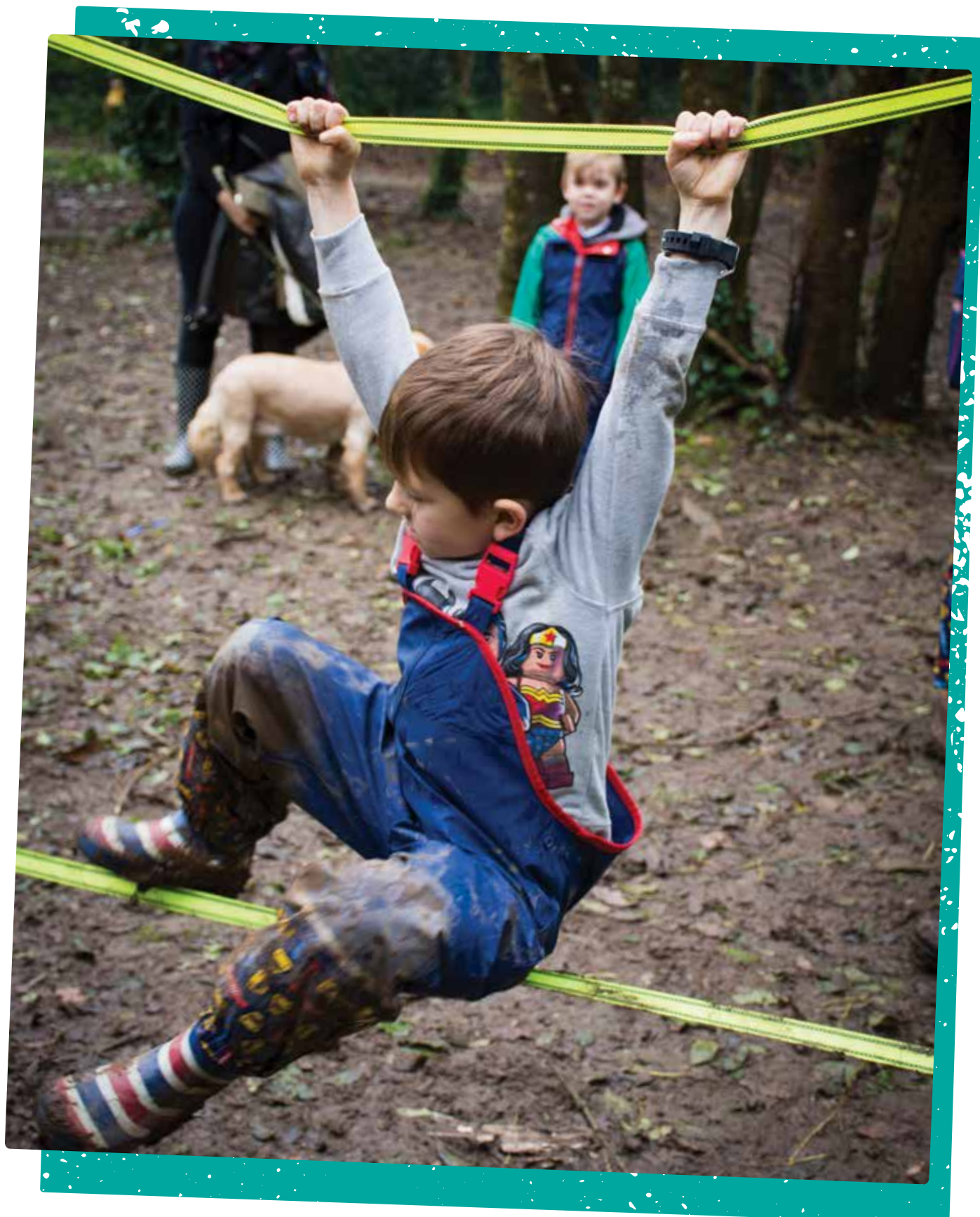




# Active Neighbourhoods — Urban nature delivering healthier communities for people and wildlife Final Report (2016–2019)



# Introduction

Active Neighbourhoods was based in Plymouth and aimed to get more people being more active and feeling better by using and improving their local nature reserves.

Neighbourhoods involved in the project experience high health inequalities and have urban greenspaces that have suffered from neglect. These greenspaces have the potential to be beautiful, accessible spaces for people and wildlife, which local communities can feel proud to have in their neighbourhood.

More than one third of Plymouth is greenspace and it's surrounded by blue space on its coast, with rivers and streams running through it. This unique green and blue city has the potential to deliver many health and wellbeing benefits for the people of Plymouth, as well as providing special spaces for nature.

Active Neighbourhoods was a partnership project between Plymouth City Council (PCC), Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) and Public Health's Thrive Plymouth network and funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme over 3 years (£419, 000). Match funding for improvements to nature reserves was supported by PCC's Section 106 funding (£254,529), PCC Public Health (£15, 000 in-kind time). University of Exeter's Blue Health research programme (£19,000) and PCC Public Health's Team (£15,000 in-kind). We also worked with a range of local delivery partners and providers to deliver Active Neighbourhoods on the ground.

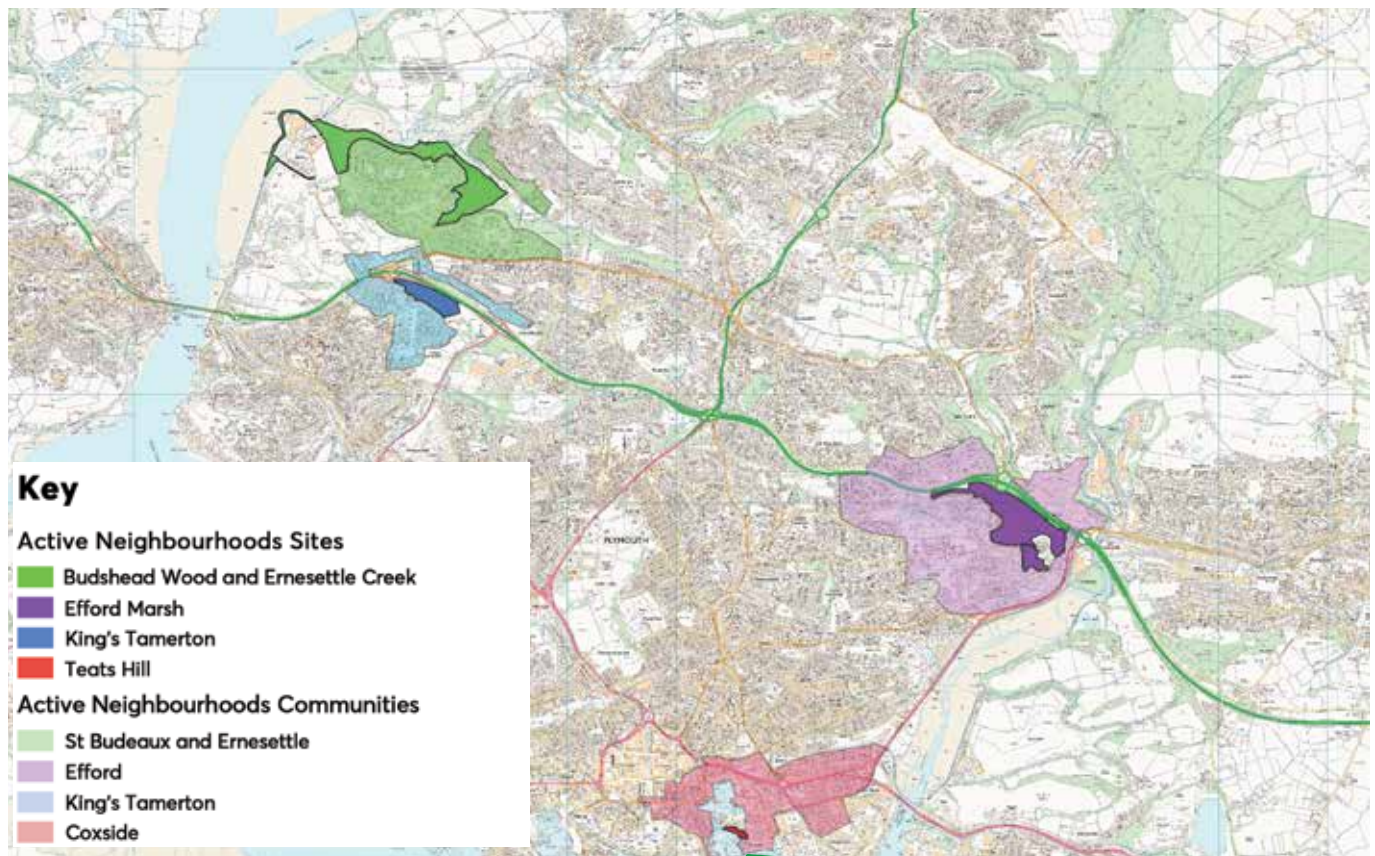
**Plymouth aims to be one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by all. Part of this vision is creating a city that residents have helped to shape and feel proud of - creating neighbourhoods that are pleasant to live in and that take care of our local wildlife. As we enter the Year of Green Action, supporting positive action in our own environments is more important than ever - this Active Neighbourhoods report is a timely reminder that in Plymouth we can be proud we are starting to deliver a green future, connecting people with their natural environment, their neighbours and improving health and wellbeing across our communities.**

**Cllr Dann, Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene, Plymouth City Council.**





# Active Neighbourhoods Sites and Related Communities



Devon Wildlife Trust has learned so much from its role in Active Neighbourhoods. We are used to working with local communities and engaging them in their local wildlife, but this project has really demonstrated the health and wellbeing benefits to those people from engaging with wildlife-rich greenspaces. The passion of volunteers in planting trees, sowing wildflowers, caring for woodlands, surveying and so much more can be seen in the new County Wildlife Site designations, the Friends Of groups that have been established, and the huge impact on the accessibility of these sites to local people. This project has had a huge impact on the amazing network of wildlife sites that run through Plymouth linking the sea to the moor and the people of urban Plymouth with the native wildlife of the area. Thank you to all those who have given so much and we look forward to seeing you more on future work in Plymouth.

Ed Parr Ferris,  
Conservation Manager, DWT

Enjoying their natural surroundings is so important for people's health and wellbeing; whether they are simply noticing nature and the passing of seasons, enjoying a walk or playing with family and friends. We are excited to be working in partnership with Active Neighbourhoods who have been really successful at helping people notice nature, enjoy their surroundings and connect with their neighbours too. We know that these projects make a real difference for the city's population, helping them to be healthier and happier. The evaluation of Active Neighbourhoods has enabled us to identify the factors that have made the project so successful – and we are now applying this learning across the city. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and seeing Active Neighbourhoods continue to use innovative approaches to produce positive health and wellbeing outcomes for the city.

Ruth Harrell, Director of Public Health



## What we do...

**Health and wellbeing can be broken down into physical, mental and social wellbeing. Through Active Neighbourhoods we aim for communities:**

- to be more physically active and feel better
- to have greater social cohesion, with more active citizens contributing towards, and taking pride in improved local green assets
- to have an improved local environment and that they will enjoy more welcoming, accessible and nature-rich green spaces on their doorstep

## How We Do it...

Active Neighbourhoods works with communities, using their local green or blue space as a neighbourhood hub. This work is underpinned by a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework to help us collect evidence on the impacts of Active Neighbourhoods, including participant's health and wellbeing and the quality of spaces. This framework is based around the '5 ways to wellbeing' – Connect, Learn, Be Active, Take Notice and Give – researched and developed by the New Economics Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

1. Commissioned by the Government's Foresight project on mental capacity and wellbeing



Local greenspaces and communities are working together to improve health and wellbeing for people and wildlife

# Local Greenspaces

Family Events

School Engagement

Volunteering

Citizen Science

# Local Community

Improved Health and Wellbeing for People

Better Places for Wildlife



## Ways we work with local communities:

- family, youth services, children's centres and school programmes developed to meet specific community needs
- volunteer and citizen science programmes
- development of greenspace stakeholder and 'Friends of' groups, including residents, local groups and professional organisations
- build capacity and confidence of organisations and groups to access nature such as physical activity programmes being delivered outdoors
- collect evidence on the impact of Active Neighbourhoods on community health and wellbeing through a range of robust monitoring tools

## How we improve the quality of spaces:

- community-led stakeholder groups for each greenspace
- improve infrastructure such as accessible paths, gates, signage, and a better welcome
- create and protect more wildlife rich spaces
- gather baseline data on greenspaces such as numbers of visitors, how spaces function in the community and wildlife surveys



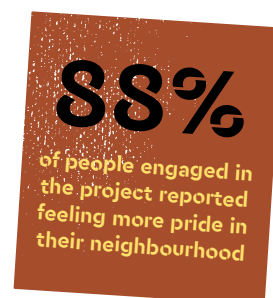
# What have we achieved so far?

## A final summary of Active Neighbourhoods – delivering on the 5 ways to wellbeing

.....

### 1. Connect

Linking people with each other and with their local environment



#### We connect and work with

Buglife, the Tree Council, Plymouth Tree Partnership, Plymouth Community Orchards, RSPB, Plymouth and Exeter Universities, Marine Biological Association, National Marine Aquarium, Ernesettle Community Forum, Four Greens Community Trust; Plymouth Environmental Action, Plymouth Energy Community, TCEF; Walking for Health, Friends of Ham Woods, PCC Family Interventions, The Dove Project, Evolve; Spaceshot (Ernesettle Youth Group), Plymouth Community Homes; Efford Community Centre; Summer Mix; Take A Part; Crazy Glue; Livewell SW; Countryside Management Association; Controlled Frenzy, Far Flung Dance; Plymouth Hope

**For me to be able to socialise whilst participating in nature activities is so important. I never thought that after my stroke, I would be able to do anything like this, but because the staff and participants are so friendly and helpful it makes the whole experience enjoyable and I do not feel like a burden. This day was a very important experience for me and I now have a much more positive attitude to being able to do such things.**

Sarah, Ernesettle resident

## Case Study

### What's digital technology got to do with nature?

Tapping into the current technologies and digital trends, such as Pokemon Go drew lots of young people and families to explore their local beaches and woods with us, as well as spending time with each other! We ran a series of Pokemon safaris in our key nature reserves, including using 12 wristband fitness trackers for participants to calculate their steps and calories burnt.

This proved a great way to have health based conversations and motivate people to get more active in their local green space.

**Ashley Tod, AN Community and Volunteer Officer**







## Stumpd!

Digital visitor counters were installed at all sites through a student-led digital innovation project called 'Stumpd' - these were used at the beginning of the project and at the end. We saw a huge increase in visitor numbers at each site, despite heavy rain during the 2018 survey period:

- Kings Tamerton, 191%
- Ernesettle Creek, 140%
- Efford Marsh, 134%
- Budshead Wood, 43%

## Detour to Explore

A collaborative project between Smarter Choices (PCC) and Active Neighbourhoods, Detour to Explore experimented with how digital technology and game playing can be used to encourage more active travel, particularly through greenspaces. This project encouraged local families to use their LNR regularly and had a positive impact on the school community; with a reduction of parent/carers driving to the school entrance at drop-off and pick-up times.

## 2. Learn

Providing opportunities to explore something new about nature

**34** sessions  
with **53** teachers,  
connecting **360**  
children with nature  
in greenspaces  
across Plymouth

**31**  
Citizen  
Science events

**1** trainee  
ranger gained  
full-time  
employment  
in nature  
conservation

**Watch Wild  
Challenge  
in action!**  
  
vimeo.  
com/279630811

### Case Study: Wild Challenge Working with schools to reach families...

We partnered with the RSPBs Wild Challenge, which aims to connect children and families to nature, through activities which work towards bronze, silver and gold awards. We engaged all the schools nearest our neighbourhood greenspaces, building teacher confidence, and removing other barriers they had to getting their classes out and active in nature, such as knowledge about what to do outside and where to go, getting support from school heads and valuing the impact of nature on children's learning and wellbeing.

Through Wild Challenge we watched children explore new spaces and play more freely in nature. Importantly many children started to bring their families back to take part in a celebration and outdoor theatre event at Ernesettle Creek, Teats Hill, and to also attended our family events during the school holidays.

Ashley Tod, AN Community and Volunteer Officer

**I normally sit inside  
but I loved getting  
more active and  
doing stuff.**

Lexi, Year 6 student at  
Ernesettle Community School





## Phenomenal Phenology!

We worked with our volunteers to trial a citizen science wildlife survey in partnership with Plantlife focussing on phenology – the timing of natural events such as the beginning of spring. It was amazing to photograph the tree canopy through a fish-eye lens, as well as monitoring new plant growth to indicate how factors such as shading and changing temperatures may affect the woodland structure over time.

We also designed a citizen science survey to monitor the effect of meadow management at Efford Marsh. The survey methods were scientifically robust while engaging for families to identify key plants and insects. The results showed its meadows are healthy, with an abundance of wildflowers, bees and bugs.

Hayley Partridge, AN Trainee Ranger

# 3. Be Active

Supporting participation in physical outdoor activities for all abilities

More than

**98%**

of all participants agreed that they were more active and felt better after taking part in Active Neighbourhoods activities

Active Neighbourhoods collaborated with Public Health to launch the Active 10 app: encouraging people to undertake 10 minutes of brisk walking a day and we trained 4 new walk leaders

Delivered **47** community events, **126** family learning activities, **54** training sessions for volunteers, **26** training workshops for professionals, and **5** research events

**84%**

of residents say they are getting out more in their local nature reserve and are feeling better and are more active

**94%**

of local residents surveyed say their local nature reserve is more welcoming and accessible now

Engaged

**12,353**

local residents being active in nature

Participants took

**31,889,631**

steps; covering

**8,344.9 km**

This burnt

**768,093**

calories





## Case Study: Family health and wellbeing...

Family events give families a reason to visit nature reserves and to take part in free family activities, in a safe guided fashion. Getting people to attend these events has involved a joined up approach of using social media, traditional word of mouth, leaflets and posters. All activities make sure both children and adults keep active, provide opportunities to socialise and also include an element of volunteering.

Working with Active Neighbourhoods in local woodland gave our vulnerable families a chance to work together in neutral space. Being outside and more active, encouraged more positive behaviour from both children and adults, and allowed participants the freedom to explore the woods and express themselves. It was often the highlight of the family's week.

PCC Family Intensive Intervention Project (FIIP)

We went to Teat's Hill today and my son had a great time hunting bugs and making his own rope. The staff are really helpful and welcoming. A great way to get out and keep summer holiday costs down!

Anna, local parent

Ernesettle felt a bit forgotten at that time and it felt great to have something here, to get people active and provide community cohesion, although getting community involved is hard.

Sally, Active Neighbourhoods volunteer

# 4. Take Notice

Providing a high quality, accessible natural environment which encourages people to be curious about the world

**5 km**  
of new and  
improved  
paths

**810 m sq**  
new/  
restored  
hedgerows

**1,000**  
trees  
planted

**35**  
Bird boxes  
made

**5**  
new  
wildflower  
meadows

**1**  
new  
wetland  
area

**900**  
plug  
plants

**2**  
pond  
dipping  
platforms

**15**  
benches,  
seating areas  
and picnic  
tables

**3**  
accessible  
gates

**1**  
new Local  
Nature Reserve  
designated

**23**  
new entrance  
signs and  
interpretation  
panels

**2**  
new County  
Wildlife Sites

**5**  
new  
management  
plans developed

**4**  
community-  
designed  
nature trails

**5**  
marine  
Bioblocks  
installed

**90%**  
surveyed say the  
improvements we've  
made make their  
community a better  
place to live





## Case Study: Can man-made structures create new habitats for marine life?

Five BIO-Blocks have been installed in the intertidal zone on the beach at Teats Hill to try and answer this question. Over the coming years their colonisation will be monitored as part of a scientific experiment which is part of a collaboration between the University and Plymouth City Council. The blocks feature a range of textures, holes and 'rockpools' to create an artificial habitat. Students from the university will be monitoring the blocks over the next 2 years, identifying species and abundance on the blocks, as well as mapping the textures and features that encourage the most colonisation and inhabitation by marine life. These blocks could help off-set the impact on biodiversity caused by man-made marine structures such as slipways, piers and sea defences.

**So a big thank you also to you and your team for the facilities and the amphitheatre - it gets quite a lot of use particularly at times of celebration and festivals - Eid saw it in use a great deal. All ages, genders and cultures playing together was lovely to see. The football pitch gets a lot of use both for football and for bike riding for the very young ones.**

David, local resident at Teats Hill



## Case Study: Looking for Silence

We experimented with new and innovative ways to connect local residents to nature, including guided sensory walks through greenspaces wearing a mix of sound amplifying headphones and noise cancelling headphones and partnerships with artists.

Once inside the Efford Marsh we were struck by the noise from the A38 – that's when and how we had our idea to make a "listening post" based loosely on the pre-RADAR acoustic early detection devices that are dotted around the south coast of England. Only ours, instead of trying to hear the noise of combustion engines, is focused on trying to cut them out and reflect the ambient sounds of the nature reserve and raise awareness to listening.

Nick Leverington and Nadja Wuthrich,  
Looking for Silence artists



We have gone on listening walks with volunteers using Parabolic Microphones and run workshops in Efford library as part of our research; asking members of the community – Where to put the sculpture? What do the users of this nature reserve think about the noise? Does it change their perception of the park when they can hear it better?

Gem Smith, Take A Part arts organisation

This is the first time I have been able to walk around the headland for years. I recently had a stroke and this new path means that I can get out and do some walking to improve my health. Resident who now walks the path every day, following access improvements to Ernesettle Creek's headland path.

Matt, Ernesettle resident

I have lived here 14 years and it really has changed my outlook on Plymouth, seeing the open spaces and the varied wildlife.

Kate, local volunteer

This has also been a great opportunity to experience the amazing wildlife and natural beauty that Plymouth has to offer. So far I have been lucky enough to see kingfishers, bullfinches, fallow deer and even a common lizard. One of the best things about the job is being able to see the positive impact that our work can have on communities. The Ernesettle Headland Path was an example of this, at the beginning of the project this area was a muddy inaccessible area. We were able to completely transform a previously inaccessible area, into a spectacular scenic walk with a wheelchair accessible path, it is now a real asset for the community.

Kieran Shaw-Flach, AN trainee ranger

# 5. Give

Leading volunteering sessions which empowers people to contribute to their local area

Residents have volunteered  
**10,140** hours,  
over **2028**  
volunteer days with an  
in-kind value of  
**£101,405**

**3 new**  
**'Friends of'**  
**groups for**  
**greenspaces**

**Plymouth Volunteer**  
**Award for excellence**  
**in volunteering**  
**(2018) for the Active**  
**Neighbourhoods**  
**volunteers**

My inspiration with the Mayflower theme and totem poles was to mirror how the native Americans look after nature and encourage local people to care for and appreciate their local environment. I have been overwhelmed and choked at how much involvement I have had with the nature trail project – the support of other local residents, the school and Active Neighbourhoods – and really feel a sense of ownership with it all. It's very rewarding hearing that lots of people have already had the joy of discovering the totem poles and exploring nature trails for themselves (not just seeing them on social media but then going out to find them). My favourite totem pole is the owl!

**Ray, volunteer**





## Case Study: Supporting residents to deliver change...

Ray has been volunteering with Active Neighbourhoods since the start, and took on a leadership role, including developing his idea for the Budshead Wood Mayflower 400 nature trails. Ray feels a sense of pride and connection to his local site which he is able to share within his community – and so he wanted to create a legacy for the children of Ernesettle (working with the local primary school), with the vision of the long term care and conservation of Budshead Wood.

**Ray Morton, Active Neighbourhoods Volunteer**

The way I have actually progressed with Active Neighbourhoods, they have taught me so much. Although my own wildlife garden was two years old, I now know how to dead hedge and I know the names of more wildflowers. I was privileged to go on the beaver project visit and learn about bee conservation and I have been pushing, myself to do more. It's like having a little pair of hands behind my back going "go on – do it." it's brilliant!

**Michele, local resident**

Where we are now with conservation in Britain urban wildlife is becoming a very important subject, urban sites like Efford Marsh, are providing an oasis for wildlife generally. 80% of people live in towns and cities and if you want to get them interested in wildlife on their doorstep is the best place to start.

**Tim Russell, Active Neighbourhoods Urban Ranger.**



# 6. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

## What have we learnt?

**Using robust monitoring and evaluation tools and techniques to evidence the impact of Active Neighbourhoods has been our approach from the start. Some of the key tools we have used are listed below:**

- Site surveys were carried out before and after site improvements using the Spaceshaper questionnaire, developed by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. This is a nationally recognised standard and has been used to deliver community consultation workshops and survey site users/local residents. We expanded this survey for our end of project evaluation to include wider perspectives on Active Neighbourhoods.
- Digital visitor counters installed at all sites through a student-led digital innovation project called 'Stumpd' and evidenced large increases in site use
- Ecological surveys of sites delivered through Devon Biodiversity Record Centre and citizen science events with volunteers
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (short form) to assess wellbeing outcomes for longer-term project participants; and we also commissioned a social research project, using film, photo and analysis to assess the impact of the project on volunteers.
- Evaluating events for quality and health and wellbeing outcomes using the Likert Scale; and we also interviewed volunteers to find out more about their experience of Active Neighbourhoods.
- Linking with more in-depth academic research including the Blue Health Project; and initiating an action research PhD to explore how outdoor nature-based health promotion can be used within public health practice for children and young peoples' health and wellbeing (partnership between the University of Plymouth and the University of Birmingham, in collaboration with the Active Neighbourhoods project).

**Gathering data and analysing it on a regular basis enables us to adapt our approach to delivery and monitoring as we go along. Some of the changes we have made as a result include:**

- Incorporating elements of volunteering into family events to encourage local ownership and care of the greenspaces. Combining fun nature-based activities with volunteering has enabled participants to give something back to their community and to learn a bit about their local greenspace.
- Combining traditional community engagement approaches such as door-knocking, attending existing community events, taster sessions and running fun events with new technology-based tools such as Pokemon safaris, NFC trails and effective social media has enabled us to reach a more diverse audience and reach out to more socially isolated residents.
- As well as managing sites to increase biodiversity over the long-term, we've delivered site improvements that show relatively quick visual and habitat improvements to spaces to inspire residents to get involved such as wildflower planting and orchard planting.
- Adapting conventional wildlife survey techniques over short project timescales has been challenging. We have trialled and adopted innovative methods to evidence changes in biodiversity over the short term. Such as simple before and after photos documenting the change in habitat structure and species diversity; recording species and comparing composition and variety between newly managed habitats and neighbouring unmanaged habitats (for example a newly sown meadow and neighbouring amenity grassland); butterfly counts along transects of newly managed habitats. Butterflies provide a relatively quick indication of changes in habitat; and mapping changes in management and habitat to inform constantly evolving site management plans.









## Case Study:

# Site Surveys – What have people told us about the Active Neighbourhoods Project?

We commissioned an independent evaluation (University of Plymouth, November, 2018) of the Active Neighbourhoods sites to see what impact the site improvements, community engagement and activities had on local communities – we surveyed and spoke to people that used the sites, participated in the project and people that didn't use the site, but lived nearby.

It is clear from the feedback of local residents that the AN project has successfully carried out its project aims...and enhanced the well-being of individuals and the social cohesion of local communities in several deprived communities in Plymouth, through addressing barriers to accessibility and use of local green spaces and finding ways to further encourage engagement in local natural resources.

Evaluating the Active Neighbourhoods Project (Site Survey Analysis), Plymouth UK (February 2019).



## Key findings include:

- Generally people socialised in nature reserves by talking to other users, especially when using the site regularly and other regular users become familiar; and through family events, volunteering and for planned socialising with family and friends i.e. to meet up and spend time with them.
- The majority of local residents agreed that physical improvements had been made to their nature reserve; and also agreed that the sites were now better maintained, with more accessible pathways and improved seating. There was also a positive response to the improvement of the quality of nature and wildlife at the sites.
- 93% of local residents agreed that their nature reserve was now a more enjoyable place to visit; 80% agreed that they felt a greater sense of responsibility to look after the sites; 78% agreed that it was now a safer place to visit; 67% agreed that they were now more knowledgeable about their natural environment; and 58% agreed that they felt they now had a say about what happens in their nature reserves.
- The majority of residents agreed that there are now more onsite activities. Over 50% of respondents said that they now attended more onsite activities and the greatest attractions were to spend time in nature, for the event to be local to people's homes, for the event to be part of a healthy lifestyle, for the event to be free. Less important but still significant motivators are for events to include children and be social opportunities.
- Although nature reserve users had not noticed an increase in apps and downloadable resources, they are clearly a known and used source of information and another means of communicating with some of the local residents. It is important to use a variety of ways to reach people with different needs and interests.
- Since the Active Neighbourhoods project most of the participants reported having positive personal and attitudinal changes: enjoying their nature reserves more, having greater knowledge about their environment, feeling a greater sense of responsibility to look after the sites and feeling more empowered to have a say in the decisions concerning these spaces.
- 83% of local residents visit their nature reserve to enjoy nature; 81% for physical activity; 58% to relax; 35% to socialise; 25% to attend events; 16% to volunteer.
- Most people using their nature reserves for physical activity do so by walking, both with dogs and with families. Other popular activities include volunteering, commuting, and family activities such as using guided apps, den building and blackberry picking.
- Common themes on relaxing activities included getting out of the house, or away from the built up environment and all of its noise and busyness to the peace, fresh air and picturesque scenery of their nature reserve. It was noted that it was more relaxing than a city park, that people enjoy observing the wildlife: birds, seasonal changes, sights and sounds and gain a sense of connection with nature. People appreciated new infrastructure such as seating and gathering places allowing to spend longer in spaces and 'chill out' and have some 'time to think'.





## Case Study: Volunteer Stories...

Volunteers have become a central element of Active Neighbourhoods – and so we wanted to hear about their experience of being involved in the project. We worked closely with a social researcher to interview volunteers using film/audio (watch our short film - [vimeo.com/303978452](https://vimeo.com/303978452)) and to analyse these through a written report (A Qualitative Report on Volunteers' Experience of, and Contribution to Active Neighbourhood – it's Impact on Health and Wellbeing, 2018); and commissioned an accompanying series of volunteer portrait photos which were exhibited at celebration event and will tour local neighbourhoods.

Volunteers are vital for maintaining the sites, a good example is of Budheads Wood. Ray and Richard live local to the site and walk there regularly outside the sessions and if there is something that needs doing they will let us know. I have seen a huge impact, not only from a wildlife perspective but also from bringing volunteers together and seeing the impact even spending time in the woods for day, the positive effect that has.

Hayley, Active Neighbourhoods  
Trainee Ranger

We have great fun, we learn, we teach, we educate and we share the worst jokes ever. We need people who care about all the green spaces around Plymouth, the education of others and to help others through mental or physical problems - it's a great team.

Richard, Volunteer





## Key findings include:

- Volunteers most value positive social connections, learning new skills/increasing knowledge, accessibility of the sites, flexibility to attend when they can, greater connection with their local green space, a meaningful stake in a wider goal to support wildlife and the environment and being supported to take on leadership roles.
- Volunteers reported that positive social connections and enjoyment support their social wellbeing and learning; local volunteers have a strong connection with their site and are in a good position to support work and to influence change in their communities; and working towards a common goal with like-minded people, sharing your knowledge and seeing the impact of your work promotes confidence and wellbeing.
- What does the volunteer experience tell us about the impact of Active Neighbourhoods?
  - new skills have been used to improve project sites and volunteers have been inspired/support to help improve spaces beyond the project area.
  - deepened knowledge and understanding of wildlife and habitats have enabled volunteers to support and lead family/community events and activities.
  - Active Neighbourhoods provides a positive and supportive volunteer environment, with good staff relationships and offers opportunities to form new social connections, which in turn improved volunteer social and mental wellbeing.
  - volunteers reported experiencing a sense of trust and support within the group.
  - volunteers have carried out improvements to site, surveyed wildlife and shared decision-making on site improvements which has led volunteers to feel they are making a contribution to increasing urban wildlife and their local area.





## Case Study:

### BlueHealth Research at Teat's Hill

#### Using robust research to inform decision making....

In Teats Hill, Active Neighbourhoods is partnering with BlueHealth – a pan-European research initiative investigating relationships between urban waterways and health led by the University of Exeter and involving a consortium of nine institutions across Europe.

Active Neighbourhoods and BlueHealth are working closely with the local community around Teats Hill beach and greenspace, as well as with organisational stakeholders, such as Plymouth Community Homes, the National Marine Aquarium, the Marine Biological Association and Plymouth Marine Laboratory. This innovative partnership has helped shape the physical redevelopment of Teats Hill, and is evaluating any potential changes to community health which may arise from those changes.



## BlueHealth are assessing community health effects, with published results expected in 2019, through:

- A before and after survey with residents in seven surrounding census areas which looks at their general health, well-being, recreational visits and willingness to pay for improvements to Teats Hill.
- A before and after 10-week behavioural observation schedule exploring how people use the site before and after improvements.

Physical improvements have created an open air theatre and natural play features as well as reverting some of the amenity grass to limestone grassland and coastal wildflowers.

BlueHealth are also trialling a new environmental assessment tool at Teat's Hill to assess the quality of coastal environments for wider use by local authorities to help them get the most out of these spaces and decide what improvements could achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities, as well as better places for wildlife.

**Early findings show that when controlling for other factors known to affect health and wellbeing, BlueHealth found that there was a statistically significant increase following the site improvements in the following:**

- Positive wellbeing
- Life satisfaction
- People's perceptions of the site's quality.

On average, willingness to pay for the Teat's Hill regeneration project was £8.00 per household. More detailed results will be written up for publication during 2019, including findings from the observational study.



**Teats Hill is one of several European case studies for BlueHealth where we're working with the local community to design improvements to blue spaces. BlueHealth is all about using planning and design to enhance blue spaces – using small interventions in under-used spaces to potentially have a big effect, what we refer to as 'urban acupuncture'. These interventions can change the way people interact with, use and get the most mental and physical benefits from, blue space.**

**Professor Simon Bell, Chair of Landscape Architecture,  
Estonian University of Life Sciences**

**We've worked with a range of organisations as part of our Blue Health research and Plymouth City Council's Active Neighbourhood Project have been an excellent delivery partner – supportive and dynamic, making sure the local community have been engaged with the changes to the area. It is such a cool project that I think many people from around the world will love to hear about it so we're kicking off the International Congress of Environmental Psychology in Sept 2019 with a key note presentation and discussion on Teats Hill!**

**Mat White, Senior Lecturer in Psychology Applied to Health & the Environment, European Centre for Environment & Human Health, University of Exeter Medical School**

# 7. Where Next?

## Year 3 and beyond

### As we head beyond Active Neighbourhoods our focus will be:

- Developing more in depth health and wellbeing research, including PhD research on how School Nurses can improve child/family health outcomes through access to nature; Blue Health research results; and how greenspace interventions can influence community-level social wellbeing.

- Linking our Silver Wild Challenge schools to wider activities within the growing Plymouth Outdoor Learning Network and secure funding to expand this network.

- Securing capital funding to deliver more high quality greenspace through on-site physical improvements such as accessible paths, better welcome signage, way-marking and interpretation and increased biodiversity.

- Securing funding and developing partnerships to reach out to new audiences that could benefit from enjoying their local greenspaces, particularly those that feel isolated and experience poor health and wellbeing.

- Developing new and existing Friends groups and volunteer networks through Plymouth Open Spaces Network. How do we refresh and support volunteering with limited resources?

- Making use of our evidence on how greenspace can impact on health and wellbeing in Plymouth, building on our relationships within Public Health and its networks including future commissioning.

- Identifying resources to increase and expand local volunteering and community engagement such as the partnership arts project, Reverberations, led by Take A Part (community arts organisation) and building on the transformation of Teats Hill greenspace.

- Developing a collaborative approach to wider urban greenspace management, which we piloted through Active Neighbourhood sites.

- Learning from our deeper relationship with Public Health and applying their systems leadership approach to health and social care services for people - to places. For example, developing a stewardship-led governance model for greenspaces through co-design with communities, local groups and other stakeholders.





Active Neighbourhoods work with local communities to successfully get people out and about, being more active in their doorstep green and blue spaces. PCC and DWT are at the forefront in really valuing, investing and engaging people in these spaces for health, wellbeing and wildlife and we're proud to be working within such an innovative partnership.

Claire Turbutt,  
PCC Public Health

**As we move beyond Active Neighbourhoods it is important that we find a range of ways to reflect this learning and experience into our wider greenspace management - in particular how we continue to work in partnership; support long-term community involvement in decision making; and promote the stewardship of our urban greenspaces, both for the benefit of community health and wellbeing, and to support a richness of wildlife.**

Jemma Sharman, Active Neighbourhoods, Project Coordinator

**Contact info:**

**Active Neighbourhoods - Plymouth City Council**

**i** ActiveNeighbourhoodsProject  
**e** NatInfra@plymouth.gov.uk  
**w** [www.plymouth.gov.uk/activenighbourhoods](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/activenighbourhoods)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 666773.



**Devon**  
Wildlife Trust

