

Getting outdoors helps young people's wellbeing, research shows

Submitted by: Word Worker

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Young people's wellbeing improves and they feel more connected to nature if they are able to get out and about in their local environment and take action on issues that matter to them.

That's the outcome of a ground-breaking scheme, which has so far recruited almost 3,000 young people to be 'Green Influencers' and take positive action to improve the environment of their schools or communities.

The Green Influencers Scheme is run by national educational charity The Ernest Cook Trust, which has given 40 Host Organisation Grants to support the employment of 44 Green Mentors. The Green Mentors' role is to enable young people to lead the way as 'Green Influencers' on environmental social action projects. So far 2,900 Green Influencers have been recruited, and the ambition is to recruit 5,000.

Researchers looking at the impact of the scheme found there was a statistically significant increase in young people's wellbeing and nature connectedness.

The most noticeable increase was for the statement 'I feel part of nature'. Green Influencers' wellbeing scores increased from 51.6 to 55.1, and their connectedness to nature went up from 48.3 to 53.4.

Some 77% of the Green Influencers told researchers at Wavehill they would carry on taking part in meaningful youth social action, showing the scheme has made a permanent impact on young people's sense of agency and ability to feel they can make a difference.

The scheme is match-funded through the #iwill Fund, which is a GDP 54 million joint investment between The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to support young people to access high-quality social action opportunities.

The Scheme's second annual conference, held recently in Matlock, Derbyshire, heard from some of the Green Influencers.

Muhammed, 14, is involved with the Garsdale Pike Project Youth Leadership Group, a collective of 20 young people from across the North West of England taking action for the environment through a ground-breaking nature restoration project.

He told the conference: "The first time I went to Garsdale Pike I fell in love with it. It seemed magical. I was really happy to be part of something that would shape the landscape and inspire others to take action. I've learned lots of new skills and started to appreciate the intricacies of an ecosystem and to protect spaces. I have grown with this project."

As well as funding Green Mentors, The Ernest Cook Trust provides grants towards projects designed and implemented by the Green Influencers. These include a grant for SOS-UK in Norwich, to create a climate change newspaper available through Norfolk libraries, and funding for Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to supply all the pupils in a local secondary school with reusable water bottles.

“The impact the Green Influencers Scheme is having on the young people involved is fantastic,” said Dr Victoria Edwards, CEO of The Ernest Cook Trust. “It has also had a ripple effect, with Green Influencers making individual changes to their behaviour, and many going on to join other outdoor initiatives, like cycling clubs and local conservation groups.

“They are learning so much through the scheme, like teamwork, improved communication, and feeling more confident. With young people so badly affected by the pandemic, we believe the evidence shows The Green Influencers Scheme is having a very positive effect.”

For information about the Green Influencers Scheme visit The Ernest Cook Trust at <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/> or email greeninfluencers@ernestcooktrust.org.uk.

Notes to editors

Green Influencers Scheme

The mission of the Green Influencers Scheme is to assist young people to create deep, lasting and meaningful connections with the natural environment. Through this scheme young people will learn and build skills which will help them contribute to the local community through environmental action.

The scheme was developed by The Ernest Cook Trust in 2019 as a match-funded project with the #iwill Fund. Both the #iwill Fund and The Ernest Cook Trust are providing GDP 1.5 million resulting in a total of GDP 3 million to be spent over 3 years on youth environmental action.

The Ernest Cook Trust has provided grants to registered charities and non-profit organisations across England to employ Green Mentors to help young people between the ages of 10-14 years (Green Influencers) to create environmental projects in local schools, youth groups and communities.

Full list of recipients:

1. Action for Conservation (London)
2. Action for Conservation (Manchester)
3. Action for Conservation (Manchester)
4. Action for Conservation (Bristol)
5. Ambition, Aspire, Achieve (Newham, London)
6. Centre for Sustainable Energy (Bristol)
7. Child Dynamix (Hull)
8. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
9. East Riding Voluntary Action Services (East Riding of Yorkshire)
10. ecoACTIVE (Hackney, London)
11. Endeavour Training Limited (Sheffield)
12. Field Studies Council (Shropshire)
13. Friends of St Nicholas Fields (York)
14. Global Action Plan (London)
15. Global Generation (Islington/Southwark, London)
16. Green Light Trust (Bury St Edmunds)
17. Green Synergy (Lincoln)

18. Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire and Merseyside
19. Groundwork Greater Manchester
20. Groundwork North East and Cumbria
21. Groundwork Northampton
22. Groundwork South
23. Handsworth Association of Schools (Birmingham)
24. Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust
25. Northumberland Wildlife Trust
26. OrganicLea CIC (Walthamstow, London)
27. Prospects Foundation (Accrington, Lancashire)
28. Shropshire Wildlife Trust
29. Somerset Wildlife Trust
30. SOS-UK (Southampton)
31. SOS-UK (Norwich)
32. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
33. The Children's Foundation (Newcastle)
34. The Oaklea Trust (Kendal, Cumbria)
35. Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire
36. Wilderness Foundation (Chelmsford)
37. Woodcraft Folk (Leeds)
38. Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust
39. Young Gloucestershire
40. Youth Work Unit Yorkshire and the Humber

The Ernest Cook Trust

The Ernest Cook Trust offers children and young people, their families and communities, the chance to learn from the land through hands-on outdoor learning activities.

The Ernest Cook Trust is a charity limited by guarantee with the sole charitable objective of education.

The Trust places education at its very heart by offering children and young people a chance to connect with nature and to take action on the environment in a meaningful and positive way.

The Trust awards around GDP2m per year in grants based on relevance and impact against organisational objectives. Grants are given to schools or charitable organisations for activities in the UK with a particular focus on areas where there are fewer opportunities to experience the outdoors.

For more information call Jo Smyth 07780 639287

#iwill Fund

The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to GDP54million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities.

The #iwill Fund brings together a group of organisations who all contribute funding to embed meaningful social action into the lives of young people.

The #iwill Fund supports the aims of the #iwill campaign - to make involvement in social action a part of life for young people, by recognising the benefit for both young people and their communities.

By bringing together funders from across different sectors and by making sure that young people have a say in where the funding goes – the #iwill Fund is taking a collaborative approach.

The #iwill movement

The #iwill movement is a collaboration of over 1000 organisations and 300 young #iwill Ambassadors from across the UK. They are united by a shared belief that all children and young people should be supported and empowered to make a positive difference on the issues that affect their lives, their communities, and broader society.

#iwill was launched in November 2013 after an independent review into how different sectors could help more young people to make a positive difference.

The #iwill movement is supported by an independent coordination hub, hosted by Volunteering Matters & UK Youth.

Take the lead by signing up to the Power of Youth Charter at www.iwill.org.uk or follow us @iwill_movement on twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest funder of community activity in the UK – we support people and communities to prosper and thrive.

We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with Government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives.

Our funding has a positive impact and makes a difference to people's lives. We support projects focussed on things that matter, including economic prosperity, employment, young people, mental health, loneliness and helping the UK reach net zero by 2050.

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over GDP30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, GDP43 billion has been raised for good causes. National Lottery funding has been used to support over 635,000 projects - 255 projects per postcode area.

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