



**Leicestershire
& Rutland**
Wildlife Trust

Nature Connection Partnership Project



*Together
we can create a wilder future*

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Empowering Communities through Access to Nature

Access to Nature is recognised as bringing multiple benefits, particularly around physical and mental health. It can also help to bring people together in many ways regardless of their beliefs or background and help to create a more cohesive environment, addressing many issues around disengagement.

By challenging assumptions about who engages in nature and how, we aim to increase the diversity of ways in which people can spend time in nature spaces in and around Leicester, accepting diverse ideas and perceptions of what is 'nature' and empowering communities to play an active role in this journey.

Over the past year we have been running a new and innovative project to test a way to empower communities within Leicester by creating a common ground and goal for those of different backgrounds, using access to nature as a foundation.

Importantly, our approach has not been about going in with a fixed agenda or doing the work for people, but to work with them to address their needs, and to give the knowledge, experience, confidence and support to help themselves.



Belgrave Library Gardening Project



Our Pilot Project

Belgrave, in Leicester, is incredibly diverse with an approximate population of 11,500, and cohesion between so many different groups is paramount to improved lifestyles and wellbeing.

Our Community Engagement Officer worked with the Belgrave Library Gardening Project to go past an initial wariness to develop a common ground.

From determining what an initially small group hoped for and needed, we drew in partners from across the area who could see the value in developing a common ground that would not only benefit the group itself but reach across the entire area, bringing unity and creating an area communities could be proud of.

Partners we engaged with throughout the project included the police, the Housing Association, libraries, the City Council, neighbourhood centres and Leicester College.

This project has demonstrated the ability to generate momentum and enthusiasm. The group itself has developed the strength and confidence to start submitting their own funding bids so they can continue to work and grow once we take a step back.



We have been contacted by, and would love to work with, other groups who have seen the success of this project and the positive affect it can have on all those involved.

Inspiring Communities



This pilot project has demonstrated that the approach we have taken, shifting power to the communities, can work. We are now looking to fully embed this way of working, developing projects that deliver in multiple areas across the city and into the surrounding areas of Leicester.

We are looking to work with more groups and engage with more partners to develop the infrastructure, networks and forums needed for the work to really take root in communities and enable the longevity of the work.

We would love you to be a part of this journey.



As a Wildlife Trust, we know that the focus on nature and the natural environment brings benefits towards mental and physical health, increasing a sense of pride and ownership.

This project combines the benefits of connection through community and the connection with nature, creating a powerful mix which we have shown can really benefit those in the most diverse and potentially divided communities.

The next steps

Over the next five years we are looking to:

Embed the ways of working developed to build our network of allies, partnerships and relationships across the city

Reach new communities and involve young people and youth groups to hear their voices on what they feel are the issues that need addressing

Test approaches and develop deeper learning to share across other areas

Increase the number of community-organising trained staff working on the project to give a greater capacity and allow greater reach

Develop a digital hub of resources and a podcast to share the voices of forum members and our experience

Provide an authentic and lasting opportunity to connect with nature and access to the sector and full range of green jobs

Identify and engage with a full range of partners, including local groups, public bodies and businesses

Deliver community organising training to community members, cascading knowledge and creating empowerment and confidence

Why partner with us?



Collaboration

Throughout the project, developing and being open with partner organisations has been a key part of evolving, and it has been important to collaborate and work together to develop shared goals that work for us all through our shared values.

Let's unite our skills and influence to make a real and lasting difference.

"Our participation has been transformative for our housing Co-op and the community. It has provided a platform for our members to connect, work together, and learn about nature, fostering a strong sense of community and breaking the isolation barrier"

Engagement

Together we can create a real and genuine social impact and outreach locally, while engaging your stakeholders and staff by involving them throughout.

Let's generate stories and interest, increasing reach and awareness.

"An incredible initiative that goes beyond gardening. It's a community-building platform that unites people, fosters learning, and empowers individuals to make a positive change for themselves and nature. It's an opportunity everyone should be a part of"

Building Understanding

Partnerships need to be about more than just a 'warm glow', so let's make a real impact instead. We can learn what matters to you, and together we can creatively find new ways of working that make the most of all we both have to offer.

Let's transform the way we work.



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Business Partnerships

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www.lrwt.org.uk/corporate



**To find out more
information about
becoming one of our
valued corporate partners
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