



November 2024

Generation Green 2 is a 12-month project that aims to connect more than 25,000 underserved young people living in England to nature and rural life by taking them on inspiring experiences in beautiful protected places.



Alison Stevens,
Programme Director

Welcome

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the first newsletter of Generation Green 2!

Generation Green 2 was inspired by the belief that every child deserves the chance to feel immersed in nature and experience the beauty of landscapes. However, we recognise that not all children have access to these opportunities. This initiative started with a powerful ambition: to ensure that every child in the country has the chance to spend a night under the stars.

By the end of Generation Green 2 next spring, we will have given more than 25,000 underserved young people a host of fantastic experiences aimed at connecting them with nature and rural life.

We will have delivered more than 41,500 overnight and day experiences focused on nature connection and outdoor learning to young people who would otherwise be the least likely demographic in the country to spend time in the nation's most beautiful landscapes.

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Generation Green 2 has been in full swing for several months now, and has so far enabled more than 7,000 young people to take part in experiences across England. Demand from participating schools and groups has been extremely high and there is currently little remaining availability.

Delivered by a coalition of 24 organisations and funded by Defra, Generation Green 2 aims to help address major inequalities in access to nature by cultivating a wider interest in green spaces among the next generation.

All opportunities are based in protected landscapes such as National Parks, National Landscapes and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). They range from pond-dipping to stargazing; from campfire cooks to mountain hikes; from day trips to week-long residencies. Generation Green 2 supports key recommendations in the 2019 Landscapes Review, addressing the need for a wider range of first-time visitors to engage with protected landscapes to help make them fit for the future.

Why is a project like this necessary?

Underserved communities in the UK have the worst access to green spaces. Research has shown that 18% of children living in the most deprived areas never spend time in any kind of natural space.

But an extensive body of research shows that people who are more connected with nature are usually happier and more likely to report feeling their lives are worthwhile. Nature connection also leads to more willingness to take action to help our wildlife and the environment.

In the context of collapsing biodiversity and the climate crisis, closer relationships with nature are more vital than ever before.

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Feedback so far has often testified to the value and power of outdoor learning

Just as with the first Generation Green, this ambitious project is being delivered by the Access Unlimited (AU) Partnership, which includes the YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Field Studies Council, Girlguiding, Scouts, National Parks England, and (a new partner this time around!) the National Landscapes Association. The £4.5 million of funding for Generation Green 2 has been provided by Defra as part of its ongoing support of access to nature and we are enormously grateful for their support.

Feedback so far has often testified to the value and power of outdoor learning. Amy Armstrong, a teacher at St John Bosco College, Liverpool, said: “It was amazing to see the interaction between different year groups and students that wouldn’t normally talk to each other at school. On this trip they have been smiling, relaxed and willing to chat to each other.”

Delivery will ramp up this autumn and in the New Year, but as this newsletter shows, the stories from the many opportunities that have taken place so far demonstrate the huge power of these experiences. A massive thanks to all partners for their role in the delivery of Generation Green 2 so far.

*Alison Stevens, Programme Director,
Generation Green 2, YHA (England & Wales)*



Switch off and connect: immersing in nature in the heart of the Lake District



**Click to take a look at
Generation Green 2
activity at YHA Langdale**



YHA Langdale in the heartland of the Lake District National Park has been a key hub for Generation Green 2 residentials, with scores of young people experiencing the rejuvenating benefits of the outdoors in superb September weather. Charlie Giddins reports on the lifelong impact these experiences will have.

September was a busy month at YHA Langdale with our Lake District hostel welcoming nearly 150 young people in just three weeks as part of Generation Green 2.

Students from three schools came to the Ambleside hostel in the second week of September to undertake our YHA Connecting to Nature package, and were greeted with stunning weather and a dramatic backdrop for their residential, with views over Loughrigg Fell, Ambleside and the lake of Grasmere.

As part of Generation Green 2 the students took part in various nature-based activities, including guided walks, environmental art, minibeast hunts, den and shelter building and even a campfire in the evening. All of YHA's activities are centred around connecting the students to the natural environment around

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”



them, and focusing on mindfulness and relaxation.

Our two-night residential is action packed with nature based activities and gives these young people an immersive experience, and a real opportunity to switch off from the bustle of their city or town, have a couple of days away from a mobile phone, and experience unforgettable scenery for the first time in this beautiful protected landscape.

The feedback from the staff and students alike on these trips shows how valuable time outdoors in nature is to the young people taking part in Generation Green 2 and what a meaningful and lasting impact these residential trips will have. Young people who could potentially struggle in the classroom environment are absolutely thriving being outdoors and taking part in our nature-focused activities.

YHA is welcoming over 4,000 young people across 10 YHA hostels located in protected landscapes in England as part of this project. Through this brilliant and fully funded opportunity, we are giving access to nature to children who simply would not have it otherwise.

Charlie Giddins, Project Officer, Generation Green 2, YHA (England & Wales)



Night and day: seeing the power of outdoor learning

Feedback from Generation Green 2 has often testified to the markedly different demeanour young people can exhibit in outdoor environments compared to the classroom. Carey Davies caught a glimpse of this in the Lake District National Park.

I was lucky enough to join and photograph pupils from Northside Primary School in Workington as they visited Brockhole, the Lake District National Park's Visitor Centre, on a wonderful site next to Windermere. It was one of a host of experiences doing hands-on nature connection activities delivered through Generation Green 2 funding by the National Park's excellent learning and engagement team.

The first activity of the day was pond-dipping from a patch of wetland. The group seemed quiet and uncertain, but at the sight of all that weird and wonderful aquatic life wiggling around in the water - the dragonfly nymphs, the freshwater shrimp, the water boatmen - their demeanour totally transformed. Kids shouted with excitement at their discoveries. Peering through a magnifying glass, one child said: "I love nature." Their energy was infectious and heartwarming.

Next up was a walk through a patch of temperate rainforest woodland, with pupils scouring the forest floor for acorns and interesting autumn leaves. They took to this with incredible enthusiasm, competing to see who had the most colourful foliage, hugging trees, and finding tactile fascination in the textures of bark and fungi.

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Spending time 'learning' through the fun and fascination of the outdoors is a necessity, not a privilege

A teacher from the school confirmed they would not have the opportunity to take their pupils on a day like this without funding from Generation Green 2. They said: "The difference between what they're like in the classroom and here is night and day. I've got more engagement out of these kids today than I have in the whole term. It's just sad that we're not able to do this more often. I don't think children are meant to spend all their time indoors."

Spending time in nature and 'learning' through the fun and fascination of the outdoors is a necessity, not a privilege. Every child should be able to experience it.

*Carey Davies, Senior Communications Officer,
National Parks England*



Rain won't stop play: enjoying a wet and wonderful day in the Peak District

As you can see from the pictures, we had some of the very best rain that Northern England has to offer! But this didn't dampen the spirits of the children, and they learned that it's still possible to have an adventure outdoors in wet weather.

Of the 81 children who visited over the two days, 65 said that they had never visited the national park before. A large majority of them said that they would like to visit again. "I didn't realise that there were places like this so near to home", said one child.

It was wonderful to open a door into another world for these children, and hopefully inspire them to return. Being able to provide funded visits really helps us remove barriers that prevent young people connecting with nature in our beautiful national park.

*Matthew Ross, Learning and Discovery Ranger,
Peak District National Park*



As the project moves into autumn and winter, some Generation Green 2 opportunities have had less-than-ideal weather. But as Matthew Ross reports, that didn't dampen spirits in the Peak District National Park...

Here in the Peak District, visits through Generation Green 2 have enabled children from areas of deprivation in Manchester and Tameside to experience the beauty of nature first-hand. Children from Gamesley Community Primary School and Haveley Hey Primary School were able to explore the stunning scenery of the Crowden Valley, guided by rangers from the Peak District National Park's education centre at Longdendale.

During the course of the two days, participants enjoyed a led walk into one of the Peak District's most scenic valleys. Also included were games, activities and experiences designed to connect them to nature, and to the special qualities of the national park. These included stream-paddling, bug-hunting, scavenger hunts and building their own mini drystone walls.



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A pupil's perspective: bats, boats and Bolognese in the Broads



A young person from Valley Primary Academy in Norwich recounts their experiences on a Generation Green-funded trip to the waterworld of the Broads National Park.

On Monday morning, we went to the Broads by coach, because it's part of our geography topic about rivers.

When we got to the centre, everyone's faces looked happy because it was a big nature reserve. We all sat down at the picnic tables underneath a canopy and listened excitedly to the welcome. The teachers split us into two teams.

My first activity was pond dipping. I did this with my friends, who helped me to sweep carefully with the enormous net. There was lots of chickweed, but we were extremely lucky to find a dragonfly nymph.

After that, we went on a boat with Nick, the skipper. He was careful to drive at the speed limit of

4mph, so we didn't upset any of the wild birds.

We were starving hungry by the time we returned to the benches for lunch - it was a delicious packed lunch from home. Later on in the afternoon, we did geocaching and campfire building. I was proud of myself for using the potato peeler tool to take bark off a stick, to make some charcoal.

As we'd had so much fun, we were glad to sit down on the coach and drive to the Horstead Centre, where we spent the rest of the trip. Dinner was a gorgeous spaghetti bolognese with cheese and garlic bread. There was even a choice of four puddings!

In the evening, we went out on a night walk, where we listened

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I hope that my teacher can take us out overnight again

out for bats using special echolocators. We learned about how the rods and cones in our eyes work and I was really freaked out by making my friend's finger and face disappear.

I would definitely recommend this trip to another year group and hope that my teacher can take us out overnight again.





This work is essential

Teachers and parents give their feedback

Feedback about Generation Green 2 from parents and teachers has so far been overwhelmingly positive and appreciative. Here is a flavour of the comments.

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I'm a single parent of three. We can't afford to go camping, but my kids love being at one with nature. My daughter thoroughly enjoyed her camp. She said going to sleep with the sound of a stream nearby was peaceful, and she was able to spend time with other children, sharing a new experience and giving her a real sense of achievement. She has already said she'd like to do it again!

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We had the most wonderful time. The team pitched the sessions perfectly at our group of young people, many of whom have never been to countryside before, let alone on a farm and feeding animals! It was such a valuable experience. Trips like this make an enormous difference for some of our young people, they are absolutely vital and inspirational for these children whom would otherwise not get these opportunities. This work is essential for the youth of today and it must be prioritised. To quote one of our pupils on the way home: "it was the highlight of my 2024".

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The group enjoyed making bird feeders, pond-dipping, making bug hotels, exploring the woodland – they enjoyed everything. Only four of the children's families had visited the park before and they rarely have the opportunity to visit national parks.

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The project supports key recommendations in the 2019 Landscapes Review, addressing the need for a wider range of first-time visitors to engage with protected landscapes in order to help make them fit for the future.

Generation Green 2 is the second project to be delivered by the Access Unlimited coalition. The project capitalises on the coalition partners' combined reach of more than two million young people. Learn more at www.yha.org.uk/generationgreen

