ensure they are embedded in the things that you do / offer. Think about reframing / tapping into young people as volunteers & work experience students. Listening can underpin your eventual offer or output. Adapt your approach within the context of who you're working with.



Visibility – our offer, and often our organisations, aren't visible to young people – we're too hidden from them. We need to hear how young people want to be communicated with and see how we can best achieve this. We had feedback in the last project that imagery used by partners was uninspiring and didn't invite participants to join. As such we have invested in professional photography of real life sessions which is providing very useful and also is a useful legacy of the project. Another partner found that they could use the same channels with different offers and get different results – for example a photography session got new people in, whereas Chiltern Ranger's Wild Tribe sessions were advertised in same way but had less take-up. The Chilterns National Landscape are keen to take on the challenge of creating an info hub for young people to showcase how to get involved across nature and heritage, whether via work experience, a traineeship, or volunteering.



Agency – young people thrive when they have the power & tools to do things themselves, and when adults leave them to it to work it out. We've learnt not to be precious, which relates back to partnership – our friendships and honesty have made this flourish. The Bring it Back group wanted to move away from being a project, and organised themselves, allowing friendships & connections to form. Wycombe Museum found they needed to trial and error about how

much agency works – they discovered need to have some structure, then let it go.... Chiltern Rangers realised that also, sometimes it doesn't work – and that's ok - young people don't always have the language – i.e. they wouldn't ask to go in a river as they don't know that's a thing. This also comes back to listening as a skill – conversation flows more alongside an activity – but also to give agency and space within activities etc to allow for chatting and listening.

Reflections from Trish Evans, INSTAR

In the latter part of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs scheme, Trish Evans from INSTAR consultancy worked with the team and many local youth organisations to find out what young people in High Wycombe felt about nature. The [resulting report](#) gave recommendations which the Partners have taken into their work this year.

Trish supported the Next Generation project partners through her expertise in working with young people, particularly in nature and conservation. She was huge asset to the project, challenging the norms and encouraging partners to test and try new things, which was a crucial thing that we wanted to achieve. Some reflections from Trish follow:

“From my perspective, several key features have given the Next Generation project its distinct energy and quality.

Firstly, the combination of partners from comparatively different sectors/locations, each with unique structures and delivery models, created a fertile environment for cross-professional learning. This mix allowed for genuine dialogue beyond organisational echo chambers, generating new insights and mutual understanding that reached across disciplinary boundaries.

Secondly, partnership working brought both opportunities and challenges - shaped by geography, sectoral differences, varying capacities, and contrasting organisational priorities. Through supported dialogue, partners were able to navigate these complexities and, in doing so, revealed an important lesson: partnership does not always mean co-delivery. A “connecting” model of partnership - where organisations maintain autonomy while finding points of connection - proved both supportive and productive. This approach removed the pressure to compromise or “tick boxes,” instead encouraging a culture of listening, inspiration, and knowledge exchange that respected each partner’s priorities and limitations.

Thirdly, providing informal one-to-one mentoring was a particularly valuable element from my perspective. It opened up reflective and creative space for partners to explore ideas without expectation, test assumptions, and think imaginatively about challenges. Having an external perspective - someone not embedded in the daily operational or local pressures - brought - I believe - a dynamic opportunity for focused, solution-oriented dialogue. It was a privilege to contribute ideas and to witness how partners integrated and/or developed them.

Fourthly, the concept of *connection* - rather than simply engagement - has emerged as a key outcome of the project. Professional connections across organisations, internal connections within teams, and deeper connections with young people have all proved transformative. A shift from the role of “youth engagement leader” to that of “connector” brings significant benefits, allowing relationships to form organically and sustainably, grounded in trust and mutual curiosity.

Finally, the cross-sector nature of the partnership extended the project’s reach and impact. The public webinar exemplified this: high attendance and visible engagement demonstrated that sharing learning across traditional sector boundaries is not only possible but deeply inspiring. The project reminds us that innovation thrives when we resist working in silos and embrace the unconventional opportunities that connection brings.”

Reflections from Anna, Project Manager

“Having overseen the final 18 months of the Chalk, Cherries and Chairs scheme to its completion in Nov 2024, it has been a pleasure seeing the partnership blossom, and to be able to work with the partners for a further year. It hasn’t always been smooth, but seeing the relationships that have developed, and the way the partners have felt safe enough to try new things in a supportive environment has been really special. It seems this ‘feeling’ came across in our October sharing session as well, with participants saying they would take away points such as “(the importance of) freedom of space for conversations” and “cross sector relaxed networking - breaking out of silos”.

The role of project manager quite rightly comes with a degree of (self confessed) need for control, my job literally being to deliver high quality work on time and on budget. With this project, we didn’t at the start really know what we would deliver – hence the point of it – it was about trying new things out. This was at times uncomfortable - I have to admit to on occasion being worried whether we would deliver anything at all – but I had to force myself sit with it – and, as another October session participant put it – learned “the importance of listening, patience and having faith in the process”. Of course, letting the team know that I was there to support them (along with Trish), having monthly meetings to check in, as well as putting boundaries in place – i.e., ‘you need to have decided what you’re going to deliver by x date’, was key – whilst giving them space and time to create. Trish and I worked well together also, again a great example of collaboration, in her words “we worked together to dismantle barriers, navigate challenges, and draw on each other’s skills to move forward”.

Budget wise, the project costed roughly £73,000, with this being split between on the ground delivery (mainly staff time), some equipment, project management, expert advice, hosting / admin / meeting costs, and some costs to support the young people themselves with travel or incentives, and photography. When designing the project, we felt it was important not to assume that the youth organisations we wanted to work with could facilitate this without fee, and as such we set aside some budget to ensure that we could pay youth group leaders for their time, so that this wasn’t a barrier. To our surprise, this budget was hardly drawn upon, which meant that we had more to allocate to partners for direct delivery- this was an interesting learning point.

I’m delighted that so many great foundations have been laid during this year, and am excited to see what the partners do next. Plus, I really hope what we have experienced and shared is of great use to many other organisations, wherever they are in their journey of working with young people.” Please do get in touch if you have any queries about the project – anna@adfconsultancy.co.uk

Sharing our learning more widely

In October 2025, the project partners held a webinar, advertised via social media and mailing lists, as well as by direct invitations, to those from across the heritage and nature sectors interested in working with young people. We were pleased that 68 people registered with 39 people joining live - a group made up of a wide range of heritage and nature organisations and groups, spanning across the whole of England, such as museums, other National Landscapes, conservation organisations, community groups and individual volunteers – as well as members of our steering group.

The 1.5 hour session was made up of:

- Introduction & welcomes
- A spotlight from each of the 5 partners giving a quick overview of what they delivered, some key learning points, and what’s next for them

CCC Next Generation: sharing what we’ve learnt through our work with young people in the Chilterns

Monday, 13 October '25 12:30pm – 2pm
Online – free



Join the CCC Next Generation project team online to discover how they’ve been working with new groups of young people in the Chilterns to connect nature and heritage. The team will share their projects from the past year, reflect on both personal and organisational learnings, and offer practical insights on how you can apply these in your own work.

Find out more and register at <https://bookwhen.com/ccb>



- Trish then introduced each of the key themes (as above) which were then illustrated with examples from the partners
- The floor was then opened to questions, which were answered by partners, Trish and Anna.

The session was well engaged with, received excellent feedback, with people taking lots of learning away with them:

"Thanks for such an interesting talk- I'll take away the idea of adapting levels of support / agency for different groups of young people, and lots of ideas for building a successful partnership!"

"Thanks so much all - lovely to hear such a positive result over so many local organisations and lots of food for thought - really useful!"

"I will take away giving space to think and be innovative, rather than being target driven"

"The idea of a small number of participants or fluctuating attendance not meaning that the initiative isn't working or shouldn't continue"

"Different ways of measuring success when working with young people"

At www.chilterns.org.uk/flagship-projects/chalk-cherries-chairs/our-legacy/ccc-next-generation, you can download the slides presented by the partners about their activity and key learning, the Q&A between the attendees and partners, as well as watch the 1.5 hour session in full, which has been watched 31 times having been online for only 3 weeks. We also plan to create further resources to share on the above web page and partners' social channels.

The Partnership



Throughout the year, Anna and the delivery team were supported by the partnership's existing Steering Group, in the form of quarterly meetings. This was part of our proposal to NLHF for the year – that the group would oversee delivery, and also spend time looking at the future of the partnership. A highlight was in September when we got together for a day to review the project to date. 17 of us in total; Steering Group members, delivery partners, Trish and Anna. We started with a beautiful autumnal walk and talk near the River Thames, which was full of chatter between those who hadn't seen each other for a few months, as well as those who have worked closely together. Throughout the day we heard in detail from each delivery partner about what they achieved and learned, as well as sessions to pull out key themes, discuss the sharing session in October, and discuss what's next.

Some feedback captured throughout the day:

- Positives - trying out new things, the space to try it out, keeping an open mind, having funding to trial these new things, capacity and funding may underpin this but IMG_9644.jpg why can't this be something that we do - embed it into organisation rather than see it as an extra
- Don't worry about numbers - a few participants who take loads from a session is so beneficial and is not a failing
- Embed process - value young people as young people, not as future adult.

- Barriers -expertise -money -resourcing -attitudes and perceptions
- There has been experimental and piloting of ideas - this funding has given space for this.
- Young people are a more challenging group due to many reasons, such as safeguarding, interests, friendship groups
- It's incredible that so many people/organisations across multiple sectors who have strong desire to engage/involve young people, conversely, in 2025 with such expertise that we have not cracked it

And when asked about their highlight of the Next Gen project, so much came out about partnership:

- Cross pollination between partners is evident. Lots of professional learning and dipping into each other's work and experience - not formal "partnership" in a traditional way perhaps - but connections are truly valuable
- Getting to know people rather than organisations is really helpful
- The personal networking connections - whether that's for professional/ organisational purposes
- The partnership - it opens so many doors :-)

It continues to be a huge legacy of Chalk, Cherries and Chairs that the partners all really want to spend time together – they value the deep connections made over the years, and this is really beneficial in their work, in so many ways.

What's Next?

For our delivery partners

It's really pleasing that due to this project, all the partners have kicked off pieces of work that will continue – much now becoming, or on their way to being, part of their core offer. You can see the specific next steps in the sections above – safe to say there will be more to see from each of them! We will also be sharing the photography taken as part of the projects, for partners to use for future promotion of their work to young people.

For the Partnership

We look forward to getting together for one final time in March 2026, where we will meet for a walk and an update from partners on work they have done in the 6 months preceding, as well as future plans.

Throughout the day together in September, as well as in meetings and emails throughout the year, we have come back to the familiar question: 'what's next' for the partnership. Mid way through the year we did an exercise to look at what groups all members were part of – and whether we should each slot into these groups rather than continuing as a 'partnership' which was originally created for a purpose and physical area.

We have explored joining the NEP Nature and People group which could be a good fit for some, but there was concern that this doesn't cover heritage. Even if there was a heritage equivalent, splitting members between the two groups would mean we lose our USP of the mix of nature and heritage.

In the end, we have happily settled on the fact that our legacy and continued partnership is already happening – by stronger relationships and working together – that this is a wonderful thing, which was clearly evident and felt on our 'sharing' webinar – and is 'enough' – partners don't feel the need for an official 'named partnership / group' – but that our connections are sufficiently strong to stand alone.

Thank you and acknowledgements

Firstly a big thank you to Sophie Button (NLHF) and Mike Harding (Fund Monitor) for working with us at the end of Chalk, Cherries and Chairs, to develop this project and allow us to carry on for a further year. Thanks to Trish Evans from INSTAR to providing such great insight to this project.

And, a massive thank you to the organisations, individuals and experts we have worked with throughout the year:

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the young people who attended our sessions, or were consulted as part of our listening exercises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and young people who responded to Chilterns Rangers' surveys |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wycombe Youth Action team and Shero's, Be Easy & Empower groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bucks College Group - Accelerate Programme, TV and Media and Graphic Design groups, Kit Rose |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windsor Great Park Teen Rangers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Curators at Amersham Museum |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wycombe Refugee Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alfriston School |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pebblebrook School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neil Marshment Photography |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mama Bee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wycombe Arts Centre |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 4 Youth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young Carers Bucks |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Andrews Church | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aylesbury Youth Concern |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wycombe Wanderers Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Beaconsfield School |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Wycombe Community Board |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thames Valley Police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marieke Bosman at Wild Amersham |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reverend Jonny Rapson St Mary's Church, Amersham | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Catanach at Amersham Town Council |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nick Bowles - Upper Thames Butterfly Conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lucy Lawrence – Buckinghamshire Council |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justin Long | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackie Mackenzie-Dodds |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karla Mortensen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karen van Oostrum - Central Chilterns Botany Group |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Martin Pounce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laura Silverstone - Chilterns Chalk Streams Project |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily Toettcher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roy Vickery |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justin and Jacky Warhurst, Bucks Fungi Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simon Nichols, Bucks Bird Club |

And, of course to our Delivery Partners:

- Briony Hudson and team at Amersham Museum
- Becky Downey & Nigel Hopper at BBOWT
- Steph Rodgers and team at Chiltern Rangers
- Annette Weiss & Raheed Salam at Chilterns National Landscape
- Roz Currie and team at Wycombe Museum

Plus Steering Group, who together make up our Partnership:

Lucy Lawrence (Chair of Steering Group) & Eliza Alqassar - Buckinghamshire Council, Liz Shearer - BBOWT, Nicola Thomas – Bucks & MK NEP, Briony Hudson - Amersham Museum, Helena Chance - Buckinghamshire New University / independent, John Shaw - Chiltern Rangers, Andy Brock-Doyle - Chilterns National Landscape, Roz Currie - Wycombe Museum, Stephanie Thompson - Community Impact Bucks.

Appendix 1 – Key themes from BBOWT’s listening exercises

Young people find nature relaxing:



Bugs/disconnect

- Buzzing of bugs is the anticipation and how they crawl.
- Bugs and mosquito bites we don't like
- I dislike the abundance of little insects – I once lay on an ant colony
- Dislike stinging nettles
- Dislike nettles and thorns

Fear of unknown

- Don't like camping, don't feel safe
- Need time to get used to a specific place to feel comfortable and safe
- More people are to help if lost, why people prefer indoor spaces rather than outdoor spaces
- Need to be careful of the woods at night.
- Homeless people live in the woods and some people find that scary because they may be on drugs
- Scared of phone losing charge
- Dogs can be scary
- Not a fan of the ocean, doesn't make it not cool, it's just not for me, I'm a land person.
- When it's uncontrolled it can be scary, where there's a risk of death/unpredictable

Lack of opportunities/access (usually in response to 3, but more of an amalgamation)

- Can sometimes forget about it – even though its accessible.
- Most people value easy access to various forms of nature – some prefer more maintained areas like parks, fields and commons, while other preger wilder areas like forests
- Don't get access to the wide openness here
- Big mountains are too far away
- Some places are further away, need to drive or car share and they're not accessible.

- All substantial reserves are quite far – you have to plan a big trip. It would be nicer to live closer to them.
- There is a lack of organised groups in nature for young people. In cities there is more activism and political ways you can get involved, less so in small towns
- There is a lack of knowledge about what's going on, hard to find local groups like bird ringing groups or bat groups.
- Being new to birdwatching – older people don't all help, feels like you need to build your own name to get people to respect you, if you were to mention a bird you saw people might not believe you – the culture isn't super inclusive, though it is changing a bit.

Thrilling activities - what people want to see (usually in response to q4 - ideal area)

- Adult version of a playpark
- There's not much stuff for teenagers to do, like sports areas or outdoor gym equipment, more activities
- Would like more cool animals like horses or a petting zoo/urban farm/community farm
- More gaming areas around
- Climbing frames – more frames in a natural outdoor area with lots of climbing things and flowers
- Cities have more opportunities
- Theme park in town
- More cars/cool cars/private areas where young people can drive
- Public, free football fields
- Want to see more wolves and lynx, more exciting biodiversity

Sense of pride in area (usually in response to questions 2, and 4 as in what things would they like to see less of in their area)

- Hate litterbugs, flytipping and big spiders
- Flowers are pretty, something pretty is nice
- Bovingdon solar project on the field, we could make better use out of the fields like this, they're used for cattle and wildflowers (but could be used for more?)
- Less litter
- I would like more private areas where not everyone can get in so there's not so many people
- More nature, more buses and things, more grassy areas and a prettier place
- More wall gardens (on buildings) and integrate them into cities
- Hyde Park – beautiful area but not necessarily natural – very artificial and manufactured but respite and lovely green spaces within urban areas – balance
- More unkept natural wildlife – feels like it may be more dangerous/unpleasant areas
- Invasive species – not sustainable to maintain areas via human intervention and causes problems for biodiversity (hogweed, mice in house, glisglis in house)
- Compromise – between landscaping and natural settings. Taming and maintaining natural non-manufactured wildlife to maximise the beauty and loveliness of what is actually natural
- Invasive species have ruined local nature and people's perceptions of nature.
- Don't like muddy things and dirty/messy areas, areas that have been left derelict and have water and mud and dirt in them.
- More bins around and make the area cleaner and nicer
- Rubbish isn't nice to see
- Mud element is just a bit more grim

- In the woods on the way to the station there is so much litter
- People are lazy with litter, they're disrespectful and don't care

Council (usually after being asked what is preventing their areas being ideal)

- Council don't care, there isn't enough room for footpath, as there's bushes there – but they could trim the bushes and make certain road sections 1-way, but they have to focus on other things. They're paid to do nothing, don't know what they do to be honest.
- Need to catch the people that litter and fine them and make them do litter picks, then they might learn – council seems to be focused on the wrong things but they're not open (transparent) on where they spend the money. People would probably be more understanding if they were clear on what they're doing. Need better and more education on littering – people get told off for doing it but the impact of littering is not explained to them. Children get their bad habits from their parents.
- Council that's doing stuff (or not doing) – I haven't emailed them yet.
- River – local council initiative needed to fix it
- Councils could make new rules, they need more consequences
- Some councils have enough funding
- Money – the government doesn't want to make things nice, they want to keep the money for themselves
- Government[s fault] by not stopping inflation

Laziness (usually in response to what is preventing their areas being ideal)

- People are lazy with litter, they're disrespectful and don't care
- People are lazy
- People are using their phones to do shopping, people are so lazy and aren't taking advantage of things being under their feet.

Social media (usually as part of discussions after the last question, what is preventing their area being ideal)

- People are using their phones to do shopping, people are so lazy and aren't taking advantage of things being under their feet.
- Social media is an addiction and young people don't want to get involved – they don't find real life as exciting which is sad cause it's all fake these days.
- People are buying things because of trends, people need to stop using their phones and following trends, or creating good trends

Appendix 2 – Bring it Back feedback

What session or discovery most stands out from the sessions you've attended?

- History and Biodiversity
- Plant Folklore
- Exploring the Church (inside)
- Chatting to people who are interested in similar things to me.
- I'm not alone!
- Circles-wildflowers and history cycles
- Exploring the Tyrwhitt-Drake chapel with the group.
- How thoughtful and engaged people were in biodiversity sessions – even the rain!
- Willingness to get involved and passion
- Passionate people leading the sessions
- Learning about how different animals need different habitats all in one place.
- Awesome to learn about folklore, bats.

Why have you got involved in the project? Is the reality what you imagined?

- Group rather than individuals
- Yes great to see it working
- Involved as wanted to meet people w/ similar interests and seemed interesting. Not sure what I was expecting! Very happy w/ what it is though.
- The churchyard is so unloved and unknown and bare and I understand many young adults are warned about nature and want to contribute, good- how do we get more?
- Learn about conservation in the local area wasn't sure what to expect.
- Takes learning from solitary to group activity. Try new and practical things! Read, analyse, discuss.
- Expecting: yes, broadly. (hands- on later)
- Climate day and local actions
- Didn't have any expectations just looked forward to exploring. I found it really interesting – My mum found this through WhatsApp Wild Amersham group knows it interests me.
- Lots of variety, really enthusiastic experts in some fascinating and quite niche areas.

If we could change one thing to make the projects/sessions better for you, what would it be?

- Timings-hard to attend biodiversity ones
- Merch? (not serious) art....?

- Timings – Sometimes can't make sessions as can be at awkward times.
- Sometimes missed some of the emails with session information.
- More young people and continued involvement going forward.
- Reach out to more people via different methods? Not a criticism but would be good moving forward.
- More reach – more people involved.

What next for the history side of the project?

- Talk to the museum's reminiscence group
- Talk to the congregation
- Look at museum's existing oral history collection
- Get back to Lucy to find out more about plague pits!

How might we share what we're doing/finding out?

- Signage in churchyard
- Church communication channels
- Podcast
- Guided walk
- Schools talks/activities
- Bucks New Uni talks/activities
- Social media – could include videos
- Suggestion from Neil – could commission drone photography to go from great height right down to details of individual plants.

Appendix 3 – Report following Chiltern Rangers' Campfire Conversations session – 'Motivations and Barriers for Young People Engaging in Outdoor Nature Sessions'

Introduction

Engagement with nature and the environment offers young people a range of benefits—from improved mental wellbeing to personal development. However, participation in outdoor nature sessions varies widely, influenced by personal interest, accessibility, and broader societal factors. This report explores the motivations encouraging young people to take part in nature-based activities, as well as the barriers that prevent greater engagement.

Motivations for Engagement

1. Mental and Emotional Benefits

- **Calm, Welcoming Spaces:** Nature-based sessions often provide a peaceful alternative to high-pressure or overstimulating environments. This is particularly beneficial for neurodivergent young people, who may find traditional classroom settings overwhelming.
- **Thriving Outside the Classroom:** Young people who struggle in academic settings often thrive in outdoor sessions where learning is more experiential and less formal.

2. Adventurous Appeal

- **Element of Danger:** For some, the unpredictability and challenge of the outdoors are attractive. Controlled risk-taking can make outdoor activities feel exciting and empowering.

3. Family and Cultural Influence

- **Family Values:** When environmental awareness and time spent in nature are embedded in family life, young people are more likely to value and seek out these experiences themselves.

4. Positive Experiences and Opportunities

- **Enjoyment After Exposure:** Many young people report enjoying nature once given the opportunity, suggesting that initial access is key.
- **Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE):** Participation in structured schemes like DofE introduces young people to the outdoors in a meaningful and rewarding way.
- **Diverse Outdoor Opportunities:** A range of activities—from forest schools to conservation projects—helps appeal to different interests and abilities.
- **Trusted Adults:** a driver for engagement which is seen as a positive draw, is the presence of trusted adults such as rangers, youth workers, older volunteers, teachers & support staff.

Barriers to Engagement

1. Practical Challenges

- **Transport and Accessibility:** Young people often cite difficulty getting to nature sites. Many want opportunities closer to home.
- **Lack of Facilities:** The absence of toilets, charging points, or shelter can make outdoor settings feel uninviting or impractical.

2. Comfort and Environment

- **Unfamiliar or 'Alien' Environments:** Young people from urban areas may feel disconnected or uncomfortable in rural or wild spaces.

- **Fear of Nature:** Nettles, insects, and other natural elements can be intimidating. Concerns about getting dirty or ruining clothes (e.g., trainers) are common.
- **Town Mouse vs Country Mouse Effect:** Cultural differences in familiarity and comfort with outdoor settings can create psychological barriers.

3. Technological Disconnect

- **No WiFi / Phone Charging:** Fear of losing phone connection or battery life deters many, particularly in areas where tech plays a central role in daily life.

4. Competing Priorities

- **Busy Schedules:** Young people often juggle school, social life, extracurriculars, and responsibilities. Nature-based activities are not always prioritized.
- **Academic Pressure:** Time is often directed toward UCAS-building activities perceived as more directly valuable for future success.
- **Greater Choice:** With digital entertainment and structured indoor activities readily available, the outdoors can lose appeal.

5. Safety Concerns

- **Parental Anxiety:** Parents may be concerned about the perceived risks of outdoor spaces, limiting opportunities for independent exploration.

6. Disconnection and Apathy

- **Lack of Personal Relevance:** Some young people feel disconnected from broader environmental issues and don't see how nature engagement fits into their lives.
- **Lack of Incentives:** Without clear benefits or rewards, participation may seem optional or unimportant.
- **Funding Constraints:** Limited resources restrict the ability of organizations to offer accessible, engaging nature programs.

Conclusion

Young people are often open to nature-based experiences—especially when introduced through inclusive, accessible, and rewarding avenues. While many thrive in outdoor environments, barriers such as transport, digital disconnect, personal fears, and competing priorities continue to hinder widespread participation. Tackling these obstacles requires a multi-faceted approach, including better infrastructure, family and school engagement, and programs that make nature feel relevant and rewarding to the realities of young people's lives today.

Appendix 4 – Chiltern Rangers' leaflet for parents and carers

Chiltern Rangers



Conservation Sessions: Information for Parents and Carers

What to Expect:

- Your child will be joining in practical conservation work on one of our beautiful nature reserves or other sites in the Chiltern Hills.
- They will learn safe use of tools under the supervision of our Rangers and your school staff.
- We will provide work gloves and safety glasses where needed, and waders for river sessions.
- Sessions will go ahead in all but the most extreme weather: see below for more information on clothing.

What to Wear & Bring:

- Wear old clothes and dress in layers for warmth and flexibility.
- A waterproof coat is essential for most sessions, even better if you also have waterproof trousers.
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots. We will often be on muddy and uneven ground and steep slopes.
- In summer, long sleeves and trousers are still needed as we often work with thorny vegetation. Wear a sunhat and use sunscreen.
- Bring your own water bottle, and a packed lunch in a backpack if you are staying all day.
- For river sessions bring a spare set of clothes in case the ones you are wearing get wet.

We do have some waterproofs and wellies to lend. If you would like to borrow equipment, please ask your school staff to let us know.



Visit our website at chilternrangers.co.uk to find out more about our work

Appendix 5 – Chiltern Rangers' leaflet for school staff

Chiltern Rangers



Conservation Sessions: Information for School Staff

What to expect from a session:

- You and your pupils will be joining in practical conservation work on one of our beautiful nature reserves, or other sites in the Chiltern Hills.
- You will be provided with session information beforehand; including contact details, timings, directions to the meeting point, and copies of our site and task risk assessments.
- You and your pupils will be given a safety briefing at the start of the session, and taught safe use of tools under supervision from our Rangers.
- We will provide work gloves and safety glasses where needed, and waders for river sessions.
- Our staff are all DBS checked and First Aid trained.
- Sessions will go ahead in all but the most extreme weather, in which case you will be notified of cancellation.

Our expectations of you:

- Send our parent / carers information sheet to all attendees ahead of the session.
- Arrive expecting to work alongside your pupils and engage in tasks with enthusiasm.
- Ensure that you and your pupils arrive dressed appropriately for the task and weather, as per the information sheet. We have some waterproofs and wellies to lend, but you will need to notify us of what is needed beforehand.
- Inform us *by telephone* if you are running late, or in the event of needing to cancel a session at late notice.
- Our staff are trained to run the sessions safely and effectively, and to ensure everyone can join in and have fun. You remain responsible for the behaviour and discipline of your pupils at all times. Please bring sufficient staff with you to ensure this.
- Inform us at the start of the session if you or your pupils have any serious allergies, health conditions or additional needs. You remain responsible for ensuring any medications needed (e.g. inhalers) are available with your staff on site.
- Keep our staff informed of any problems that arise, or if anyone leaves the site.

Visit our website at chilternrangers.co.uk to find out more about our work