

Independent Evaluation of the
Heritage Lottery Funded
Youth Engagement Project

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Independent Evaluation of the Heritage Lottery Funded



Youth Engagement Project

Funded by
Heritage Lottery Fund

Commissioned by
The Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Delivered by
Wider Impact Consultancy Ltd
www.widerimpact.com



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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Wider Impact Consultancy has been commissioned by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (**The Trust**) to carry out an independent evaluation of the Heritage Lottery funded **Youth Engagement Project (The Project)**.

The key aim of the commission is to establish:

1. Whether the Project has achieved its planned outputs and outcomes.
2. Whether the Project has achieved the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world.
3. What impact the Project has had on young peoples' well-being.

1.2 Approach to the Commission

A systematic approach has been adopted, which includes quantitative, desk research and qualitative field research. Opportunity has been taken to review and evaluate key reports and documents provided by the Project. Field research has included meetings and interviews with key stakeholders, hosting a beneficiary workshop, utilising bespoke questionnaires designed by Wider Impact Consultancy, carrying out detailed case study interviews, observational visits / studies and use of photographic images / evidence.

1.3 Findings

There can be no doubt that the Project has been a success in terms of it achieving aims and objectives agreed with the Heritage Lottery. Agreed indicators have on the whole been met and in a number of cases impressively exceeded.

It is also strong evidence that the Project has played a direct role in achieved the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world, delivering a significant impact on young peoples' well-being, and supporting the delivery of the overall objective and planned outcomes of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP).

This has been achieved by hard work and tenacity by the Project team and the young people involved in the Project, which includes the development and delivery of a wide range of activities and initiatives, which have involved thousands of hours of participation by the young people.

1.4 Good Practice

The following 'good practice' has been noted:

- The level of multi-agency partnership working, which has clearly been led and instigated by Project staff
- A wide range of innovative and appropriate activities and initiatives have been developed and delivered by the Project team, in partnership with multi-agency partners
- Every appropriate opportunity has been taken to involve and develop the capabilities of the young people themselves
- The creation of the Youth Rangers has been inspirational, and has enabled a group of young people to bond and positively contribute to the success of the Project and their personal development
- The Project has delivered significant natural heritage improvements, which includes managing woodlands, burning back rhododendron woods, coppicing, thinning, ring barking, controlling bramble growth, installing over **100** bird boxes, planting nearly **500** trees, creating **2** new areas of native woodland, **70m** of new hedgerows, **2** wildlife gardens, a bee 'hotel', re-building drystone walls, installing over **100** metres of post and rail fencing, footpath improvements, installing a cleft wood gate, constructing steps and board walks, wood arch ways and wildlife gardens
- The Project has been particularly successful with engaging and motivating young people with special educational needs and potentially limited academic abilities, with a focus on opening up their potential job / career opportunities
- There can be no doubts about the skills and abilities of the Project Manager, **Martin Evans**, whose skills and abilities in areas associated with youth work, leadership and the countryside have played a significant impact on the successes of the Project
- The Project, enabled by Project staff, partner agency members and significantly the young people themselves, has opened up the countryside and the role the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust can play in stimulating and guiding young people to enjoy the countryside and see it as a source of enjoyment and potential career opportunities

1.5 The Way Forward / Recommendations

Based on research findings the following recommendations are tendered:

1. Steps should be taken to preserve and build on the multi-agency partnerships links developed and delivered during the Project, with a view to exploring the development and delivery of similar projects and initiatives, which focus on the continued delivery (or development) of Project objectives:
 - a. Young people to gain a greater understanding, appreciation and respect for the countryside.
 - b. Young people to gain insights into how the landscape of the countryside is managed and conserved, with aims that include encouraging young people, their peers and families to visit the countryside more and become involved in volunteering activities.
 - c. Through volunteering, acquiring training, skills and relevant experience, young people to become more employable, particularly within the land management sector.
2. Opportunity should be taken to celebrate the successes of the Project and thank all those involved in its development and delivery, with a focus on young people, Project staff / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and other multi-agency partners.
3. The contents of this report should be disseminated to other Wildlife Trusts with objectives that include sharing such positive results and learning from good practice.

1.6 Conclusion

It is always a pleasure to deliver such a positive report, which hopefully does credit to all those involved in the development and delivery of the Project. Opportunity is taken to thank Project staff and all those involved in the delivery of this report and for their valuable time taken out of busy schedules.

Most significantly, thanks are passed on to the young people themselves who have clearly demonstrated how they have enjoyed and benefitted from the Project, and embraced such amazing opportunities to understand and empathise what our countryside has to offer in terms of recreation and the wide variety of volunteering, careers and employment opportunities.

Edwin Lewis

Director, Wider Impact Consultancy

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 Introduction

The key objective of the commission has been to carry out an independent evaluation of the **Youth Engagement Project**, which is being delivered as a component programme of the wider Heritage Lottery funded **Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP)**.

2.2 Aims of the Evaluation

The evaluation has been tasked with researching and reporting on three areas:

1. Whether the Project has achieved its planned outputs and outcomes.
2. Whether the Project has achieved the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world.
3. What impact the Project has had on young peoples' well-being.

The evaluation has also monitored the Project's role in delivering the overall objective and planned outcomes of the CVLLP.

- The **objective** of the CVLLP is to conserve, enhance and celebrate the special landscape of the area fringing the Peak District
- At the end of the Project, the CVLLP aims to have reversed the rate of decline across the landscape by increasing:
 1. Habitat connectivity and the condition of representative built heritage features.
 2. Volunteers' involvement in maintaining their local landscape.
 3. Community awareness and knowledge that provide options for economic diversification.

The improvement in the natural and built environment will be visible. Equally important changes will be achieved in peoples' careers, incomes and enjoyment of the area.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As outlined at **Figure 1**, we have taken a systematic approach to this commission, which has included consultation with key staff, beneficiaries, parents and partner agency representatives.

Figure 1



3.2 Quantitative (Desk) Research

Due note has been made of reports and documents such as:

- The original funding application to Heritage Lottery
- Year 1 Project Monitoring Form (Heritage Lottery)
- Year 1 internal Project evaluation
- Year 2 Project Update Form (Heritage Lottery)
- Data / information provided by the organisation
- Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / Project website

3.3 Qualitative (Field) Research

Field research has included:

- Meetings / interviews with Project staff / volunteers
- Meetings / interviews with beneficiaries / parents / family members
- Meetings / interviews with partner agency members
- Workshop – attended by beneficiaries
- Questionnaires:
 - Beneficiaries
 - Partner agency members
- 4 Case studies
- Observational / field visits
- Use of photographic evidence provided by the Project and obtained by Wider Impact Consultancy during observational visits

3.4 Case Studies

The following kindly agreed to case study interviews by Wider Impact Consultancy:

- Matthew Hayes (Project Trainee Youth Assistant)
- Abigail Addison
- Chris Seymour
- Lily Cartlidge (and family)

3.5 Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members

The following partner agency members have been interviewed on a one to one basis:

- Wendy Askey Buxton & Leek College
- Tracey Cartlidge Parent
- Paula Goodwin Staffordshire County Council
- Sarah Kent Buxton & Leek College
- Dave Marsh Stoke on Trent College
- Lisa Newport St Edwards Church of England Academy Leek
- Mavis Weaver St Edwards Church of England Academy Leek

3.6 Questionnaires

Two bespoke questionnaires have been designed by Wider Impact Consultancy:

- **Beneficiary questionnaire (Appendix E)** – distributed by Project staff, with completed questionnaires returned to Wider Impact Consultancy for independent analysis and presentation of findings
- **Partner Agency Questionnaire (Appendix F)** – distributed by Wider Impact Consultancy via email to partner agency members, with completed questionnaires returned via email to Wider Impact Consultancy for independent analysis and presentation of findings

4.0 Background Information

4.1 Introduction

Established in 1969 the Trust's Mission Statement reads: **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust protects and enhances the wildlife and wild places of Staffordshire and promotes understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world** - a task that the Trust has been undertaking since it was formed in 1969.

The Trust aims to offer its support to all communities in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, in order to **increase a living landscape for the benefit of people and wildlife**. This work is often focussed on key areas such as the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Regular activities include nature reserve management, providing volunteer opportunities for local communities, as well as places for residents and visitors and contractors to display traditional skills.

A key area of activity is community and educational work. From enabling local people to manage sites on their doorsteps, through to helping young people to gain new skills, or people with health challenges to access nature, the Trust looks to making a difference to lives across the County. And that difference starts young, with children able to access Trust activities as wide as Nature Tots through to Wildplay and Wildlife Watch, through to formal, National Curriculum based learning.

4.2 Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP)

The CVLLP comprises of senior representatives and managers from the following organisations:

- The Trust
- East Staffordshire Borough Council
- Lafarge Cement Limited
- Natural England
- Staffordshire Destination Partnership
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

- Staffordshire Peak District Tourism Association
- Staffordshire Rural Hub
- RSPB
- British Waterways (Canal and River Trust)
- Caldon & Uttoxeter Railway Company (1978) Limited
- Staffordshire Moorlands Community Volunteers Service
- English Heritage

The **objective** of the CVLLP is to **conserve, enhance and celebrate the special landscape of the area fringing the Peak District**. The landscape includes the market town of Leek and distinctive landscapes such as the Weaver Hills, Ipstones Edge and Churnet Valley.

4.3 About the Area

The area is 'special' because it has many original landscape features such as dry-stone walls, small-scale field patterns, small sunken enclosed lanes, incised wooded valleys and considerable areas of semi-natural vegetation. Other important features include traditional farm buildings, groups of field trees and the remains of past industries such as mining and smelting, as well as the supporting network of transport infrastructures (canal and rail in particular).

Issues and challenges include:

- Intensification of agriculture
- Loss of habitats
- Increase in stock fencing
- Decline in condition of farm buildings, hedges and dry stone walls
- Busy roads
- Quarries and former quarries
- Poor incomes from farming
- Pockets of local deprivation
- Young people leaving land management
- Climate change requiring greater habitat connectivity
- Leisure development

4.4 Aims of the CVLLP (Source: Heritage Lottery funding application)

Retaining and expanding biodiversity, conserving the geological and built heritage rooted largely in the industrial revolution is critical to the future of the landscape in terms of sustainable land management, options for diversification and the economic security of the rural population.

4.5 Key Actions

Funded by the Heritage Lottery grant, key actions include:

Conserving and Enhancing Built and Natural Features

- Maintaining and improving landscape features
- Restoring the natural heritage by linking habitats
- Conserving and restoring the built heritage (particularly dry stone walls and trails linked to past industries)

Increasing Community Participation

- By improving opportunities to get involved at many different levels
- Diversification through for example produce marketing and tourism
- Reconnecting the market town of Leek with the rural hinterland

Increasing Access and Learning

- Volunteering opportunities
- Provision of visitor sites that typify the area's best qualities
- Use of trails and interactive interpretation
- Raise awareness of the value and context of the landscape

Increasing Traditional Skills

- Training
- Countryside skills
- Dry stone walling
- Marketing
- Landowner advice

4.6 CVLLP Outcomes

At the end of the Project, the CVLLP aims to have reversed the rate of decline across the landscape by increasing:

1. Habitat connectivity and the condition of representative built heritage features
2. Volunteers' involvement in maintaining their local landscape
3. Community awareness and knowledge that provide options for economic diversification

The improvement in the natural and built environment will be visible. Equally important changes will be achieved in peoples' careers, incomes and enjoyment of the area.

4.7 Youth Engagement Project

The CVLLP overall Project includes the delivery of a number of inter-linked projects and initiatives, one of which includes the **Youth Engagement Project**, which is subject to this evaluation / report. Measured **outputs** are:

- Over the four years of the Project **500** young people will take part in positive activities. Of these:
 - **50** will take part regularly for six months or more
 - **200** will achieve a John Muir Award or other form of accreditation
 - **50** will be signed up to further training opportunities
 - At least **200** activities or events will be delivered
 - **24** mini-projects will be delivered
 - **3** larger youth events will take place during CVLLP

Table 1 highlights Project outcomes.

Table 1 Project Outcomes

No	Outcomes
1	Young people will gain a greater appreciation for the heritage, both natural and built, of the area, and will place a greater value on the area, and be more likely to respect and look after the area.
2	Young people will gain insights into how the landscape of the Churnet Valley is managed and into the work of conservation and heritage organisations working in the area. Some young people will discover new interests and some will continue volunteering or working.
3	Through acquiring training, skills and relevant experience, young people will be more employable, particularly within the land management sector.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Introduction

The following data and information includes quantitative and qualitative research findings.

5.2 Desk (Quantitative) Research Findings / Outcomes

Table 2 provides an overview of outputs achieved to date by the Project.

Table 2

Output	Target	Achieved (June 2016)
Number of young people taking part in positive activities	500	674
Number of young people taking part for 6 months or more	50	80
Number of young people achieving John Muir Award (or other form of accreditation)	200	101
Number of young people signed up to further training opportunities	50	42
Number of activities or events delivered	200	394
Number of mini projects delivered	24	24
Number of larger youth events delivered	3	3

Source: Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, June 2016

Notes

1. The target to achieve 200 young people achieving the John Muir award (or other form of accreditation) was deemed to be an over ambitious and unrealistic target, which has been discussed and agreed with the funder (See **Section 5.3**).
2. All activities delivered include elements of exploring, interpreting or learning about the natural and / or built heritage of the Valley.
3. A number of Youth Rangers plan to start careers in land management. Other young people who have taken part in the Project have started college course in Countryside Management or related subjects.

One young person is employed at a local outdoor education centre and another is working as a local tree surgeon. The Trainee Youth Assistant has started his own gardening business.

4. The Project regularly links with partner organisations and always explains how and why it manages the habitats in the way it does.

5.3 John Muir Award (JMA) (Project Feedback)

The JMA is the main form of accreditation that has been used during this Project. The requirements of the JMA are to discover, explore and help conserve a wild place and then to tell people about the activities undertaken.

The minimum time commitment to achieve the basic level of the award is 4 days worth of activities and there is also a requirement for participants to learn about John Muir. Given that many of the activities we have delivered include conservation work, exploring and finding out about the wildlife of sites, and particularly since groups we have worked with on a number of occasions will have carried out a range of these types of activities, this award fitted our project perfectly.

Groups that have been suited to the John Muir Award include the St Edwards Academy group and Leek College groups, whom we have worked with regularly over a whole academic year.

However, there have been groups that have worked with us for just a few occasions, not reaching the roughly 24 hours worth of activities required to achieve a John Muir Award, or having just undertaken one type of activity, for example practical conservation work. With these groups the John Muir Award didn't fit the bill.

We also wanted to recognise the efforts of young people that have been clocking up tens if not hundreds of hours of volunteering. We therefore created our own form of accreditation in the form of **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Young People's Awards**. These we named after species of owl that can be found in the Churnet Valley and were set up with the following requirements:

- **Tawny Owl Award** - 10 hrs of activity, 2 habitats visited
- **Barn Owl Award** - 20 hrs of activity, 3 habitats visited. Helped to conserve wildlife
- **Short-eared Owl Award** - 50 hrs of activity, 5 habitats visited. Helped to conserve wildlife

- **Long-eared Owl Award** - 100 hrs of activity, 5 habitats visited. Helped to conserve wildlife

A number of young people that we worked with were working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Award and used their volunteering with us to achieve the Service Section of their Award. For those completing the Bronze Award they needed to help out regularly for 3 months and for those completing their Silver Award the commitment was 6 months of regular help.

Over the course of the project we hosted a number of work experience placements, from local schools, colleges and universities. As these young people were working to a set of goals or outcomes to be achieved from the placements I included them in the outputs for young people receiving some form of accreditation.

Appendix D provides an overview of '**Chris' Success Story**' (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust News Letter, 7 September 2015), a volunteer Youth Ranger (See **Section 5.17**) gaining a work-based qualification.

5.4 Natural Heritage Improvements (Project Feedback)

Much of the natural heritage improvements that have been carried out have involved managing the areas woodlands. Much of this work has been cutting and burning rhododendron and considerable sized patches have been cleared from Ballington Woods in Leek, from St Edwards Park, Cheddleton and from Reacliffe Woods, Rudyard.



Other woodland management activities have included coppicing, thinning, ring barking to create standing dead wood, controlling bramble growth and clearing dense stands of holly, all of which are considered to be good management practices.



Other habitat management we have undertaken includes clearing hawthorn scrub from SSSI grassland at Caldon Dale to allow the wildflowers to thrive, controlling course weeds and bramble in species-rich grassland, pulling up Himalayan balsam, particularly in some of the

valleys' wooded streams in which the invasive species is just starting to make its presence known such as Crowgutter Wood and Cotton Dell, clearing a pond of choking non-native vegetation and cutting and burning gorse.

We have installed nearly **100** bird boxes of varying sort around the valley and have planted nearly **500** trees creating two new areas of native woodland and **70m** of new hedgerow.



Two new wildlife garden areas have been created in community spaces and a large solitary bee hotel with a living roof was constructed that each year has more bees occupying it.

In addition to the habitat management and creation young volunteers have been carrying out plenty of estate and access works to improve the visitor experience in the green spaces of the valley. Post and rail fencing, much in the traditional cleft wood style, has been installed at four different sites across the valley totalling over **100m**.

At Ballington Woods various groups have been working on access in the woods, improving the footpath, constructing and installing a cleft wood gate, constructing steps and boardwalks, so that now there is an accessible path around the whole site.



The Foxlowe Arts Centre, a volunteer run community initiative, has been a hub for many of the short projects and the garden there now benefits from attractive fencing, two cleft wood archways, a fence for espalier apple trees, a wildlife garden and bee hotel and a large spider play sculpture made from logs.



5.5 Summary of Activities

Table 3 summarises activities which have taken place, including participating hours.

Table 3 Project Activities

Conserving and Enhancing Built and Natural Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintaining and improving landscape features ○ Restoring the natural heritage by linking habitats ○ Conserving and restoring the built heritage (particularly dry stone walls and trails linked to past industries) 		
Activities	Participating Hours	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Drystone walling ○ Woodland management ○ Tree planting ○ Bird box making and installation ○ Other habitat management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 297 ○ 1522.5 ○ 139 ○ 358 ○ 777 	'Woodland management' includes rhododendron clearance, thinning, coppicing and removal of other invasive species. 'Other habitat management' includes scrub clearance from grasslands, weed control, Himalayan balsam removal and wildlife gardening.
Increasing Access and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Volunteering opportunities ○ Provision of visitor sites that typify the area's best qualities ○ Use of trails and interactive interpretation ○ Raise awareness of the value and context of the landscape 		
Activities	Participating Hours	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth Rangers ○ Geocaching ○ Volunteering/enrichment for local schools, colleges and universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2524 ○ 132 ○ 3167.5 	
Increasing Traditional Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training ○ Countryside skills ○ Dry stone walling ○ Marketing ○ Landowner advice 		
Activities	Participating Hours	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dry stone walling ○ Hedge laying ○ Other traditional skills ○ Level 2 Certificate in work-based Environmental Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 297 ○ 32 ○ 543 ○ See comments 	Other traditional skills include felt making, paper making, woodland crafts and green wood crafts. 6 young people have completed the Level 2 Certificate and 4 have completed units from it.

Source Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, July 2016

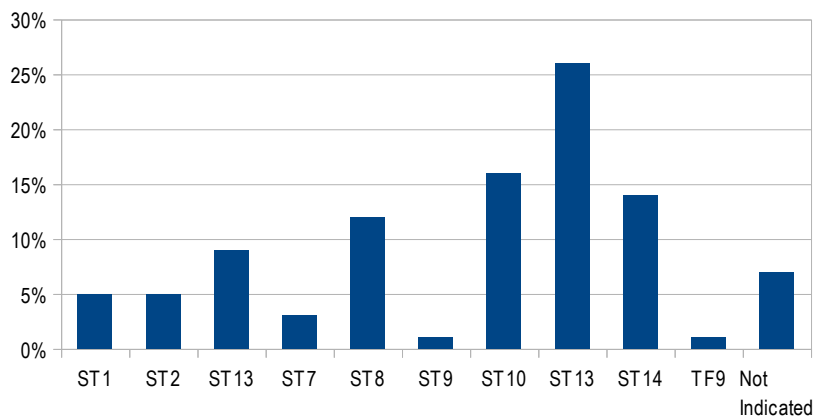
5.6 Questionnaire Analysis (Young People)

A total of 74 questionnaires were received for analysis, of which:

- 74% were received from males
- 26% were received from females
- The majority of respondents (84%) classed themselves as White / British
- 4% were received from other ethnic backgrounds (Mixed 3%; African Caribbean 1%)
- 18% did not indicate ethnicity
- The majority (93%) were students; 3% were volunteers

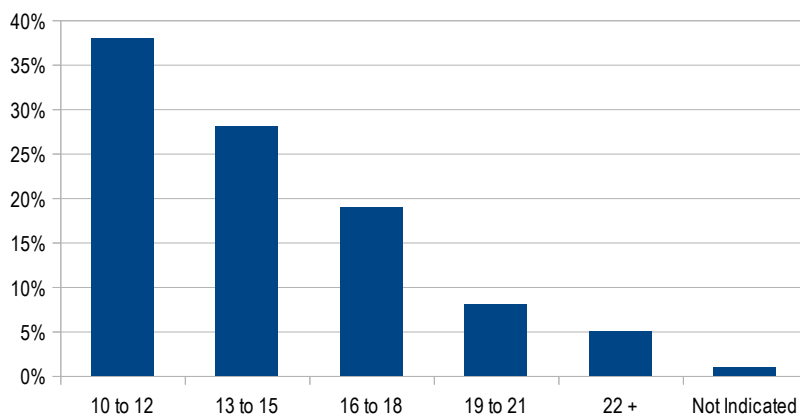
Graph 1 highlights the post code home address of respondents.

Graph 1 Postcode Addresses of Respondents



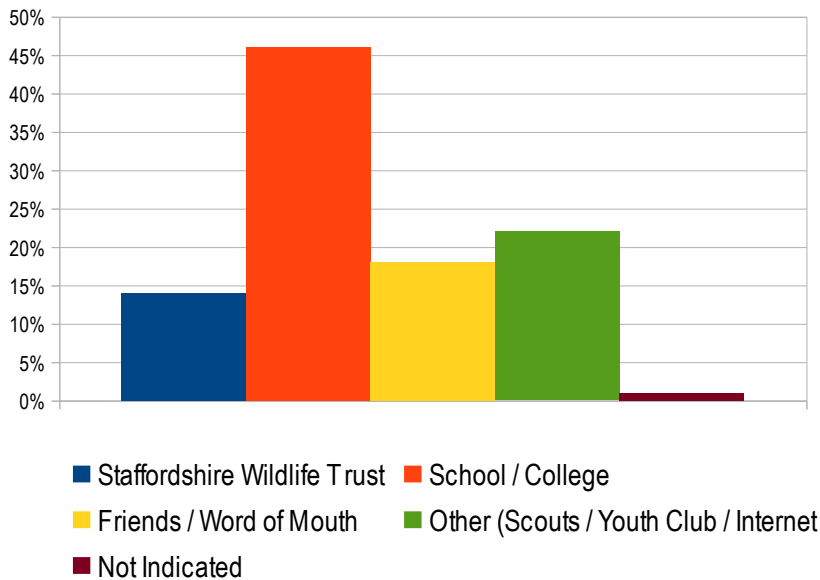
Graph 2 highlights ages of respondents

Graph 2 Ages of Respondents



Graph 3 highlights where respondents stated they heard about the Project.

Graph 3 *Where did you hear about the Youth Engagement Project?*

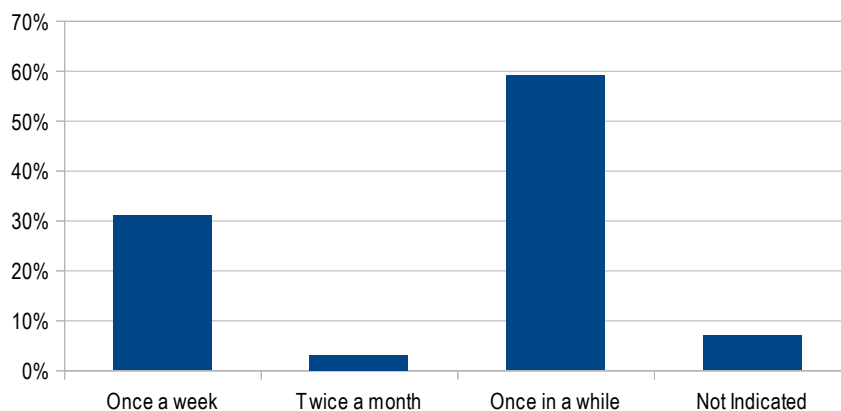


Notes

1. It will be noted that the majority of respondents (**46%**) heard about the Project at school / college.

Graph 4 highlights respondents' involvement in the Project.

Graph 4 *Respondents' Involvement in the Project*



Notes

1. The majority of respondents (**59%**) attended the Project '*Once in a while*'

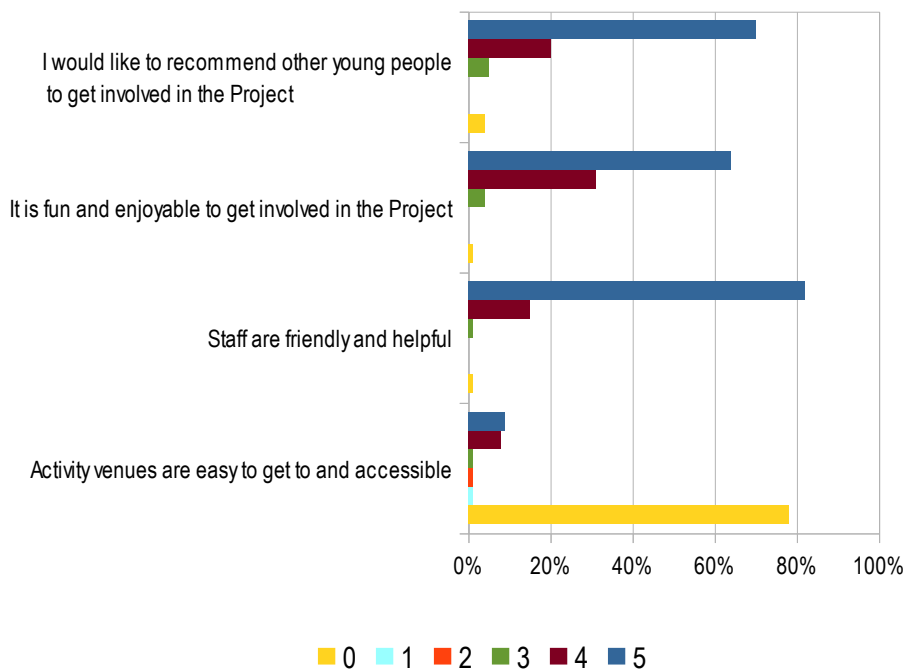
Graph 5 highlights respondents' self-explanatory reasons for their involvement in the Project.

Graph 5 Reasons for Involvement in the Project



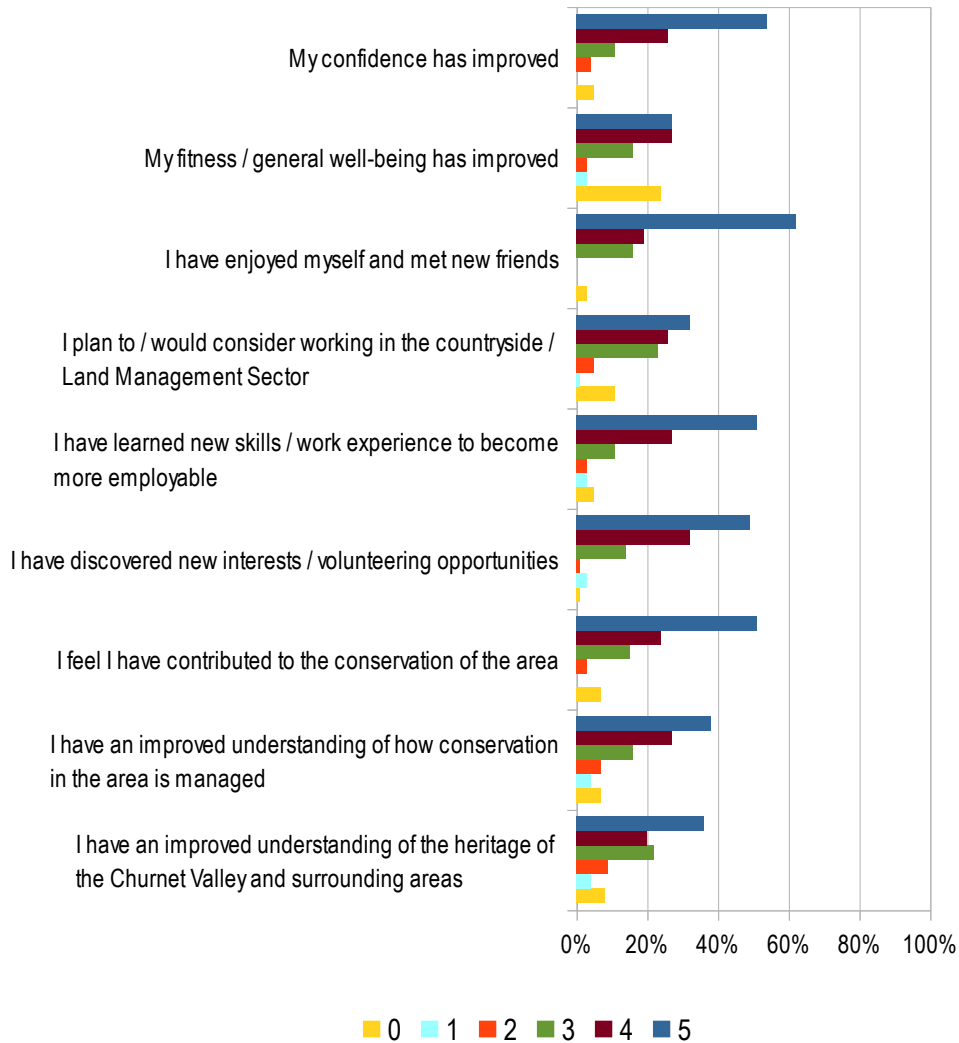
Graph 6 highlights respondents' self-explanatory views about the Project.

Graph 6 Respondents' Views about the Project (1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)



Graph 7 highlights respondents' views about the effectiveness of the Project.

Graph 7 Respondents' Views about the Effectiveness of the Project (1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

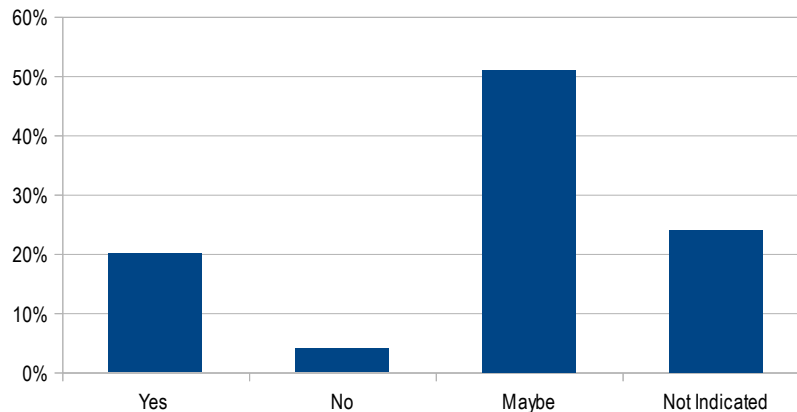


Notes

1. The majority of respondents have scored all areas highly.
2. Areas linked to confidence building and enjoyment / meeting new friends scoring significantly high.
3. There is a clear acknowledgment that the Project has played a role in enhancing respondents' views / knowledge of areas linked to the Project outcomes: e.g. greater appreciation of heritage, countryside management, conservation, discovering new interests, volunteer opportunities, acquiring new skills, relevant experiences, employment opportunities etc.

Graph 8 highlights the likelihood of respondents' considering supporting the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust in the future as for example a member or a volunteer.

Graph 8 *I am considering supporting the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust or similar in the future.*



Notes

1. The majority of respondents (71%) responded positively – 'Yes' or 'Maybe'

5.7 Further Comments

Appendix B highlights further comments made by the young people. The following is a summary of responses:

What is really GOOD about the Project?

- From the long list of views it is clear that respondents have enjoyed taking part in the Project and are extremely enthusiastic about it
- They have found it really interesting and stimulating and have appreciated being outdoors and in the countryside
- There is a strong acknowledgement of new skills being learnt and how it has boosted confidence levels

How the Project could be improved?

- There is a strong feeling that more people should take up the opportunities they have been provided with
- Generally 'more of the same' is the key suggestions

Anything else to add?

- As above, more of the same is requested, with an emphasis on the positive strengths of the staff and the Project as a whole

5.8 Case Studies

The following are summaries of case study interviews carried out by Wider Impact Consultancy.

Case Study 1, Matthew Hayes, Project Trainee Youth Assistant



Matthew is 21 years of age, local to the area, and held the position of Trainee Youth Assistant on a 12 month contract, supporting the direct delivery of the Project.

He says, *'Prior to working on the Project I was working part-time in a small retail shop with limited prospects. This was not my idea job as I studied Workplace Conservation and Countryside Management at Reaseheath College (<http://www.reaseheath.ac.uk/>; and my ideal job / career is in youth work and supporting the environment.*

Although just a 12 month contract I saw such close involvement in the Project as an ideal opportunity to gain valuable work experience and of course do what I loved to do.

From day one it was clear that I was working for a professional organisation. There was a comprehensive induction package in place and I methodically covered lots of areas, which include learning about the Staffordshire Country Agency, and most significantly learning about the Project.

I also learnt a great deal about working within a 'workplace', covering issues such as use of emails, IT systems, management structures, attending internal meetings and representing the organisation at external partnership meetings. I received training in areas such as safeguarding, Health & Safety, fire drills, tool uses etc. It has been an eye opener to me to learn that it is not just about turning up for work. Such a lot goes on in the background.

There is no doubt that my confidence grew daily, and I quickly fitted into the organisation and my role supporting the organisation and the Project in particular, which was a joy to be a part of. It is such a good project, and really supports young people and the environment. Young people from all backgrounds get the opportunity to visit, enjoy and play a role in physically maintaining their local countryside environments. It was rewarding to play a role in supporting them to take on challenges that they had never faced before and to see them also grow in confidence.

He acknowledges the support provided by the Project Manager and says, *'Martin [Evans] has been great and really supportive. He has taken the time to introduce me to the 'workplace' and to ensure I played a useful role in supporting the Project. This has been in areas such as Health & Safety/ risk assessments, safe guarding issues, and how to get the best out of young people who have often disengaged with the education system. It can be quite shocking for some people to see for example young people using tools as axes, but with the correct training and support systems risks are significantly reduced, and it is clear that the young people respond positively to the trust placed in them and the opportunity to play a direct role in supporting woodlands with activities such as drystone walling and hedge laying.*

Matthew is keen to point out that it is not just in areas linked to practical youth work that he has benefitted from by his involvement with the Project. He says, 'As I have said, I have learnt so much about the 'workplace', and what it is to be part of a team. **I am more confident now**, and have learned such a lot about things such as attending meetings, timekeeping, and the importance of grants, which is mind-blowing and really interesting. I have benefitted from a number of courses / training, the benefits of which will be transferable and useful to me in future employment opportunities.

I have gained a real insight into lots of areas and feel I have personally benefitted, which will make me a more rounded person and of course lots more employable now and in the future.

It is also important to know that the Project is and will play an important role in supports lots of other young people, who have as a whole played significant roles in shaping and improving the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas.

I would just like to say 'thank you' to Martin, the Staffordshire Countryside Agency and the Lottery for providing me with this opportunity!

Project Manager's observations:

Matt is a local lad that, under adversity, managed to complete a Level 3 qualification in Countryside Management. He overcame some stiff competition to secure our one and only Traineeship as a Youth Assistant, spending a year with us. I think Matt highlighted the fact that college life doesn't fully prepare young people for the world of work.

His experience of assisting with our work, observing the levels of motivation, creativity and hard work required to run successful project work should stand him in good stead with his new venture as a self-employed gardener.

Case Study 2, Abigail Addison



Abigail is 18 years and has an interest in wildlife and the countryside. She became involved in the Project for a number of reasons, 'I am looking for a career linked to nature and animals and was looking for volunteering opportunities to learn more and meet new people. I wasn't 'over confident' at the time, and from what I read on their website, it looked really well run and involved young people of my age and interests'.

Abigail certainly enjoyed the experienced and continues, 'Martin, the Project Manager is very good at engaging young people, and takes time to listen and understand your needs.

I attended during the school holidays mostly, and learnt lots about local wildlife and the management of the land. We got involved in lots of practical things, and it was good to work in teams with other young people, who were very friendly and keen to make new friends. I am particularly proud to have been involved in drystone walling, and it is gratifying to know that what I helped to build will be there for many years to come, supporting the local environment.

We got to visit and explore lots of places that I didn't know existed, which I would never have been aware of without Martin and the Project'.

Asked how the Project could be improved she says, 'Whilst I understand it was focussed on the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas, it would have been lovely if it also supported countryside areas where I live in the Uttoxeter area. Travelling to and from Leek was a challenge as I had to be dropped off by my parents or get the bus. I also felt at times that I was 'between age groups', in that the younger people, aged 10 to 16 years were a bit silly at times and too young for me, and the Youth Rangers aged 16 to 25 years did a lot of their work at weekends when it was hard for me to attend because of the distance for me to travel'.

She is however clear about what she gained from the Project, 'As I have said I learnt so much about the countryside and land management and career options in particular. I gained such a **lot of confidence**, as it was such a safe environment to meet new people and learn new skills and interests. Martin was excellent. He is so knowledgeable and a really good teacher. He also kept control of the younger kids, whilst ensuring everyone really enjoyed themselves and were safe.

Most significantly it has been a stepping stone for my future education and planned career. It has helped me to decide my career options. I am enrolled on a Foundation Degree in Zoo Management and am looking for a career in this area. Everyone I speak to is really impressed about what I achieved and learnt whilst involved with the Project.

I am really grateful to Martin, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and of course the Lottery. It has been a really worthwhile experience for me, and I would certainly recommend other young people to get involved with the Trust and spend some of your free time volunteering'.

Project Manager's observations:

Quiet, reserved and mature beyond her years yet appearing to gain as much enjoyment from the activities as everyone else; Abi was always a very welcome member of the group. Abi always seemed determined to follow a path in the field of wildlife conservation, and used her attendance in our activities as evidence of her interest and experience when applying to college.

She took part in a whole spectrum of activities from willow weaving to dry stone walling to habitat management tasks and she seemed perfectly at home with groups of younger children or when working with adults. She picked up tasks quickly and I'm sure will excel in whichever area of conservation she decides on studying.

It's always a joy to further someone's interest in wildlife and I hope we've managed to do that with Abi and to help establish within her a lifelong interest in conservation work.

Case Study 3 Chris Seymour



Chris is 20 years of age and a native of Glasgow. He currently lives in the Leek area with his parents.

He joined the Project around three years ago because, 'I was looking for something to do and for some work experience. At the time I just felt my life was going nowhere and I knew I needed to meet new people and learn new skills and build up my confidence. I felt isolated and knew I need to get out of the house and make something happen.

I checked out the Project on the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust website and it looked really interesting. I have enjoyed doing gardening work for my grandparents, and the opportunities to get 'hands on' seemed ideal for me.

I met with Martin and it was agreed that I could around one day a week.

We agreed a plan of action, and it was immediately apparent that I would not be rushed and he cared about other people. It was also clear that the Project had a lot to offer me in terms of new experiences and skills. This was a big thing for me, as I was doing things I had never done before. I suppose I was out of my comfort zone in lots of ways.

Chris remembers the early days well, 'Nothing was rushed, in that we were introduced to the tools we would be using and given the skills to use them safely. A lot of time was spent on this. We were allowed to go at our own paces and confidence levels. I met new friends and got a lot of satisfaction out of learning new skills. These included theory such as woodland management and practical skills such as drystone walling and grass and brash clearance.

I also learnt a lot about local history and the heritage of the area, which included visiting disused limekilns and understanding what they did and how horrible it must have been to work in them.

It was particularly rewarding to actually make and build things that would benefit the countryside and other people visiting the areas we worked on. For example we built a fence protecting one of the limekilns and did lots of drystone walling.

As I went on, meeting new people and learning new skills I noticed that I was becoming much more confident and felt I was really achieving things in my life. It opened my eyes to who I am and what I can achieve.

*An amazing thing is my achieving **Level 2 in Woodland Management** – I am so impressed with this!*

*As I **became more confident** it was rewarding to be trusted to help and guide other young people in areas I had become skilled and experienced at. It meant a lot that I could do it, and that Martin trusted me.*

*Since I have been on the Project I have become employed as a Higher Technology Apprentice with Vodafone, and there is no doubts at all that the **confidence I gained** whilst on the Project and the skills and experiences learnt and enjoyed played a significant role during the application and interview processes for the job.*

What else have I achieved as a result of being involved with the Project? Well, I appreciate the countryside more now and go for walks there whenever I have time. Our own garden is much better cared for now as I know how use tools and what plant will grow where. I also feel good that I have achieved something in the countryside and left a legacy in the form for example of fences and drystone walls.

*But mostly it is feeling much **more confident about myself** and the fact I can do things. I have a life now and new friends.*

I am really grateful to Martin and the Wildlife Trust. I would also like to say ‘thank you’ to the Lottery for providing the funds to make the Project happen.

Project Manager’s observations:

Chris was one of the founder members of the Churnet Valley Youth Rangers Group. He was put in contact with us after visiting the local volunteer centre and he started attending in October 2013. Initially Chris was very quiet and found many of the practical tasks difficult. However, he stuck with the group and gradually gained more confidence, striking up a close friendship with one of the other members and being looked up to by many of the newer members.

Chris worked really hard to gain conservation skills and knowledge, and in November 2014 was the first person from the group to complete the Level 2 Certificate in Work-based Environmental Conservation. Chris’s diligence and perseverance shone through during his time with us and despite the fact that he found some of the skills hard he got his due reward with the certificate.

We were thrilled for Chris when he moved on to an apprenticeship and several members of the group still ask after him more than six months after he left us.

Case Study 4 Lily Cartlidge



Lily (pictured right) is 14 Years old and lives in the Leek area with her sister (pictured centre) and her parents.

It was mum (pictured left) who encouraged Lily to become involved in the Project, saying, ‘Lily’s sister joined the Project first and got so much out of it. I felt that Lily was spending too much time in the house in front of the TV, so as soon as she was old enough I encouraged her to get involved’.

Lily says, ‘I have to be honest and say I was not too keen at first. I am a different personality than my sister, and was not all sure that I would enjoy ‘working’ in the countryside. I acknowledge though that I was under my mum’s feet and there is not a lot for young people to do in Leek’.

Lily is really pleased now that she took the plunge and got involved in the Project and says, 'It was good and fun. I went with my sister a few times, but after a while had no problem with going on my own. I found new friends and really enjoyed myself. There were fun things to do to such as tyre swings and creative things such as wood carving (see photo – Lily is holding one of her carvings) and willow art. The more I went the more I enjoyed it. We learnt how to light fires, cook outside; and I even ate a squirrel!

I learnt lots of new skills and things about the countryside. Martin introduced us to amazing things such as watching rare birds, such as buzzards and other birds of prey. Things that I would NEVER have experienced had I not have been involved with the Project. At one stage we got involved in a film script, which was really interesting.

It was also interesting to learn more about the history and heritage of the areas we visited and how they have developed over the years. I also have a more of an awareness and appreciation of the countryside, and really enjoy going for walks now with our dog'.

Lily feels she has developed new skills, and says, 'I feel I am **more confident** since I attended the Project. I have met new people and been taken out of my comfort zones on a number of occasions. I enjoyed the creative side, using my hands to make things and leave a legacy behind me. There has been a lot of team work, which I enjoyed – knowing you sometimes need others to complete complex or hard tasks'.

Asked how the Project could be improved she says, 'There was not a lot of publicity in the form of posters about the Project where young people could have seen them. I wouldn't have known about it if my mum hadn't of told me. Otherwise there is nothing else I can say. It is brilliant and I am looking forward to going to Codsall Camp in the Summer'.

Project Manager's observations:

Lily was a real boost to the Churnet Youth activities when she started coming along. She's a confident, bubbly girl, interested in dance and fashion and not your typical wildlife-loving outdoorsy young person, yet proof that most young people enjoy and benefit from these kind of activities if given a chance.

Lily brought some real creativity to the group and fully engaged in all the activities, turning up regularly and in all weathers. She and her older sister put together a team for the first Churnet Challenge, and despite not winning they put in a lot of effort and seemed to really enjoy themselves.

5.9 Young Persons' Workshop

Appendix A summarises outcomes of a workshop, which as this photograph shows was attended by a representative group of young people who have benefitted from the Project.



From the responses received it is clearly apparent that the young people:

- Have gained an appreciation for the heritage of the countryside and have placed a noticeable value on it, and are likely to respect and look after it e.g. 'Because its full of living things', 'Because we only have one and if it's gone we won't get another', 'We should use and explore it' (**Outcome 1**)
- Have gained insights into how the landscape is managed and into the work of conservation and heritage.

They have also discovered new interests and some will continue volunteering or working e.g. The best thing was: *'Seeing the countryside and the extent of the wildlife', 'Understanding how important it is to look after the environment so there is more wildlife'* The biggest risks are: *'People pollution', neglect / lack of care', 'Humans',* Want: *'More people days for young people who would like the experience', 'More projects like this one for different age groups'* (**Outcome 2**)

- Through acquiring training, skills and experiences gained whilst on the Project are more aware of / are interested in employment in the land management sector e.g. through open discussions, *'Achieving Level 2 in Conservation and the Environment'*, and other stated answers, understanding the numbers of employment opportunities available – farmer, dry stone walling, tree surgeon, park ranger, youth workers, gardeners (**Outcome 3**)

5.10 Questionnaire Analysis (Partner Agency Members)

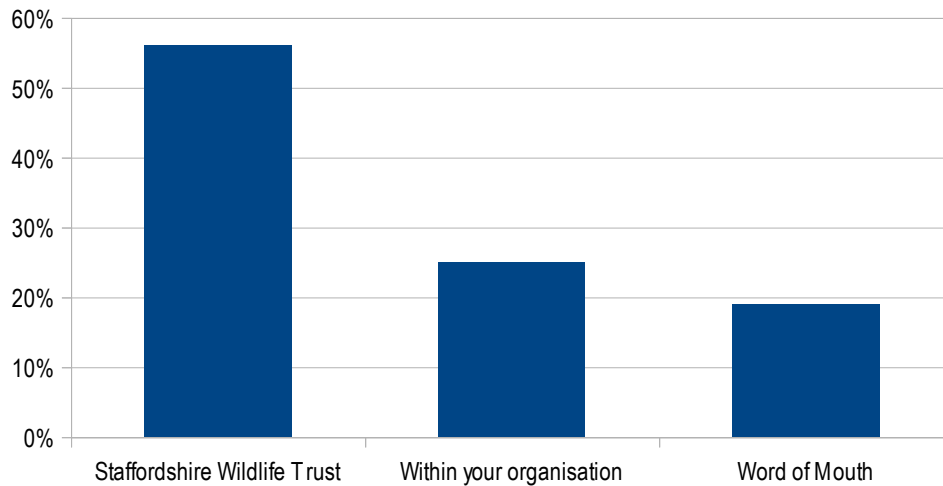
16 questionnaires were received for analysis. **Table 4** lists respondents and where applicable the organisations they represent.

Table 4

Name	Organisation	Job Title
Tracey Cartlidge	N/A	Parent
Dean Goodwin	SELFIE Services	Sole Trader / Director
Jane Daly	N/A	Parent
Jude Gaskell	GH Motor Services, Leek	Book Keeper / Dinner Lady / mum of four
Alison McCrea	Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek	Garden Coordinator
Helen Bailey	Farm2grow Ltd	Managing Director
Wendy Askey	Buxton and Leek College	Teaching Support
Denise Wheat	Tean Youth Club	Volunteer (Chair Person)
Sarah Kent	University of Derby	Facilitator
Sharon Chauveau	Pickwood Hall Estate	Director
Paula Goodwin	Families First - Targeted Youth Support	Targeted Youth Worker
Mrs Mavis Weaver	St Edwards (C of E) Academy	Teaching assistant (Special Needs)
Jackie Steer	N/A	Parent
David Marsh	Stoke on Trent College	Lecturer
Craig Halliwell	Stoke on Trent College	Lecturer
Claire Hardwick	N/A	Parent

Graph 9 highlights where respondents stated they heard about the Project.

Graph 9 *Where did you hear about the Youth Engagement Project?*

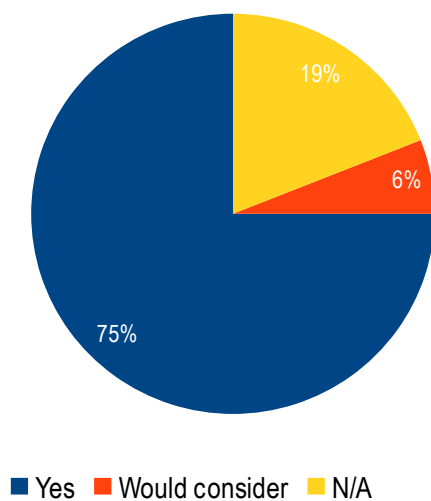


Notes

1. It will be noted that the majority of respondents (**55%**) heard about the Project from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Graph 10 highlights whether respondents referred / encouraged young people to get involved in the Project.

Graph 10 *Does your organisation refer / encourage young people to become involved in the Project?*

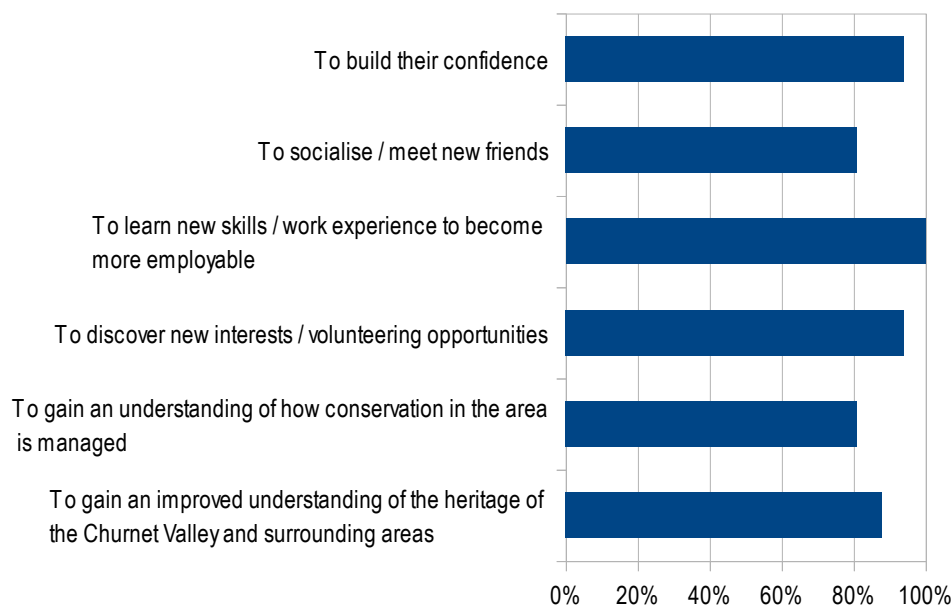


Notes

1. It will be noted that the majority (75%) do refer / encourage young people to get involved in the Project.

Graph 11 highlights self-explanatory reasons why respondents are encouraging young people to get involved in the Youth Engagement Project

Graph 11 Why Respondents are Encouraging Young People to Get Involved in the Project

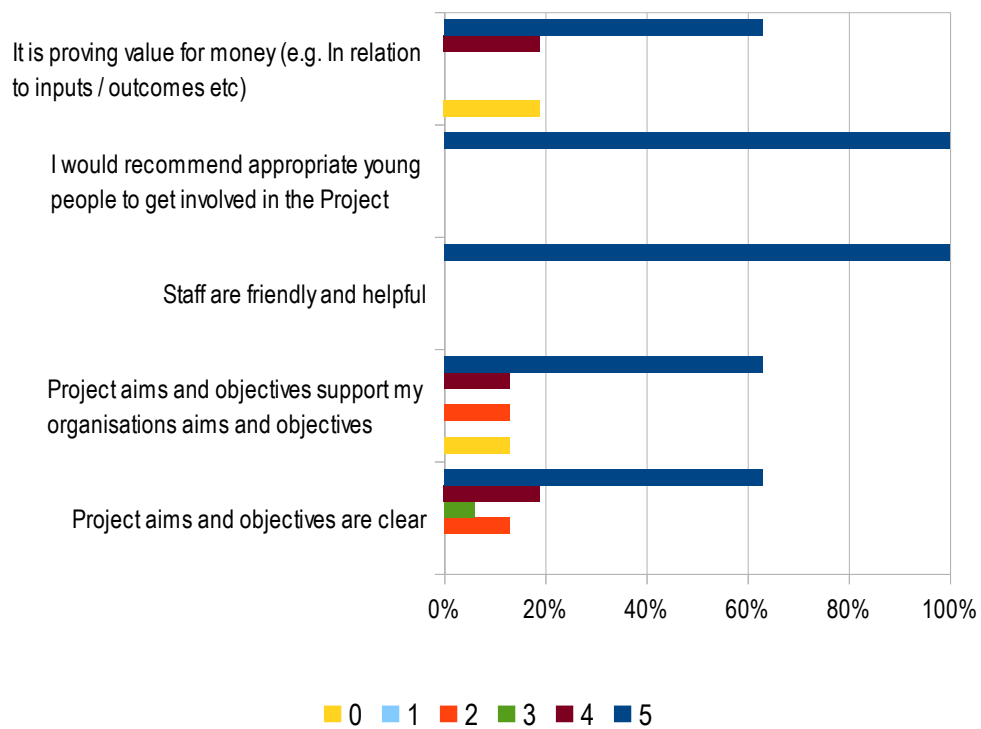


Other reasons include:

- All the above as well as contributing to personal growth and social awareness developing skills for life and the world of work. Gaining qualities such as a sense of responsibility and purpose in life, are nurtured. There is also a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction to be experienced from participation in outdoor activities
- To gain a qualification in conservation

Graph 12 highlights respondents' self-explanatory views about the Project.

Graph 12 What are your views about the following regarding the Youth Engagement Project? (1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

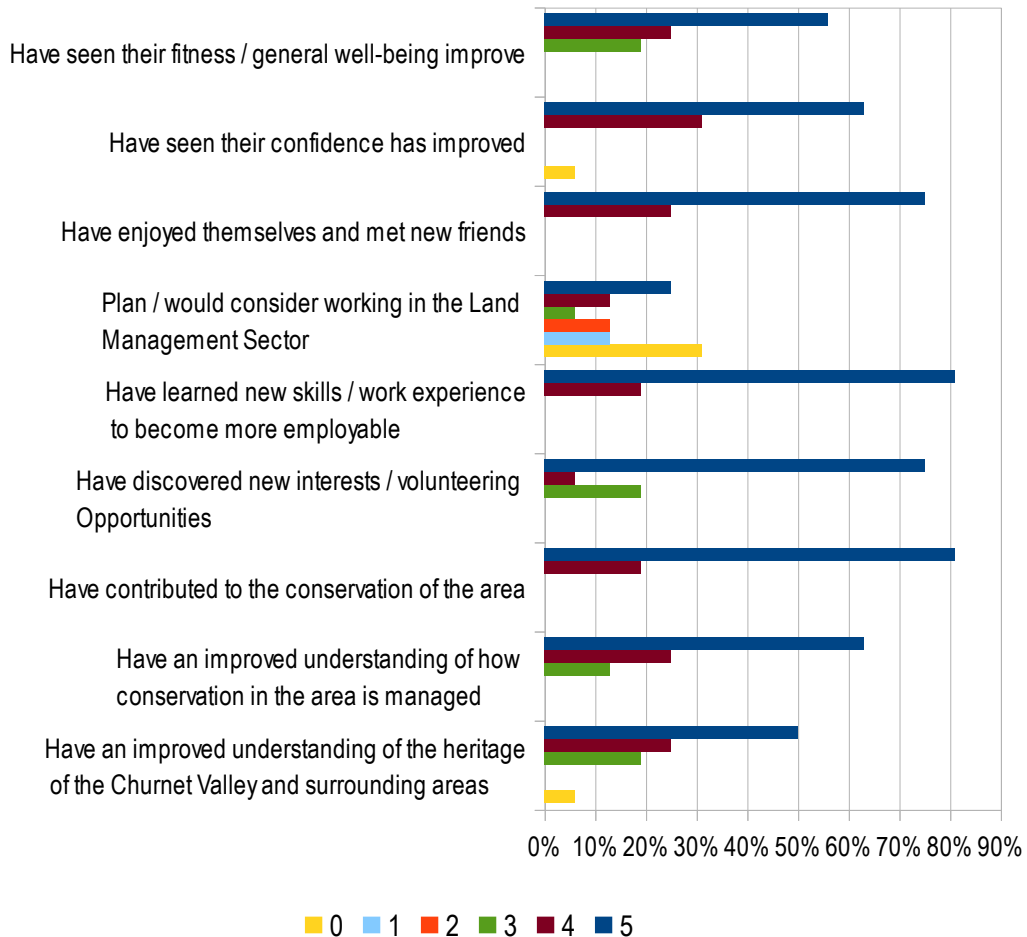


Notes:

1. **100%** of respondents feel staff are friendly and helpful.
2. **100%** of respondents would recommend appropriate young people to get involved in the Project.

Graph 13 highlights respondents' views about the delivery of Project objectives.

Graph 13 As a result of the Project, young people: (1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)



Notes:

1. It is clearly apparent that as a result of the Project respondents feel particularly strongly that young people have:
 - a. Contributed to the conservation of the area (**Outcome 1**)
 - b. Gained an insight into the area and have discovered new interests / volunteering opportunities (**Outcome 2**)
 - c. Learnt new skills and become more employable (**Outcome 3**)

5.11 Further Comments

Appendix C highlights further comments made by partner agency members. The following is a summary of responses:

What is really GOOD about the Project?

- From the long list of comments it is clear that there is universal support for the Project, with an emphasis on:
 - The professionalism of staff, and the Project Manager (Martin Evans) in particular
 - The quality of the Project, enabling young people to problem solve and meet new challenges
 - The commitment to heritage, conservation and young people
 - Health and fitness – young people getting outdoors and being active
- Partnership working / joined up working

How the Project could be improved?

- Improved marketing – reaching out to a wider range of young people
- More / continued funding to expand to more young people

Anything else to add?

- Continuation of positive endorsements of the Project
- A 'plea' it does not suffer the same fate of other childrens' services

5.12 Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members

As outlined at **Section 3.4** one to one meetings / interviews have taken place with a number of partner agency members, whose organisations have been directly involved with the successful delivery of the Project. The following is a summary of findings:

- **As a direct result of attending the Project, young people have gained a greater appreciation for the heritage, and are likely to place greater value on the area, and be more likely to respect and look after the area (Outcome 1):**

*'Our 'Youth Rangers' have certainly embraced the countryside and the environment since they became involved in the Project. It would be fair to say that before the Project they had little knowledge or interest in subjects such as heritage and history; in fact like lots of other young people, given the opportunity, it is possible that they would not have cared or respected it if and when they may have found themselves there. The opposite is now the case. They really look forward to the sessions that they attend, and bring things back with them to put on display in the school and to share them and their experiences with their peers. Martin particularly knows how to get through to them and to bring the countryside and the areas they visit to life. This is a talent, and so important, as the attention span of a number of the boys can be quite short normally. It is so rewarding to see the boys respect the areas they are in and they are proud to take on the mantles of 'Youth Rangers'. They take such very seriously, and on a number of occasions share what they know and what they have learnt to other pupils during assemblies and within our school Newsletter'. **Lisa Newport**, St Edwards Church of England Academy Leek.*

*'I have been out with the young people and it is noticeable that they really enjoy being out in the fresh air and learning about local heritage and history. This is demonstrated by the energy they put into tasks such as coppice clearing and hedging. They love the talks Martin gives and I know it sinks in as they enjoy telling their peers at school all about what they have learnt. They certainly value the areas they have been to and are proud that things that have achieved and done will benefit others who visit the areas'. **Mavis Weaver**, St Edwards Church of England Academy Leek*

- **Young people will gain insights into how the landscape of the Churnet Valley is managed and into the work of conservation and heritage organisations working in the area. Some of the young people have discovered new interests and some will continue volunteering or working (Project outcome 2):**

*'It is shocking to know that nine out of ten of our young people have never visited the countryside around here; despite it being a rural area, and neither have their parents or wider family members I suspect. This project has opened up a world to them that will stay with them for ever. It is a joy to see them playing a role in the conservation of their area and discovering new interests that otherwise would most likely have been closed to them'. **Sarah Kent**, Buxton & Leek College*

'It is certainly fair to say that the young people who are involved in the Project are buzzing when they get back. They are seeing and experiencing things that would have previously been 'foreign' to them. They have seen birds such as kingfishers and buzzards and used tools to build drystone walls and hedging. They have become aware of organisations such as Staffordshire Wildlife and the important roles they play. They have enjoyed 'getting dirty', using their hands, learning how to use tools safely. The biggest buzz I am sure is the fact that they are leaving a legacy through their voluntary work; and I am confident a number will continue such voluntary work in the future. There is no doubt that this Project has been a success and will leave a lasting future legacy in the form of young people being mobilised to make a real difference in their communities. The key now must be to maintain the momentum. Doors opened to young people should never be locked; particularly when it involves young people being involved in such worthwhile projects and initiatives'. Wendy Askey, Buxton & Leek College.

'I encouraged both of daughters to become involved in the Project as it would take them out of the house and the TV and encourage and help them to make new friends and take up new interests. The Project has certainly achieved this. They have been fully involved and have got so much out of it. I was particularly impressed with the creative arts elements, where they creating things out of carvings and woodland materials. They have made lots of new friends and are certainly looking to carry on as volunteers when they have chance. It has also proved a safe environment for them to try new things and I would recommend the Project to others'. Tracey Cartlidge, Parent

- **Through acquiring training, skills and relevant experience, some young people are more employable, particularly in the land management sector (Outcome 3):**

'The Project has enabled us to deliver a full curriculum, which involves outcomes such as personal enrichment, work experience, CV enhancement and gaining employability skills. A significant number of those we have supported to benefit from the Project are at Level 1 or Level 2 in their learning journey, and have clearly benefited from such 'hands on' approach, and practical opportunities to learn. The Project is well placed to support our students who clearly enjoy this unique and important opportunity. They are 'buzzing' when they return and clearly gain a great deal from working and being in the fresh air and in a rural environment. A number live in deprived communities and would not otherwise get such chances to make a difference in the countryside. For example they have been drystone walling and have laid footpaths.

They understand that they are making physical differences to the areas they visit and most significantly transfer what they have learnt to their college work – for example, team working, decision making, healthy living / eating, science and problem solving. There is no doubts they will become more employable, with a number thinking about working within countryside environments'. Dave Marsh, Stoke on Trent College

'We have taken the opportunity to ensure a number of the young people we have referred to the Project are disadvantaged, in that they are 'NEETS' (not in education, employment or training), and as such they will certainly require support and help finding appropriate employment.

A significant number are disengaged and subject to anti-social behaviour forums. They often lack the skills and aptitudes required to take advantage of main-stream education. Many are troubled young people who benefit from a more hands on approach to learning.

The Project has certainly achieved this, which is in no small part down to Martin, the Project Manager. He is a natural 'teacher', who relates well to young people, particularly groups such as those we sent to him. He encouraged team working and group work, and helped the young people relate to each other.

They enjoyed the hands approach to lots of the tasks he set, and really enjoyed the practical sides to things such as drystone walling and hedging.

The Project opened their eyes to the fact that they could be good at something and enjoy 'learning'.

The skills and experiences they have been involved in and reacted positively to have providing many of them with employment tools that they would not normally have access to.

From discussions I have had with them I would not be surprised if a number didn't consider employment in the sector, with self-employment for example in areas linked to hands on work such as drystone walling and labouring being realistic options open to them.

Life has been hard on so many of these young people, and in addition to enjoying themselves they have been given a helping hand in terms of employment options open to them in the future. Paula Goodwin, Staffordshire County Council

*'I just wanted to let you know that this morning, in assembly Martin Evans, on behalf of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, presented the boys and myself with certificates for the **John Muir Discovery Award**, in recognition of awareness and responsibility for wild places.*

*We received this award in front of over **800** pupils, approximately **30** staff, a few parents and Karen Bradley, who is our local MP. Evidence of this will be in our next school Newsletter and hopefully the Leek Post'. Mavis Weaver, St Edwards Church of England Academy Leek*

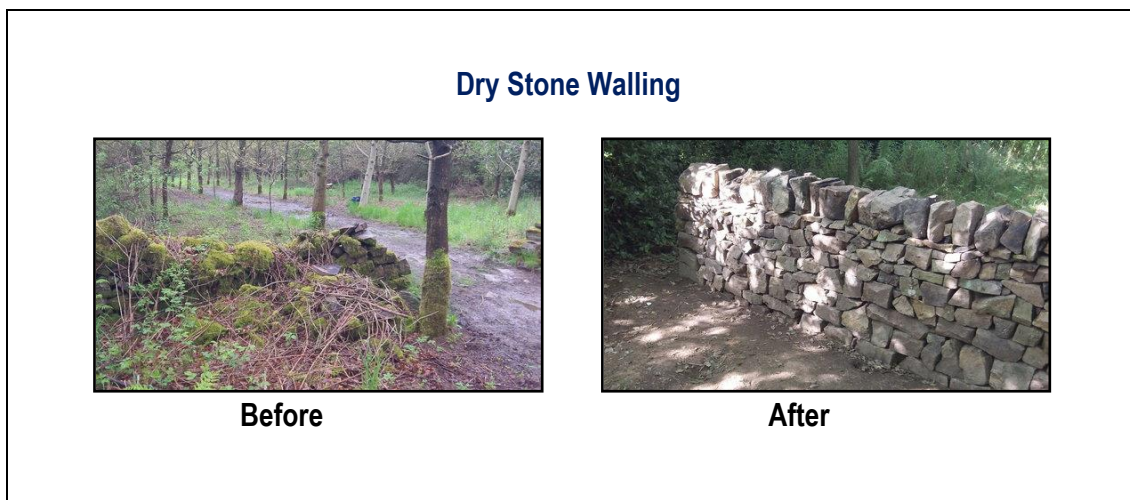
- **There is an understanding of the role the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and its staff have played in supporting the young people:**

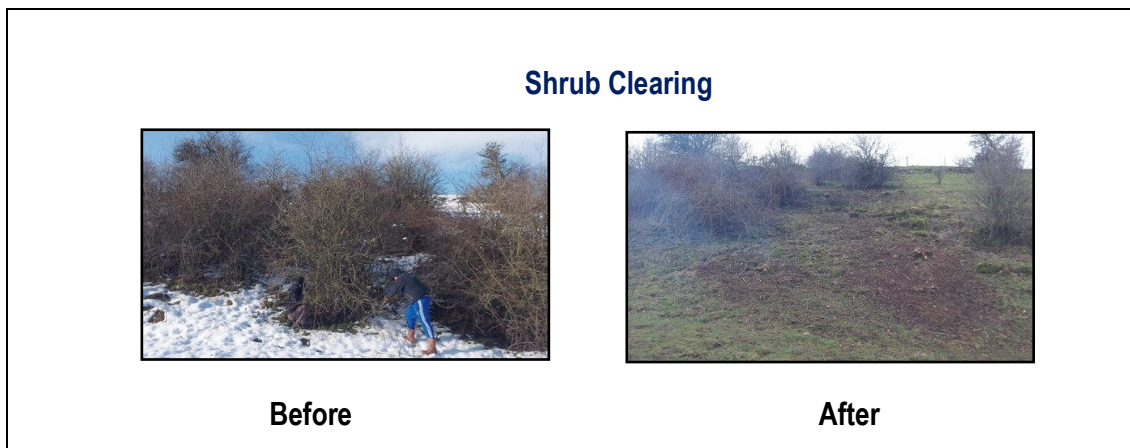
'The Trust is well respected and well placed to lead on such a project. It has a long history of partnership working and it is has been a pleasure to work so closely over a number of years, and on this initiative in particular. The staff it employs are amazing, and Matt and Martin in particular relate to our young people so well – a number of whom have learning difficulties and can be difficult to engage with. It has been a pleasure to work so closely with them and watch our young people actively get involved in countryside activities.' **Wendy Askey**, Buxton & Leek College

5.13 Observational Studies / Photographic Evidence

As highlighted at **Section 3.6** opportunity has been taken to observe and in a number of cases photograph activities and initiatives. The following is a visual summary of observations and findings.

5.14 Before and After – Environmental Improvements

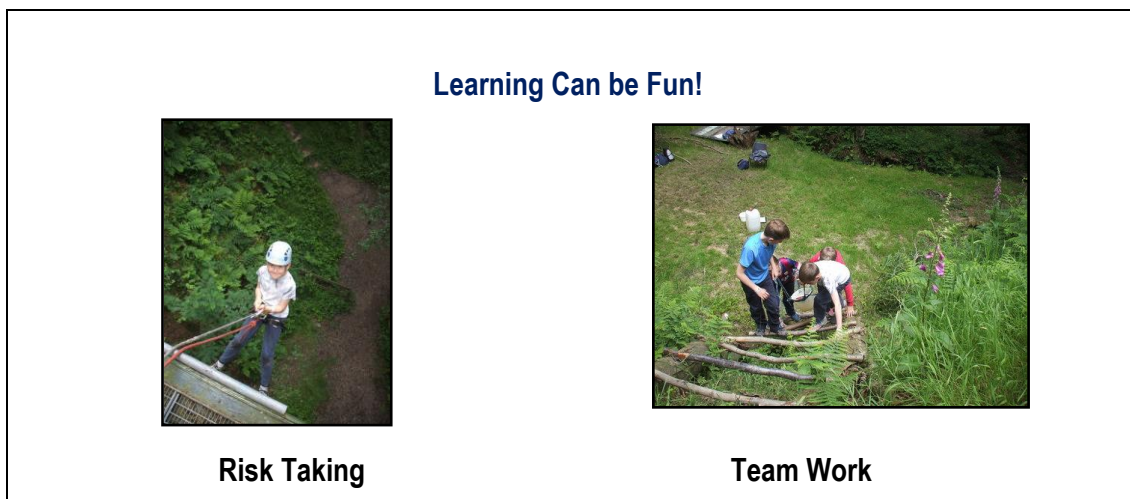




5.15 Learning New Skills



5.16 Fun and Learning in the Woods (3rd Large Youth Event)





Problem Solving



Somewhere to Sleep

5.17 Role of the Youth Rangers

As highlighted at **Appendix D (Chris' Success Story)** the Youth Rangers project 'offers young people aged 16-21 with the chance to take part in a range of exciting conservation tasks taking place every Friday, from woodland management, dry stone walling to fencing or digging a pond'.

Working Hard



An Established Team



Wood Clearing



A Job Well Done!

6.0 Summary of Findings

6.1 Introduction

As outlined at **Section 2.2** the evaluation has been tasked with researching and reporting on a number of areas:

1. Whether the Project has achieved its planned outputs and outcomes.
2. Monitored the Project's role in delivering the overall objective and planned outcomes of the CVLLP.
3. Whether the Project has achieved the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world.
4. What impact the Project has had on young peoples' well-being.

Findings will therefore be presented in two parts:

1. Youth Engagement Project findings.
2. Overall CVLLP and Trust outcomes.

6.2 Youth Engagement Project Findings

There can be no doubt that the Project has been a success in terms of it achieving aims and objectives agreed with the Heritage Lottery. As will be noted at **Section 5.2 (Table 2)** agreed indicators have on the whole been met and in a number of cases impressively exceeded.

This has been achieved by hard work and tenacity by the Project team and the young people involved, which as outlined at **Section 5.5 (Table 3)** includes the development and delivery of a wide range of activities and initiatives, which have involved thousands of hours of participation by the young people.

Table 5 provides an overview of supporting evidence of the achievement of outcomes (See **Section 4.7, Table 1**).

Table 5 Supporting Evidence

Outcome	Supporting Evidence	References
1	Positive feedback from the young people themselves from questionnaires, case study interviews, young persons' workshop, observations and photographs. Supported by feedback from partner agency members.	5.6 Questionnaires - Graph 7 5.7 / Appendix B - Further Comments 5.8 Case Studies 5.9 / Appendix A - Young Persons Workshop 5.10 Questionnaires – Graph 13 5.11 / Appendix C - Further Comments 5.12 Meetings / Interviews 5.13 Observations / Photographs
2	Positive feedback from the young people themselves from questionnaires, case study interviews, young persons' workshop, observations and photographs. Supported by feedback from partner agency members.	5.6 Questionnaires - Graph 7 5.7 / Appendix B - Further Comments 5.8 Case Studies 5.9 / Appendix A - Young Persons Workshop 5.10 Questionnaires – Graph 13 5.11 / Appendix C - Further Comments 5.12 Meetings / Interviews 5.13 Observations / Photographs
3	Specific feedback from case study interviews. Feedback from Project staff, supported by feedback from partner agency members.	5.6 Questionnaires - Graph 7 5.7 / Appendix B - Further Comments 5.8 Case Studies 5.9 Young Persons Workshop 5.10 Questionnaires – Graph 13 5.11 / Appendix C - Further Comments 5.12 Meetings / Interviews Appendix D 5.17 – Youth Rangers

6.3 Good Practice

The following 'good practice' has been noted:

- As highlighted at **Sections 5.10 (Partner Agency Questionnaire Analysis)** and **5.12 (Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members)** a key feature of the Project has been the level of **multi-agency partnership working**, which has clearly been led and instigated by Project staff
- As highlighted at **Section 5.5 (Table 3)** a **wide range of innovative and appropriate activities and initiatives** have been developed and delivered by the Project team, in partnership with multi-agency partners
- As highlighted at **Section 5.17** every appropriate opportunity has been taken to **involve and develop the capabilities of the young people themselves**

- As highlighted at **Section 5.17** the creation of the Youth Rangers has been inspirational, and has enabled a group of young people to bond and positively contribute to the success of the Project and their personal development
- As highlighted at **Section 5.4** the Project has **delivered significant natural heritage improvements**, which includes managing woodlands, burning back rhododendron woods, coppicing, thinning, ring barking, controlling bramble growth, installing over **100** bird boxes, planting nearly **500** trees, creating **2** new areas of native woodland, **70m** of new hedgerows, **2** wildlife gardens, a bee 'hotel', re-building drystone walls, installing over **100** metres of post and rail fencing, footpath improvements, installing a cleft wood gate, constructing steps and board walks, wood arch ways and wildlife gardens
- As highlighted at **Section 5.12 (Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members)** the Project has been particularly successful with **engaging and motivating young people with special educational needs and potentially limited academic abilities, with a focus on opening up their potential job / career opportunities**
- As highlighted throughout **Section 5.0** there can be no doubts about the **skills and abilities of the Project Manager, Martin Evans**, whose skills and abilities in areas associated with youth work, leadership and the countryside have played a significant impact on the success of the Project
- As also highlighted throughout this report the Project, enabled by Project staff, partner agency members and significantly the young people themselves, has opened up the countryside and the role the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust can play in **stimulating and guiding young people to enjoy the countryside and see it as a source of enjoyment and potential career opportunities**

6.4 Overall CVLLP and Trust Outcomes

A number of areas have been researched:

- Whether the Project has supported the objective of the CVLLP to conserve, enhance and celebrate the special landscape of the area fringing the Peak District has been achieved
- Whether the Project has supported CVLLP aims to have reversed the rate of decline across the landscape by increasing:

1. Habitat connectivity and the condition of representative built heritage features.
 2. Volunteers' involvement in maintaining their local landscape.
 3. Community awareness and knowledge that provide options for economic diversification
- Whether the Project has achieved the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world
 - What impact the Project has had on young peoples' well-being

6.5 CVLLP Objectives

There is certainly evidence that the Project has played a significant role in supporting CVLLP objectives. As outlined throughout and particularly at **Sections 5.4 (Natural Heritage Improvements)** and **5.13 (Observational Studies / Photographic Evidence)**, there is strong evidence of volunteer conservation, connectivity and maintenance of the countryside and heritage features. There is also noticeable evidence of young people / community awareness of knowledge that provide options for economic diversification.



6.6 Trust Outcomes

There is strong evidence throughout the report of the Trust's aim to promote understanding, enjoyment and involvement in the natural world. This is certainly highlighted at **Sections 5.6 (Analysis of Young Persons' Questionnaires)**, **5.7 (Further Comments)**, **5.8 (Case Studies)**, **5.9**



/ Appendix A (Young Persons' Workshop), **5.10 (Analysis of Partner Agency Questionnaires / Appendix B)**, **5.11 (Further Comments)**, **5.12 (Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members)** and **5.13 (Observational Studies / Photographs)**.

6.7 Impact on Young Persons' Well-Being

Photographic evidence such as this image and others within this report certainly provide visual evidence of the **enjoyment** and **personal satisfaction** felt by young people involved in the Project. Evidence of impacts of well-being / improvements in confidence are also exemplified by evidence outlined at **Sections 5.6 (Analysis of Young Persons' Questionnaires), 5.7 (Further Comments), 5.8 (Case Studies), 5.9 / Appendix A (Young Persons' Workshop), 5.10 (Analysis of Partner Agency Questionnaires / Appendix B), 5.11 (Further Comments), 5.12 (Meetings / Interviews with Partner Agency Members).**



7.0 The Way Forward / Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

It is of course the decision of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and multi-agency partner agency members as to the way forward for the Project and the impressive multi-agency links which have been developed as a direct result of the Project. As outlined at **Section 6.3** the Project has developed and delivered areas of significant good practice, which should not be lost as the Project comes to an end.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on research findings the following recommendations are tendered:

1. Steps should be taken to preserve and build on the multi-agency partnerships links developed and delivered during the Project, with a view to exploring the development and delivery of similar projects and initiatives, which focus on the continued delivery (or development) of Project objectives:
 - a. Young people to gain a greater understanding, appreciation and respect for the countryside.
 - b. Young people to gain insights into how the landscape of the countryside is managed and conserved, with aims that include encouraging young people, their peers and families to visit the countryside more and become involved in volunteering activities.
 - c. Through volunteering, acquiring training, skills and relevant experience, young people to become more employable, particularly within the land management sector.
2. Opportunity should be taken to celebrate the successes of the Project and thank all those involved in its development and delivery of the Project, with a focus on young people, Project staff / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and other multi-agency partners.
3. The contents of this report should be disseminated to other Wildlife Trusts with objectives that include sharing such positive results and learning from good practice.

Appendix A

Workshop Findings

What has been the BEST thing you have achieved whilst being involved in the Project?

- Cutting back a wood X6
- Hedge laying X6
- Learnt wood work X5
- Lighting a fire X4
- Carving an owl X4
- Learnt how to work in a team X3
- Seeing the countryside and the extent of wildlife X3
- Clearing a wood in Ballington Woods of Rhododendron plants X3
- Achieving Level 2 in Conservation and Environment X2
- To identify edible plants X2
- Churnet Challenge
- The camp
- More freedom
- Become more relaxed

What have you learnt to do / what skills have you learnt?

- Hedge laying X6
- Carving X6
- Start fires intentionally X6
- Learnt how to chop wood / trees and use them for useful purposes X5
- Build a wall X4
- How to build a dry stone wall X3
- Build strong dens X2
- Fire lighting and how to help the environment X2
- How important it is to look after the environment so that there is more wildlife
- Building
- Using a big two person saw
- Work as a team

Why is looking after the countryside so important?

- Because it is full of living things X6
- To protect the animals X5
- To protect wildlife / animals X4
- Because its where I live X3
- So that it is nice to walk in and be around X3
- Because we only have one and if it gone we won't get another X2
- Because animals habitat is not destroyed X2
- So more and more people will look after it X2
- So it looks tidy
- To look after jobs

What are the biggest risks to the countryside?

- Humans X10
- Litter X4
- People pollution X3
- Building design X3
- Neglect / Lack of care X4
- Trees falling X2
- Litter
- People population

What more should be done to protect it?

- Litter bags X5
- Fines for litter X5
- Work on the countryside X4
- We should use it and explore it X3
- More workshops like today X3
- More people days for young people who would like the experience X2
- More projects like this one for different age groups
- Build habitats
- Countryside Laws / legislation

What sort of jobs are available in the countryside?

- Farmer X9
- Dry stone walling X4
- Tree Surgeon X 4
- Sculptor X3
- Park Rangers X3
- Youth Worker X3
- Gardeners X2

Which is the most worthwhile job and why?

- Ranger X9 – *Because of the support they provide*
- Farmer X6 - *Because they improve and look after the environment while they work*
- Environmentalist X4
- Youth Worker X3

General reasons why:

- They sustain the countryside X 4
- Because its looking after the land X4
- Because they build habitats
- Because they help the environment and get others to do it as well

Wish List

- Bears and wolves in Britain again X6
- Dirt bike track X6
- Farmers get paid more X3
- More projects like this X3
- People would look after the countryside more X3
- More places to camp X2
- Farmers get paid more for milk
- More conservation projects
- Stop cutting down trees
- More money to put into sustaining wildlife
- To get an expensive car such as an Aston Martin and a massive mansion

Appendix B

Further Comments (Young People)

What 3 things are really GOOD about the Youth Engagement Project?

- *Fun and interesting activities and games (x35)*
- *All the people are friendly, helpful and kind (x14)*
- *Getting outdoors (x12)*
- *Learn new skills (x12)*
- *Helping out both with each other and the local area (x7)*
- *Boost confidence (x5)*
- *Meet new friends (x5)*
- *Abseiling (x5)*
- *Crayfish activities (x4)*
- *Den and bridge building (x4)*
- *First aid (x4)*
- *It helps you learn more about the wildlife and nature (x3)*
- *The wildlife (x3)*
- *Friendly (x3)*
- *Excellent leadership and organisation (x3)*
- *Learning about the history of places and the heritage of the Roaches (x3)*
- *You work as a team (x2)*
- *Learning about the history of places (x2)*
- *More knowledgeable (x2)*
- *A chance to do things I wouldn't do without it (x2)*
- *Challenges (x2)*
- *Cutting down trees and helping nature (x2)*
- *Learning about the area (x2)*
- *Get to see new places (x2)*
- *Getting active (x2)*
- *Atmosphere,*
- *Educational*
- *Fitness improved*
- *Good day out*
- *Help you*
- *I have discovered new interests*
- *Identifying new tasks*
- *Involved in environment*
- *It changes the way you look at wildlife*
- *It is good*
- *It makes you think about whether you would do the job*
- *Recommend others to do it*
- *The different places you go*
- *The kindness*
- *The people you meet*
- *The rappelling*
- *They care for animals*
- *Volunteers*
- *You learn stuff*
- *And look out for people.*
- *Before we broke up the previous session and lunch was great*

- Chasm crossing
- Do things you don't normally do
- Doing all the challenges
- Education
- Enjoying myself
- Environment
- Felling
- Getting involved
- I enjoyed going to Ballington wood
- I found the chasm crossing very fun
- I found the wildlife ID interesting and learnt new things
- I'm good at using the bow saw
- It helps the surrounding area
- It is fun putting bird boxes up
- It's different to what I would normally do
- It's good for the environment,
- Never a bad day
- Nut trees, music, geography (lessons that he misses when he goes out of school. This is good because he doesn't like these lessons
- Opportunities
- Organised
- The churned project was fantastic and good games
- The games
- The project
- The stuff we can do
- Walking
- We get out of school
- We travel all over Stoke, which might help with employment
- Work experience
- You can do something interesting,
- You get a good understanding of the places we go
- You get to go out

How do you feel the Project could be improved?

- More people should come (x4)
- More group involvement (x2)
- More regular activities (x2)
- Maybe we could build a bit of the bird box (x2)
- Needs more money
- A warmer day
- Build more things for other animals
- Doing as much as we can
- Going to more places
- I think the project can be improved
- Improve understanding of the Churnet Valley
- It couldn't be improved
- Making fires
- Needs more money
- Nothing

Anything else you wish to add?

- *Can we do this again? (x4)*
- *I really enjoyed myself (x2)*
- *Go somewhere that is not muddy*
- *I was interested to start this project.*
- *The challenges were good*
- *There is nothing that could be improved all the staff are fantastic*
- *Today was really fun and I think we should help fund for another time*

Appendix C

Further Comments (Partner Agency Members)

What 3 things are really GOOD about the Youth Engagement Project?

- *Engages creative thinking and problem solving*
- *The commitment, professionalism and reliability of the staff*
- *Leadership is excellent as are support staff - expert, friendly, caring, motivating young people*
- *It does very useful practical conservation projects – our community particularly benefited.*
- *It gives young people practical work experience and broadens their horizons.*
- *By participating, young people meet in friendly circumstances a wider range of people than they might do otherwise.*
- *Encouraging young people with different abilities to engage with the project*
- *The staff are always friendly, the way they interact with the students is first class.*
- *Getting young people out in the country side, doing something voluntary for the environment*
- *Building self-confidence and self-esteem which is fundamental to the young people's development.*
- *Gaining a positive attitude to learning about the heritage of their local environment, predominantly the Churnet Valley. Introducing young people to outdoor recreation which will enrich their future lives.*
- *Martin Evans leadership qualities*
- *Excellent staff - good communication skills with the young people, agencies etc.*
- *Brilliant staff, knowledgeable and kind*
- *Martin's leadership – he provides an environment where my son feels valued, where he is encouraged, supported and appreciated and where he is learning new skills.*
- *Practical element of the course*
- *Ability to get dirty*
- *Breadth of project offers*
- *Partnership working with other agencies / schools etc*
- *The range of activities and skills learnt (including opportunity to gain a qualification)*
- *Learning new skills whilst combining with non-profit orgs and charities*
- *The staff are really knowledgeable both about the area and a wide range of subjects.*
- *It is free and transport provided*
- *Gaining effective interpersonal skills, such as, working co-operatively and effectively in teams and as individuals, gaining confidence and a feeling of achievement.*
- *Ballington wood facility at Pickwood Hall*
- *Various areas where groups use to keep the interest of the young people*
- *Opportunity to achieve through practical activities*
- *It provides a wonderful opportunity to help conserve and improve areas within the Churnet valley where the group can see the results of their hard work and commitment.*
- *Opportunity to see different areas with the community*
- *trying new experiences*
- *Leadership was friendly, positive and supportive of individuals*
- *It's commitment to heritage, conservation and young people*
- *Location is convenient and transport is provided to work at different sites + tools + PPE if required*
- *Creating win-win situations whilst improving conservation and helping wildlife*
- *The students always given a really interesting and engaging task.*
- *It is expanding the importance of Staffs Wildlife Trust to a younger age group*
- *Outdoor exercise, contributing to health and fitness, encouraging the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Offering valuable alternative to competitive sport. Overcoming fears and apprehensions.*
- *includes disabled children and special needs*
- *Provide excellent accreditation for young people who may otherwise find issues with employability*
- *Develops students as a 'whole' person, and a love of nature*

- *It gives an opportunity for my son and the others to come together and participate in something really worthwhile whilst at the same time having fun, developing social skills and confidence and feeling a sense of belonging and value.*
- *getting out in the countryside*

How do you feel the Project could be improved?

- *Possibly better advertising - reaching out to wider range of children*
- *More funding to sustain and grow the project*
- *It should be available 3 full days a week and become a recognised provider of Level 2 and 3 certificate in conservation. If young people want to progress, the nearest college providing this is Reaseheath (27 miles away) (re Youth Rangers)*
- *Very happy with our experience of the Project*
- *More time to spend with our students as we only have an afternoon session every other week at the moment.*
- *We don't email our young people so I could do with leaflets to give out. I can't reach them by face book either as they are not allowed on it until they are 13 or 14. We have regular young people between the ages of 11 - 16 on Friday evening s from 7pm to 9pm at Great Wood Hall, Tean ST10 4JY*
- *To have increased funding opportunities to be able to build upon the size of the project, thus get more young people into the project*
- *It's been a pleasure to watch young people who sometimes struggle in school thrive with this project.*
- *"To continue beyond 2016,*
- *The new Education and Care act encourages education for young people with learning difficulties up to the age of 25 – it would be wonderful if this project could include this age range.*
- *Just our thanks for such a wonderful project – our son has been involved since September. He looks forward to each session, takes part enthusiastically and really feels part of the team. Martin has helped him to learn new skills, encouraged him and made him feel valued. We do hope the project will continue beyond 2016. "*
- *More commitment from those booking on the course to attend*

Anything else you wish to add?

- *The experiences that both of my children had working on projects with Martin were so valuable to their development. It provided them with an opportunity to gain practical, creative and social skills whilst importantly engaging with nature. They also learned to problem solve and picked up some basic survival skills along the way. The projects were varied and broad and all of the staff were friendly, supportive and a good sense of community was delivered making for a welcoming and holistic experience. Later it has been useful to mention on job applications / college and university applications. All round it has been a golden opportunity for my children.*
- *Young people's services have suffered enough in this area, it would be a terrible loss if this project suffered a similar fate.*
- *It is the highlight of my son's week. He has benefitted enormously from the great leadership: the opportunity to gain new skills doing things he wants to do and cares about. He loves the camaraderie of the teamwork, it keeps him fit mentally and physically*

- *I think the project leader makes the possible by being inventive and combining project skills with people skills and having the initiative to approach other non-profit org to work in partnership with, whilst educating young people giving them hand on opportunities to be involved with other organisations as well as the wild life trust.*
- *Fabulous work and results. Well done Martin*
- *This project is a lifeline to groups of young people and their families. In an age where funding is cut and services available to young people are decreasing alarmingly, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust are one organisation that provides excellent skills/ improvisation of local areas and employability skills to young people in an ever increasingly difficult employment market. Please consider more funding to this project, as it is an excellent, top-rate service which provides positive feedback to the local area, and empowers young people to become positive members of society, involved in local environment issues. As long as this project exists, I will always encourage young people into this very worthwhile and successful project. Excellent work – please continue with the funding of this project!*
- *Leadership and planning of the day has always been good*

Appendix D

Chris' success story

Monday 7th September 2015

A STAFFORDSHIRE Wildlife Trust youth project has been celebrating after one of its volunteers became the first person to gain a formal work based qualification.



The Trust's Churnet Valley Youth Rangers project, part of the Churnet Valley Living Landscapes Project (CVLLP) offers young people aged 16-21 with the chance to take part in a range of exciting conservation tasks taking place every Friday, from woodland management, dry stone walling to fencing or digging a pond.

Chris Seymour, aged 20, from Leek, has become the first person from the Youth Rangers to gain the City and Guilds Level 2 Certificate in Work-Based Environmental Conservation after he joined the project two years ago.

To gain the qualification, Chris has had to show an array of skills, from coppicing to learning how to construct fences.

Chris said: *'I am delighted to have gained the qualification and it is something which will benefit me in the future.'*

Being part of a team with the Rangers has helped my career. I have gained so many skills since joining the group two years ago and my confidence has increased thanks to the social side it brings and working with other volunteers and staff.'

The Churnet Valley Youth Rangers are led by the Trust's Martin Evans.

He said: *'We have seen Chris grow in confidence since becoming a Ranger and to end his time with us with an excellent qualification like this one is very pleasing.'*

He realised two years ago he wanted to volunteer and do something like this and has worked really hard to become an integral part of the group.'

Hopefully he will encourage others to join. No experience is necessary and all the tools and equipment are provided. It's a really good way to take part in different activities each week and there's also a chance you will earn a qualification, too.'

It's suitable for young people looking for something to do during their gap years or for those wanting to do some volunteering that is a bit different.'



PRIZE DRAW – WIN £25.00

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire, which will be used to independently evaluate the Heritage Lottery funded **Youth Engagement Project**.

Personal Information

Name **Contact Phone No.**

Gender Male Female

Ethnicity

Age..... **Postcode**

Are you: Student Volunteering Working Other

Where did you hear about the Youth Engagement Project? (please tick **all** that apply)

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust School / College Friends / Word of Mouth

Other (Please state)

Section 1 – Use of the Youth Engagement Project

On average, how often do you get involved in Youth Engagement Project activities?

Once a week Twice a month Once a month Once in a while

Why do you get involved in the Youth Engagement Project? (please tick **all** that apply)

To gain an improved understanding of the heritage of the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas

To gain an understanding of how conservation in the area is managed

To discover new interests / volunteering opportunities

To learn new skills / work experience to become more employable

To socialise / meet new friends

To build my confidence

Other (please state) **Please turn over**

Section 2 – What do you think about the following regarding the Youth Engagement Project?

(1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

Staff are friendly and helpful	0 1 2 3 4 5
It is fun and enjoyable to get involved in the Project	0 1 2 3 4 5
I would recommend other young people to get involved in the Project	0 1 2 3 4 5

What are your views about the following? As a result of your involvement in the Project:

(1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

I have an improved understanding of the heritage of the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas	0 1 2 3 4 5
I have an improved understanding of how conservation in the area is managed	0 1 2 3 4 5
I feel I have contributed to the conservation of the area	0 1 2 3 4 5
I have discovered new interests / volunteering opportunities	0 1 2 3 4 5
I have learned new skills / work experience to become more employable	0 1 2 3 4 5
I plan to / would consider working in the countryside / Land Management Sector	0 1 2 3 4 5
I have enjoyed myself and met new friends	0 1 2 3 4 5
My fitness / general well-being has improved	0 1 2 3 4 5
My confidence has improved	0 1 2 3 4 5

I am considering supporting the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust or similar in the future (e.g. member / volunteer):

Please indicate: Yes No Maybe

Section 3 – What 3 things are really GOOD about the Youth Engagement Project?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 4 (If appropriate) How do you feel the Project could be improved?



Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire, which will be used to independently evaluate the Heritage Lottery funded **Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Youth Engagement Project**.

Personal Information

Name

Organisation

Job Title

Email **Phone**

Where did you hear about the Youth Engagement Project? (please tick **all** that apply)

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Within your organisation Word of Mouth

Other (Please state)

Section 1 – Use of the Youth Engagement Project

Does your organisation refer / encourage young people to become involved in the Project?

(Please tick **all** that apply)

Yes No Would consider

Why do you / would you encourage young people to get involved in the Youth Engagement Project? (Please tick **all** that apply)

- To gain an improved understanding of the heritage of the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas
- To gain an understanding of how conservation in the area is managed
- To discover new interests / volunteering opportunities
- To learn new skills / work experience to become more employable
- To socialise / meet new friends
- To build their confidence

Other (please state)

..... **Please turn over**

Section 2 – What are your views about the following regarding the Youth Engagement Project?

(1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

Project aims and objectives are clear	0 1 2 3 4 5
Project aims and objectives support my organisation's aims and objectives	0 1 2 3 4 5
Staff are friendly and helpful	0 1 2 3 4 5
I would recommend appropriate young people to get involved in the Project	0 1 2 3 4 5
It is proving value for money (e.g. in relation to inputs / outcomes etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 5

What are your views about the following? As a result of the Project, young people:

(1 – low; 5 – high; 0 – no views)

Have an improved understanding of the heritage of the Churnet Valley and surrounding areas	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have an improved understanding of how conservation in the area is managed	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have contributed to the conservation of the area	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have discovered new interests / volunteering opportunities	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have learned new skills / work experience to become more employable	0 1 2 3 4 5
Plan / would consider working in the Land Management Sector	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have enjoyed themselves and met new friends	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have seen their confidence improve	0 1 2 3 4 5
Have seen their fitness / general well-being improve	0 1 2 3 4 5

Section 3 – What 3 things are really GOOD about the Youth Engagement Project?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 4 (If appropriate) How do you feel the Project could be improved

Anything else you wish to add? (Please continue on a separate piece of paper if necessary)

widerimpact

Independent Analysis. Strategic Reviews

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