

NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM



REDISCOVERING NATURE PROJECT



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WHAT IS THE REDISCOVERING NATURE PROJECT AT NCMME ABOUT?

The Rediscovering Nature project was a UKSPF grant-funded initiative at NCMME, designed to pilot a range of hands-on nature activities for adults and children with additional needs and dementia. The project piloted outdoor learning programming for primary schools and home-educated young people. It developed the existing volunteer and work experience programme to include opportunities to engage with nature and support its thriving.

WHAT ASPECTS OF HEALTH DID THE INITIATIVE ADDRESS?

The project aimed to target a wide range of health issues, including **mental health, physical health, social isolation and health inequalities**.

WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE PROJECT?

People that live locally to the Museum including **families, schools, disability and community groups as well as individuals who may want to undertake meaningful volunteering experiences or gain work experience**.

HOW DO YOU DEMONSTRATE IMPACT AND SUCCESS?

Participant feedback outlined how beneficial being outdoors was for their wellbeing and how discovering and supporting nature gave participants a great sense of achievement. Going forward, NCM aim to use the **UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit**. The Toolkit's accessibility for a wide range of participants creates ease around methods of data collection.

WHAT KEY LEARNINGS EMERGED AND HOW ARE THESE INFORMING YOUR PRACTICE?

People enjoy and benefit from engaging with nature, particularly activities that engage with wildlife (e.g. bird watching, bug hunts and creating homes for wildlife); time spent outdoors walking and engaging informally with what they see (e.g. nature bingo or scavenger hunts) offers opportunities for slow living and socialising.

HOW HAS THE PROJECT MADE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S WELLBEING ?

Several things have been observed and reported as **beneficial to the wellbeing of individuals participating in the UKSPF programme**. For example, **work experience and volunteering enabled people to share their skills, learn something new and gain a sense of achievement**. It also provided **opportunities to socialise and be part of a community**. Taking part in educational workshops and informal nature activities allowed participants to **spend time outdoors, connect and focus on nature and again gain a sense of achievement when they took action to support wildlife**, e.g. creating a bug hotel, bird box and a bee hotel. Walks and nature hunts showed a similar effect, encouraging visitors to take time in nature and focus on their environment.

HOW ARE YOU ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY?

Having come to the end of the Rediscovering Nature project, NCMME are currently in the process of deciding which **elements of the programme would need to be grant-funded and what can be built into their established programme to be delivered by staff & volunteers**. This work would include a new nature-based school and home educator offer, regular wellbeing walks and outreach activities with local family hubs. **Nature volunteering and a garden work experience programme has already been embedded within NCMME's regular volunteer programme.**

NCMME is grateful to have received further UKSPF funding for 'Heritage & Harmony'. For this project the **Museum will work within various community settings, with adults with learning disabilities, to co-create sensory nature walks and mining-themed sensory storytelling boxes to form part of the Museum's accessible programming onsite and beyond**. Building on the fantastic work from the 'Rediscovering Nature' project, the Museum will **develop further volunteer and work placement opportunities, particularly for people with learning disabilities**. The project will help the **Museum tackle social isolation, nurture pride in place, and build confidence among participants, as well as among Museum staff & volunteers**.

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FROM LEFT: FAMILY OUTREACH, VOLUNTEERS INSTALLING BIRD FEEDERS, VOLUNTEERS MAKING BIRD FEEDERS, UNDER 5'S NATURE HUNT, BUG HOTEL WITH OPEN COUNTRY, WELLBEING WANDER WALK (BIRD SPOTTING)



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