

2019

KEEPING IT WILD

YEAR 1: EVALUATION
SUMMARY REPORT



About Keeping it Wild

London Wildlife Trust (the Trust) has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for the Keeping it Wild project, which is part of the national Kick the Dust programme. The project aims to engage young people from traditionally under-represented groups, to take part in practical conservation projects in their local communities, with the overall aim of making nature accessible and relevant to young people living in London.

Shephard & Moyes Ltd was appointed to support a formative evaluation throughout the life of the project; from August 2018 to July 2021. This is our first annual evaluation report for year one of the project, from when delivery started in October 2018 to July 2019.

The project aims to engage 600 young people aged 11-25 to become actively involved in the protection and promotion of London's natural heritage. The programme focuses on young people who are typically under-represented in the environmental sector by engaging young people from areas of socio-economic deprivation and BAME backgrounds.

In addition to the benefits to participants the project also aims to change the way the heritage sector connects and engages with young people. A key theme of the project is communications, media and film, in order to ensure that wildlife is more relevant and accessible to a wider audience of young people and to ensure that project partners use best practice when engaging a young audience into their core activities.

There are five strands of activity;

Wild Action Days; one-off, informal taster days delivered at the Trust's nature reserves.

Wild Action Programme; an eight-week skills development through conservation programme at one of the Trust's reserves.

Social Action Programme; groups of young

people design and deliver their own social action projects and receive a small grant.

Traineeships; a 12 week full time traineeship programme with a bursary at the Trust.

Young Person's Forum; a sub-committee of the Trust's Board of trustees, with the remit of improving the Trust's communications and engagement strategy for young people.

The project is delivered by a partnership, led by the Trust and includes London Youth, Headliners and the John Muir Trust. The Trust lead on the management of the project, as well as delivery of the Wild Action Day, Wild Action Programme, traineeship and Young People's Forum strands. London Youth lead on the Social Action Projects strand delivery. Headliners provide media training to young people taking part in Wild Action Programmes, Social Action Projects and traineeships, and the John Muir Trust also support these young people to obtain the John Muir Award.

“ I've realised at you don't need to take kids to Lego land to have a good time – you can just go to the park and build a den – it's much more fun and it's free.” (group leader)

“ They've never done anything in terms of team bonding and only the occasional trip and never with a single focus like wildlife. And they've never done anything like this before – developing their soft skills has been great. They are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental impact of everything we do. Some have changed their eating habits or tried to influence their family about where they source their food. The kids are really getting into it.” (Social Action Projects group leader)

“ It's our future – that's why it's important.” (Young People's Forum member)

Engaging under-represented young people

Across the five strands 269 young people have been involved in Keeping it Wild in year one, with the majority of targets being achieved. The project has been able to benefit from existing contacts with youth organisations as well as creating links with new groups.

To date, two-thirds of participants (66%) are aged 14 or under. The Wild Action Days, Social Action Projects and Wild Action Programme strands mainly attract younger age groups (14 and younger), whereas the trainees and Young People's Forum attract older young people (17+). Across all strands, the 'middle' age range of 15-18 is least represented.

The project has been successful at engaging under-represented groups;

79% are from BAME communities

37% have some form of disability

44% live in the 20% most deprived communities in the country

“ Many young people with moderate learning disabilities are often from families living in poverty. They have a lack of stimulation at home and don't have the opportunity to just go to the park. They mostly spend their time indoors. Many of their parents will also have learning disabilities as well and when they are severe this affects the amount of money coming into a family.” (Richmond College teacher)

The project is also reaching young people without prior knowledge or experience of engaging with wildlife/nature;

40% had low levels of knowledge of wildlife/nature conservation.

29% had little experience of visiting greenspace.

32% of Wild Action Day and 40% of Wild Action Programme participants had no experience of using greenspace for health/wellbeing.

61% of Wild Action Day and 63% of Wild Action Programme participants had no experience of taking action to conserve or protect greenspace.

“ [They] need more hands on, practical things where they can see they are making a difference. They want to do things that are 'real' not just things for fun – they want to make a difference. This has probably been the most enjoyable programme they have done.” (Wild Action Programme group leader)

The main strength of the Wild Action Day and Wild Action Programme sessions is the practical nature of the activities; young people feel they are helping to conserve the sites by helping with clearance work, habitat development and survey work. It is a different experience to one they would get on a school trip, where they would be passive learners or just there to have fun. The Wild Action Days are also really beneficial to the Social Action Project groups; by helping them to better understand what conservation means and inspiring them to come up with project ideas.

Traineeships

10 young people have benefited from a 12-week traineeship at London Wildlife Trust. As well as benefits to themselves, trainees have also been invaluable in feeding into the Keeping it Wild communications strategy and helping to produce youth-led content which has been shared via the Trust's social media channels. Feedback from the trainees has been overwhelmingly positive about the experience, in particular they appreciate the bursary, the variety of the placement and the opportunity to shape the traineeship to meet their own needs.

In particular trainees have found the experience helpful in learning more about potential careers in conservation, and helping them decide what area to focus on.

“ It felt like a real privilege to work with such a well-respected organisation and get paid. Some people say that jobs are a steppingstone, but this was more like a trampoline – it will open so many doors for a career in conservation. I enjoyed the focus on connecting communities to the site – I now want to work in a conservation role that also works with the wider community – so engagement or education and getting local people involved.”
(Trainee)

Young People’s Forum

13 young people have joined the Young People's Forum, which acts as a consultative panel and sounding board for the project, with the aim of ensuring Keeping It Wild and project partners are more effective at engaging and meeting the needs of young people. In year one the forum met four times and discussed a number of topics related to communications and engaging young people.

Young People's Forum members are becoming Keeping it Wild ‘Ambassadors’ and will start to meet with groups taking part in other elements of the programme to help encourage greater connections between the strands.

One key aim of the Young People's Forum is to support partner organisations to embed young people’s views more effectively within their core business. The project is exploring how the Young People's Forum can have stronger links with the Trust’s Board of Trustees, and ideas on how to achieve this were discussed at the July 2019 meeting.

“ Feeling connected to an organisation, it feels like we are listened to - it’s different to volunteering as [we are] able to discuss issues and views.” (Young People's Forum member)

Media training

To date, 33 young people have achieved a level one qualification in media and three have achieved level two. Many more young people have received media training, however only young

people aged 14+ can achieve the media qualification.

The media training is a valuable element of the programme; photography has worked well as a way to confirm what Wild Action Programme groups have learnt that week, and the trainees have benefited from learning how to use a range of media equipment and understanding the importance of media in a career in conservation.

“ It was really good as they were using cameras, making films and taking photos and discussing how the young people feel about being in nature.”
(group leader)

John Muir Award

So far, 41 Discovery Awards and 10 Explorer Awards have been achieved by young people taking part in Wild Action Programmes and by the trainees. In addition, approximately 10-15 Discovery Awards have been achieved by Social Action Project groups. The main strength of the Award is its flexible nature, allowing young people to develop their own ideas to achieve the four challenges of ‘discover’, ‘explore’, ‘conserve’ and ‘share’. This means it can fit within the Wild Action Programme and Social Action Project strands of Keeping it Wild and the young people do not need to do anything other than complete the Wild Action Programme or Social Action Project to achieve it.

Keeping it Wild has also provided a good testbed for trialling and developing the online John Muir Award record e-book, with the Young People’s Forum providing feedback, resulting in changes to the resource to benefit all users.

The difference Keeping it Wild makes

The evidence collected in year one of the project is demonstrating the difference Keeping it Wild is making against a number of key outcomes:

Increase in communication:

18 instances of communications content have been produced by young people.

The communications work is helping young people to develop skills in communications and media production and the content is helping to engage more young people and helping to inform partners' communications strategies.

An enjoyable experience:

95% of Wild Action Day participants enjoyed the day, 24% of Wild Action Programme participants said it met their expectations and 51% stated it was better than they thought it would be.

“ I thought Keeping it Wild would be disgusting, but it was fun. Better than I thought it would be”
(Wild Action Programme participant)

Improving understanding and communication:

91% of young people have a better understanding of heritage as a result of taking part.

81% feel that heritage is now more engaging to young people.

“ I found three newts, that was the best bit. I didn't even know what a newt was before today!”
(young person)

Increased accessibility:

88% of young people agreed that in Keeping it Wild there was something for everyone, regardless of their background.

85% agreed that the project was easy and affordable to get involved with.

Improving skills and employability:

95% said they have learnt new things about heritage in a fun and interesting way.

88% of Wild Action Day participants learnt something new.

81% will use what they have learnt.

In addition three trainees have secured employment in the environment sector.

Changing perceptions:

71% agreeing that heritage can be interesting to lots of different people.

80% are more likely to take part in other heritage activities.

59% are more likely to volunteer in future.

Increase in ownership and responsibility:

84% are more likely to visit their local greenspace more regularly.

61% have a greater sense of ownership over their local greenspace.

84% feel inspired to take action.

Overall, the Keeping it Wild programme has had a successful first year of delivery. In year two the partners have developed a set of actions to build on the strengths of the project and address some of the challenges experienced in the first year:

- Improve connectivity between the five strands of the project and partners;
- Increase percentage of 14-18 age group;
- Build in more pathways between project elements and post-project;
- Greater clarity over the responsibilities between partners;
- Review effectiveness between graduate and non-graduate trainee cohorts;
- Explore potential to identify/use other Trust sites.