



2020

KEEPING IT WILD

YEAR 2: EVALUATION
SUMMARY REPORT

About Keeping it Wild

London Wildlife 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 second annual evaluation report for year 2 of the project, from August 2019 to July 2020.

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, BAME backgrounds and young people with disabilities.

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 (WAD); one-off, informal taster days delivered at LWT nature reserves
- * Wild Action Programme (WAP); an 8-week skills development through conservation programme at a LWT reserve
- * Social Action Programme (SAP); 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 LWT
- * Young Person's Forum (YPF); a sub-committee of LWT's Board of trustees, with the remit of improving LWTs communications and engagement strategy for young people

The project is delivered by a partnership, led by London Wildlife Trust (LWT) and includes London Youth, Headliners and the John Muir Trust. LWT lead on the management of the project, as well as delivery of the WAD, WAP, traineeship and YPF strands. London Youth lead on the SAP strand delivery. Headliners provide media training to young people taking part in WAP, SAP and traineeships, and the John Muir Trust also support these young people to obtain the John Muir Award.

The partnership has strengthened during year 2, with partners working more closely together, enabling skill sharing and development, as well as more streamlined communication. The partners are recognising each others' strengths and areas of expertise, which enabled a quick response to the COVID-19 lockdown as well as high quality delivery.

"Going into lockdown we all pulled together quickly, and given everyone's flexibility we focused on the partners strengths. We really appreciated having Headliners with their digital media side of things, it helped us transition more quickly than if we didn't have them on board" (London Wildlife Trust)

Case study: Trainee

“I graduated with a Zoology degree and was looking for something to do. I applied to do the traineeship and wanted to carry on being involved in Keeping it Wild so I also joined the young people’s forum. I loved everything [about the traineeship], it’s one of the most valuable things I’ve done – everyone is so willing to help and support, telling us about opportunities and you feel part of the team.

I enjoyed everything – I really enjoyed the environmental education and community engagement side of things. I had knowledge of ecology and I was mixing what I learnt at uni with the people side of things – and I found I enjoyed the people side of things more.

I managed to complete the traineeship before lockdown. I did want to get more experience with children and learning events, but wasn’t able to before lockdown started.

I want to carry on doing community engagement work – I’m applying for graduate roles. I had an interview with TCV but I didn’t get it. But everyone helped me so much, and gave me so much advice and helped me practice the interview.

It was definitely a useful experience. And being paid is amazing – I may not have been able to do it if it wasn’t paid”.

Since this interview was carried out, this trainee has subsequently been employed by the London Wildlife Trust.

Case study: Wild Action Day

“The Wild Action Day was very interesting – we went to Woodberry. We had to set off early and it took ages to get there and they were still late! The young people weren’t that enthusiastic at the start, but maybe we missed the icebreaker as we were late? But they needed something to get their energy levels up. But as soon as they started doing the activities they got really into it. They loved the bird watching and exploring and everyone was really enthusiastic and great at getting them involved. In the afternoon they really engaged – they really enjoyed sharpening the wood – having freedom and trust was a big thing for them. But no matter how many times you say dress appropriately, they don’t. They just don’t own wellies and their own fabric trainers are just not appropriate. London Wildlife Trust had a couple of pairs of wellies, but not enough for everyone – but it was helpful as it meant one girl could get involved whereas previously she wouldn’t.

One girl started a work ‘chant’ and it boosted morale. When they started to see the impact of the raking work they got more enthusiastic. It would be great to take them back to see what it looks like with flowers in, as they could really see the impact of what they had done.”

Year 2: Changes and achievements

At the start of year 2 a number of changes were made to how Keeping it Wild was delivered. Efforts were made to better integrate work between the different partners, in particular the media training. Changes were made to the WAP programme to make it more flexible and youth-led, greater emphasis was made on recruiting trainees from more diverse backgrounds and changes to the way the John Muir Award was administered for the SAPs aimed to make it easier for groups to engage. Members of the YPF have been given the chance to take part in other opportunities, the Forum has started to see Trustees attending the meetings, and efforts have been made to ensure the Forum is youth-led, with members from year 1 involved in co-delivering meetings.

In March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown meant that Keeping it Wild could no longer deliver face to face sessions with young people. The partnership responded quickly to this challenge and all delivery shifted from face to face to online. Despite this, excellent progress has been made with regard to delivery in year 2, with the majority of targets achieved or exceeded. The fact that delivery has been able to continue, and targets exceeded, demonstrates the commitment of the partners and youth organisations to provide positive activities for young people during these difficult times, as well as demand from young people themselves.

Over the first two years of the project, Keeping it Wild has achieved:

- * 684 young people engaged (not unique participants)
- * 260 young people have benefited from media training, with 108 receiving a level 1 and 20 a level 2 accreditation
- * 97 Discovery Awards and 187 Explorer Awards have been awarded by the John Muir Trust

Keeping it Wild continues to reach young people from disadvantaged or traditionally under-represented groups. 73% are from

BAME communities, and over a third of young people taking part live in deprived communities. A significant proportion of young people have disabilities, and the shift to online delivery has increased accessibility for some groups.

Overall there is an equal gender split in young people taking part. The age range has also changed from year 1, with an increase in the number of young people in the 15-18 age group taking part. The project has also been successful at engaging more younger people in the traineeships and YPF.

Young people taking part in Keeping it Wild have low levels of knowledge about nature and wildlife, around a third do not use greenspace and the majority have never taken action before. Although many young people are interested in wildlife, the majority do not have the opportunity to engage in or learn about nature.

Changes to delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic included:

- * WAPs and Wild Meets (online version of the WAD) were co-designed and delivered by LWT, Headliners and the youth organisation, ensuring it was tailored to the group's needs
- * All strands had a greater focus on media and communications, with the SAP projects in particular shifting from practical conservation projects to campaigning or creative activities
- * The WAPs and SAPs also incorporated a greater focus on encouraging young people to engage with and explore their local greenspaces and support nature and wildlife in their communities
- * High quality resources were produced by all partners to support youth organisations (particularly youth workers in SAP groups) to deliver activities to young people during lockdown

These changes have enabled Keeping it Wild to be more flexible and resilient in the face of ongoing uncertainty.

Case study: Let's Get Pollinating (Surrey Docks Farm)

"We had a really positive experience last year. It's not normally something we are able to offer but last year coincided with setting up our youth committee and we wanted to build skills, leadership skills, things that could be applied to the committee. The programme has been broadly the same – changes to the structure in line with the John Muir Award made sense and made it easier to explain to the young people and made it simpler to get the John Muir awards. In September last year one young person who took part last year came and did a Q&A session with the other young people. It was a leadership opportunity for her, but she was also able to answer questions and young people could find out from her what she enjoyed. It was good as the adults could take a step back and just allow them to have a conversation – it was truly youth led and giving the power back. I feel that we are more experienced now at letting the young people lead – it's a learning curve to let the young people take the lead – and Keeping it Wild is a nice way of giving young people control [over a project].

This year it's a completely different group – they are still existing members and willing to be outside and interacting with animals and plants – to a certain extent they are a captive audience. But in the group there are young people who wouldn't access nature themselves – they are inner city children without gardens and they don't feel that parks are for them. The Wild Action Day was a real success and even better than last year. It looks like London Wildlife Trust are more used to running them – it was a full day which meant they had more time to do conservation activities, a mini-beast hunt. It was more varied. It was professionally run with an amazing leader who learnt all their names in 30 minutes and got them enthused. Half the group did the media training – it was really useful. At the time we hadn't really considered media and doing a digital campaign – now things have changed to a digital campaign, so the training was really useful.

Just before lockdown they had their project planned and had rehearsed their pitch, but then unfortunately they couldn't do it [due to COVID-19]. They were planning on doing community workshops and a campaign to raise awareness of pollinators – having a market stall and workshops at the farm. But this couldn't happen. So they moved it all online and created a social media campaign. They've put so much effort into doing it all over lockdown. They've delivered a series of awareness days, created digital content and created sculptures of pollinators and flowers, sharing books they like to read, getting in touch with celebrities – they have even got Naomi Wilkinson involved. The local college has started using their hashtag and local charities and people are seeing it and using it – it's very exciting for them.

During lockdown I've been quite struck by how the conversation turned to mental health a lot – we will talk about how hard it's been. If they didn't have the project I'm not sure we would have been able to do group sessions – it's enabled them to check in and take part. How it has benefited them...they have never taken the time to stop and notice – the smaller things can give you perspective. And they know more about pollinators role in the food chain. They've also been considering how wellbeing isn't just about us – they've been considering the wellbeing of the pollinators – really helpful at making parallels between their experience.

The support from London Youth is really good – they released the resource packs really quickly and helped with our risk assessments – it's so amazing to be a member of London Youth. [The project officer] at London Wildlife Trust has also been in touch and we've been supporting each other with online delivery – this transcends the project, it's been so much more. It's been helping us all get through it. We are really keen to continue [with Keeping it Wild] – we now have two more groups left to engage. It would be a dream if all the young people could go through it. Even if we couldn't do Keeping it Wild we have created a strong partnership with London Wildlife Trust which can continue" (group leader)

The young people told us what they have learnt and how they have benefited as a result of taking part in Keeping it Wild:

What did you learn?

"We've been learning about pollinators – I knew a little bit but not as much as I know now. There are so many different ones"

"I learnt that pollinators are the base of the food chain and ecosystem – they affect the whole food chain"

What difference do you think your project has made to other people?

"The project has helped to spread awareness of pollinators through social media – people are interested. "Because of us people know about pollinators"

"I think people are appreciating nature and people are taking more notice of nature – me included"

"It makes you think differently about wildlife – some creatures are overlooked and we need to be thankful for them. It's not just a bug"

The difference Keeping it Wild makes

The evidence collected in the first two years of the project demonstrates the difference Keeping it Wild is making against a number of key outcomes;

Increase in communication;

- * 44 communications content has 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.
- * Trainees and members of the Young People's Forum are mainly involved in developing communications content, however the shift in focus from practical projects to campaigning for SAP groups in response to lockdown restrictions has led to a greater focus on communications activity across the project.

"I have more extensive knowledge of conservation/the natural world. The natural world can be seen as a bit monotone – but I've been learning about different campaigns and strategies to support young people to engage in greenspace in different ways. It's widened my knowledge and shown me how I can help. It potentially could be a career – but I like the activism side of things. I want to spread the message and give the environment a voice, to protect species and badger the government to take notice and change society" (YPF member)

Improved heritage

- * Young people have helped to improve 6 London Wildlife Trust nature reserves.
- * 11 of the SAP projects have resulted in tangible improvements to natural heritage.

"This project will create a much-needed new green, wild space in a London school, which will be conserved and enjoyed by students, staff and parents for many years to come. It will also raise awareness across these communities of the

importance of providing all young people with access to outdoor space, in particular the mental health benefits. This is increasingly important given the impact of COVID on families in the community and the shockingly high number of students who reported they did not go outside for several months and had no access to outdoor space." (youth worker)

Enjoyable, engaging and empowering experience;

- * 88% of WAD participants enjoyed the day, 37% of other participants said it met their expectations and 41% stated it was better than they thought it would be
- * 91% of young people felt welcomed, 94% felt engaged and 72% felt a sense of achievement
- * 88% felt listened to and 65% felt they were able to influence decisions

"[At the WAD] they all got stuck in the mud. But it's such a good experience for them – allowing them to explore, get dirty, allowing them to do this in a safe environment and it was educational. Kids don't have the opportunity to get stuck in the mud and then figure out how to solve it themselves" (youth worker)

"We normally don't get to do things independently and have the freedom – we are in control of the project." (young person)

Improving understanding and communication;

- * 78% of young people have a better understanding of heritage as a result of taking part
- * 74% feel that heritage is now more engaging to young people.

"The project enhanced a connection between the young people and their natural environment, their observational skills were enhanced as they really noticed what was going on for wildlife and nature in an area they visit often" (youth worker)

Increased accessibility;

- * 90% of young people agreed that in Keeping it Wild there was something for everyone, regardless of their background,
- * 93% agreed that the project was easy and affordable to get involved with

The shift from face to face to online delivery has meant that the project has become more accessible for some groups and individuals. Providing financial support and a flexible offer going forwards will maximise accessibility.

Delivering sessions online during lockdown have also provided a space for young people to discuss the barriers they face in terms of accessing nature and greenspace.

"A big part of the sessions have been breaking down the barriers young people have – for example, them not feeling safe going to a reserve. We've been developing a better understanding of the barriers they face, but we are also giving young people the opportunity to voice them." (Headliners)

More inclusive and diverse

- * 67% of young people agreed that heritage represents people like them

"The YPF is trying to get more young people engaged. A lot of the sector are older people with the means to volunteer – a lot of young people are from disadvantaged backgrounds - they have the passion but limited opportunities as it's all voluntary – young people have lots of good ideas and are glossed over as we don't have life experience" (YPF member)

Improving skills and employability;

- * Young people have developed a range of skills, including team work, conservation, communication and leadership skills
- * Youth workers report that young people are better at managing projects, are more confident and are taking more responsibility
- * 90% said they have learnt new things about heritage in a fun and interesting way

- * 88% of WAD participants learnt something new

- * 74% will use what they have learnt.

- * Young people are more aware of potential career options, with 67% feeling there are jobs for young people like them to work in heritage

- * Two trainees are now employed full-time at London Wildlife Trust and others have secured sessional work with them and other conservation organisations.

"It has benefitted me both personally and professionally in so many ways, it has allowed me to gain experience and improve skills (practical conservation, education, community abatement) in a range of different areas. Giving me a much clearer vision of a future career. As well as learn about the city I was born and raised in from a completely new perspective." (trainee)

Changing perceptions;

- * 82% agreeing that heritage can be interesting to lots of different people,
- * 69% are more likely to take part in other heritage activities
- * 74% are more likely to volunteer in future
- * 70% of WAD participants feel more confident exploring or talking about the natural environment as a result of taking part.

A focus of the WAP and SAP delivery since March 2020 has been on having conversations with young people about what nature and wildlife means to them and how these perceptions have changed as a result of lockdown.

Increase in ownership and responsibility;

- * 75% are more likely to visit their local greenspace more regularly and have a greater sense of ownership over their local greenspace
- * 80% feel inspired to take action.

"Definitely improved their perception of nature, local wildlife and them exploring their own local green spaces." (youth worker)

Case study: Elatt

Elatt is a training provider and works with adults as well as young people with special educational needs. 60-70% of learners have needs which means they are unable to participate in mainstream education. Elatt provides a safe learning environment which is focused on personal and social development as well as 1-1 support. They deliver a number of programmes with external partners and most delivery is online.

Part of their Personal and Social Development course includes a unit on environmental awareness, and this focus, plus the ability for the course to be delivered online was appealing to them.

“We were already working online before lockdown, so we jumped quickly at the opportunity as it sounded like a good idea” (group leader)

As the first online WAP, the programme was co-designed between London Wildlife Trust, Headliners and Elatt. A number of planning meetings took place to ensure the programme met the requirements of Elatt’s course, as well as the specific needs of the young people. Debriefs following each session were also carried out and learning from each incorporated into the following session.

“Our hope was that the course would increase their environmental awareness and give them an opportunity to work together – the young people are isolated, so keeping them engaged was the focus, but also to learn about environmental issues. We also wanted them to focus on their local area – lots of students think about environmental issues in relation to global issues, but we wanted the focus to be on their local area” (group leader)

Two groups of young people from Elatt took part in the course over a 4 week programme of half-day sessions. In order to achieve the number of hours for the award and media accreditation, the programme built in a number of Wild Challenges, or assignments for the young people to complete in their own time outside of the sessions. These included carrying out research into local greenspaces, researching podcasts and making sound recordings for the media qualification, which was focused on creating a podcast. The flexibility of the programme and ability to work with Elatt to ensure it met their needs meant that it could be tailored to their course, as well as respond to topics the young people were interested in as the programme evolved.

Overall the programme was a success, with all young people engaging well. There was some nervousness from all parties around delivering a programme of this nature online for the first time, but the mix of discussions around nature and environmental issues combined with practical media exercises worked well.

“I was a bit nervous at the start, as it could have gone badly. But then we all just relaxed and let it grow organically. It can be quite stressful teaching students with autism – as they will just tell you if it didn’t go well! Our students have a choice and don’t have to attend classes, but they were almost always full, so this shows that they were engaging well. Letting them make their own recordings was good – as they could do things without being micromanaged”(group leader)

Overall the group leader feels that the young people enjoyed the course and it has helped increase their awareness of wildlife and nature. It has helped them appreciate nature more, particularly greenspace where they live.

“They are now a lot more aware of wildlife and nature. Before the environment was just pollution and plastics and recycling, now they are thinking more widely and noticing the wildlife around them. Not all of them are 100% interested in wildlife, but being isolated has made them appreciate nature a bit more – they realised how important seeing parks and greenspace is and what is around them. They appreciate nature more” (group leader)

Feedback from the young people was also positive. Although not all agreed that they are now more interested in nature and wildlife, they agreed that they had learnt new things and most agreed that the biggest benefit was the ability to connect with other young people and take part in the discussions. Young people also really liked doing the recordings, however some felt uncomfortable about the thought of these being broadcast outside of the group. Feedback from young people:

“I enjoyed the interaction with new human peoples”

“I enjoyed recording and meeting other people”

“[I enjoyed] just doing the recording’s and listening to what other people have to say”

“[I enjoyed] meeting new people and developing myself into seeing how nature is”

“it’s different to what we normally do on a Monday”

“Something I have enjoyed- looking at nature from a new perspective”

Organisational change and legacy

A key focus of Keeping it Wild is to embed approaches to engaging young people in natural heritage across the partnership and amongst the youth organisations taking part. Examples of how Keeping it Wild has changed the way the partners work include:

- * **London Wildlife Trust** have made changes to policies and practices, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, recruitment and safeguarding processes and their social media and communications strategies. Other projects are considering what youth involvement means and collaborations between Keeping it Wild and other projects are taking place
- * **London Youth** have increased their use of twitter and are involving young people in creating communications content – blogs, takeovers etc. They have improved their knowledge of delivering conservation focused projects
- * **Headliners** are learning about large group delivery and are embedding the traineeship approach within other similar programmes – whereby media is a tool to support the traineeship, rather than the whole focus
- * **John Muir Trust** are developing a better understanding of the people, culture and place of London as well as the additional support groups need if they are unfamiliar with JMA

As well as the partner organisations, there is also evidence that Keeping it Wild is helping to change the way youth organisations work. Keeping it Wild is:

- * Offering something new
- * Developing youth workers' skills
- * Improving awareness of the sector
- * Improving confidence of youth workers

As well as the immediate benefits to the organisations and youth workers involved, many groups have reported that the relationships they are building with the

partners have been important, with many London Youth members hoping to work with London Wildlife Trust, Headliners and John Muir Trust in future, outside of the Keeping it Wild project. This is an important legacy for Keeping it Wild.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite the considerable challenges faced by everyone in 2020, Keeping it Wild has had an extremely successful year. The individual and collective strengths and commitment of the partnership enabled a quick and effective response to the challenges posed by lockdown. And as a result the project managed to continue delivering in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently exceed most of the original targets for year 2 and cumulatively to date. More importantly, it has managed to continue delivering a high quality, engaging programme that young people have enjoyed, learnt from and has succeeded in connecting more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to wildlife and nature.

Recommendations for the final year of the programme are:

- * Consider how to capture the impact of the campaigning work carried out by young people
- * Build in more opportunities for feeding back to members of the YPF how their work has helped influence and change the way the Trust works
- * Consider the legacy of the YPF; options for how it can continue post Keeping it Wild
- * Consider the diversity of the YPF when recruiting for new members
- * Consider the needs of groups or individual young people who are unable to engage in the programme digitally

Case study: Peabody Trust

"Peabody are based in Thamesmead. We heard about Keeping it Wild through the London Youth website and took part in the training. We work closely with a number of young people and knew there would be interest in doing the Social Action Programme around the local environment as young people are really interested. It's a brand new opportunity for our young people – we run a Young Ambassadors programme which are youth led projects to find out about their interests – a few young people were interested in the environment, but had never had the opportunity to do anything about it.

It's all been a bit of a whirlwind! We couldn't do the Wild Action Day due to the weather and then lockdown hit. So we have done it all online. We meet weekly and do different activities. We did the Headliners training and Wild Meet and they have researched their local area. When they were planning their project they came up with lots of ideas, but many were restricted due to Covid.

People think Thamesmead is a horrible concrete jungle but it is full of greenspaces. The young people want to get the community and more people interested in the environment and put the area on the map. Their project idea was to develop a youth led eco-council in Thamesmead. They have been collecting plastic bottles and were going to create a sculpture paying for a local artist. But unfortunately the person leading this broke their ankle so they changed their approach. Their new idea is to collect recycling and do litter pick days and create aerial art with the out of the stuff they have collected and film it all with a drone. They have created their own Instagram page and it's a really active campaign for change. They are using art as a message.

The training from Headliners was brilliant – really engaging and the young people really enjoyed it. We have used elements of the London Youth resources, and London Youth support has been great, have been really impressed with them. We run a number of other programmes and it's all moved online – it's been a really interesting experience. Whilst on lockdown we have really enjoyed the connection and really enjoyed having the Keeping it Wild structure and ability to connect with young people. It can't replace face to face, but we have been thinking about opportunities to run online programmes in future.

The young people on this programme are definitely more connected to green and blue spaces, they are going out more and noticing things more and posting about it on Instagram. They have created daily posts and are downloading environmental apps. They are 100% more interested in nature and the local environment.

Young people's knowledge has improved and they are much more interested and actively engaged – some are using local spaces more, some have taken up photography and they all have a new group of friends. They have developed lots of skills – finding the artist, risk assessment, project management skills, social media and using social media in a work environment/context.

It has also really increased our [Peabody's] knowledge on issues around the environment. One young person said that their household doesn't recycle – it's just not something they do as they live in a flat and have no room for all the different bins. As a result Peabody has started to think about barriers that affect people's ability to recycle, so there have been benefits to them as an organisation as well as the young people.

As an organisation we are working closely with Clever Cities – they promote greens and blue spaces in Thamesmead. Peabody is very interested in working with the group as consultants and helping them to connect into other young people and finding out more about how to engage young people with the environment. We have never run an environmental project like this before – it's a new area to explore and something different to offer.

The eco-panel want to continue after Keeping it Wild finishes. We are embedding them with the regeneration team so they can act as a consultative panel – we will be getting them involved in community planting schemes, and other activities. The group will be a voice for young people and the environment and will recruit more young people and offer more opportunities. The youth eco development council has got a lot of notice from people in Thamesmead. Peabody would like one of the members to feed into a wider regeneration panel. They also want another member to sit on another panel to work with local artists that are doing some of the art work linked to the green and blue spaces. A lot of people have contacted us as they want some members to get involved in other work. We are going to meet a local MP who is really interested. Exposure and people listening to their voices is what they've achieved. The eco-panel is the legacy of Keeping it Wild" (group leader)

Feedback from young people:

Why did you want to take part?

"I have never really got involved in the environment before. And people always say to young people you can change the environment, but that's just words. But this project was about doing something and taking action. It has really changed me. I have discovered new places in Thamesmead, and I live here!"

"Usually when you think about our local area, it doesn't have a very nice appearance and you don't think it's being taken care of in an environmentally conscious or sustainable way. And when something looks like this and that's where you live, you have the mentality of you don't really care. And the regeneration project – I started to think that where we live is changing for the better. But it's a big company that's making all the difference. Young people can make a difference as well and young people have a role to play and voices to be heard. And as we've gone along and worked with partners it's shown that if you give young people the opportunity to care then we can do something about it. And then it's a collective exercise to strive to do something better. This is actually something really useful because of Covid as everyone had school taken away from them and going out taken away from them. And this means you can do something and learn something from it. We took the chance to become better from it"

"I enjoy helping the environment and making the world a better place, but it goes beyond that. Building teamwork skills and life skills you will use in future e- talking to artists, building your CV"

"Originally I joined it because after we got the new food bins, my mum kind of neglected the fact that we have a food bin for separate things. And it's just something that we don't realise we do subconsciously. We don't realise how much of a difference we can make with the little things. I wanted to make that difference. I wanted to make people aware of things that they don't realise that they're doing. I wanted to play a part in ensuring the upcoming generation are more informed about the impacts of their actions"

What did you enjoy/didn't enjoy?

"I really enjoyed going outside and doing the litter picking. I don't see people doing things for their community in that way, so I thought it was quite cool. I saw a lot of rubbish which was surprising. I also really enjoyed talking to the artists and sharing ideas. The whole brainstorming part"

"What I didn't like – we had a very set plan and were supposed to be working with Thames21 but an incident occurred and our relationship ended. So we spent hours thinking of a different way to change the project. But I did enjoy that everyone was so committed. I gave up, but people surround you and will push you to the finishing line. Everyone encourages you to get back on your feet. Even if you are struggling the group is good for helping you, they are really committed and supportive"

"I enjoyed getting hands on and the satisfaction of seeing the visual effect of your work straight away. I also enjoyed just meeting new people such as the artists etc"

What have you learned?

"We learnt that advertising and social media is a whole specialty in itself"

"I've learnt a lot but I think the most important thing I learned was just to trust people. It's so easy to assume that someone won't be able to do something up to your standards before they've actually done it"

"It was really interesting to do Headliners [training] they kind of completely shattered my perception of the environment, animals and just ourselves. The way they interacted with us was really unique. We were literally the authors to our own story, and the insights and knowledge they gave was truly remarkable and made me even more excited for the project"

"It was helpful to think about whether the project should be online or outdoors. The social media part was tough to get it started, it was like having a child! But they did amazing"

How have you benefited?

"I think it's actually really greatly benefited my mental health. As selfish as it sounds, just doing that one act of kindness such as recycling etc made me proud of what I had achieved"

"We've all made individual pledges – and it's helped us realise how easy it is to do small things that have a big impact. Mine was to wash my recycling before putting it in the bin"

"I think for me and everyone – we were given so much freedom on this project. We could do a project on the environment, literally anything we wanted. And we are all sitting at home on our computers, thinking about what we wanted to do. We thought of a concept, a name, role delegations, everyone took on a role so the project could get to the finish line. So we have all had the experience of working in a professional environment- we were emulating that. So we decided what we wanted to do and that became our responsibility. We were responsible to the team and the project and we couldn't give up. Perseverance is something we learned. If we were too tired we'd still turn up as we wanted to see it done and we'd feel really proud. A load of soft skills, time management, communication, impact reporting, budgeting, social media, surveys. We've learnt all these skills as we've been trusted with that responsibility."