

Newsletter #6
Places and spaces
January 2022

Generation Green is a 16-month funded project that aims to connect young people to nature, create and save jobs, and build an aspirant workforce for a green recovery.



Alison Stevens,
Programme Director

Welcome

As we enter the final quarter of the Generation Green project, I have allowed myself to reflect on the journey we have all made together so far. And what a journey it has been! The video and testimonial evidence we have collectively gathered so far is phenomenal.

The past year has been a challenging one, but we have been determined to deliver what we set out to do, and have managed to get thousands of young people out participating on one of a number of progressive opportunities Generation Green has set up; on work placements, volunteering engagements alongside residential and day activities in the national parks, AONB and in local communities.

Faced with ever changing COVID guidelines, we have adapted and delivered thousands of opportunities to enable young people to connect to nature. We have adapted these as needed in response to changing restrictions. When we haven't been able to physically get young people out into nature, we have taken it to them, delivering activities online, in print and in the classroom. By doing this we have reached thousands of young people (so far) and given them meaningful connections to nature. Together we are making a difference.

But the work of Generation Green and our collaboration doesn't end in March. This is a first step in a much longer commitment. We are now looking beyond the project and pushing as a coalition to secure more funding so we can continue our work together.

When we launched Generation Green, we pledged to reach 100,000 young people. But why stop there? Let's reach one million people over the next five years. If we achieve this, that will truly be the legacy of Generation Green.

Here's to us all making an even greater impact together in 2022 and beyond.

Alison Stevens, Programme Director (based at YHA)



The changing face of volunteering in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

Lydia Gill and Laura Day were two of the Up Skill, Down Dale volunteers who met with Chancellor Rishi Sunak in November, when he visited YHA Grinton Lodge in his Richmond constituency to learn about how the Generation Green project has been affecting the local area.

Laura explained: "As a Youth Representative on the National Park Management Plan Steering Group, it meant that I was offered the opportunity to meet Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak.

"In our brief chat, I outlined why I wanted to be involved in the Park and why Up Skill, Down Dale is a vital part of the life of young people in the area. I also shared how my PhD intersects with my involvement in the Park, and how my love and study of landscape literature was borne of a childhood lived in the countryside."

The Up Skill, Down Dale Generation Green-funded volunteering programme is providing opportunities for young people aged 18-26 to volunteer in an office setting too. It has been instrumental in inspiring more young people to help conserve and protect the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Lydia Gill joined the Up Skill, Down Dale programme in May to gain valuable experiences that she hopes will aid her career change into the conservation sector.

She said: "The group has been great for me as it has allowed me to explore all the different volunteering opportunities the Park Authority has to offer. I've chosen to explore nearly every part, be it working with the Education and Engagement team, taking groups of disadvantaged adults from urban areas on guided walks, to bashing bracken and drystone walling on a remote farm in the Kexwith Moors."

Laura, who has supported the Dales Countryside Museum's dialect project, added: "I wanted to get involved with Up Skill, Down Dale because I found myself living at home as a result of the pandemic, completing my studies from my childhood bedroom. I wanted to meet people and give something back to the environment I have grown up in and love. The Yorkshire Dales is such a special place, so it made sense to commit some of my time to volunteering in the Park before I might have to move away for employment.

"Up Skill, Down Dale has been fantastic so far - not only am I able to get involved in the landscape, but I've met other like-minded young people from across the Park. It's so lovely to chat to other people my age about why we love the National Park, and what we see as our future within it."



Digital connection sparks nature connection



Online natural history courses and virtual fieldwork packages developed by Field Studies Council (FSC) have brought nature and outdoor learning skills into classrooms and homes, helping thousands of young people study the natural world.

The Generation Green-funded courses and packages have been invaluable for schools who have been unable to travel and has given teachers the confidence to use their local spaces to bring outdoor learning to life.

The digital resources have enabled FSC to continue to bring environmental education to young people when they are unable to get outside or to centres.

The Biology and Geography virtual fieldwork packages alone have enabled 74 schools and more than 5,000 GCSE and A Level students to learn vital skills for future study or careers in the environmental sector.

Courses cover a wide range of subjects, from fungi identification and botanical folklore to QGIS. They also encourage young people to manage their own learning and practise new skills in their local area.



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Being encouraged to do our own research and looking at specific examples after having an overview.

Young learner commenting on the fieldwork packages



Pathways to practical skills in The Broads

Generation Green in The Broads has been working with Pathways College – a complex needs sixth form – to help build students' awareness of their local environment, their self-confidence and communication skills.

Along with the practical skills, the students were also exposed to softer skills such as teamwork,

problem solving and resilience - all extremely beneficial life skills through Generation Green-funded work-experience sessions and two-night residential trips.

Cutting back Alder scrub on fenland to improve habitat for the rare and beautiful Swallowtail butterfly, as well as creating "corduroy" paths across the boggy areas to protect peat rich soils beneath, are just two of the work experience opportunities students have been able to get involved with.

“**I love work experience, I love chopping down the trees. I've learnt about sawing. I like being outdoors.**

Adam, student

The residential stays have provided students with the opportunity to explore The Broads by canoe, enjoy a meal cooked on an open fire, explore star-filled dark skies, and spot seals playing in the surf down on the beach. Student Shane said: "It's fun and it's nice being outside. It's cool watching how to build a fire. I've learnt how to be safe. You definitely need a hard hat when you're chopping trees."

The students' experiences have also had an impact on their parents. One commented: "He always talks about it when he gets home. We really appreciate that he's had this opportunity to be outdoors after being stuck inside for so long, and that he has picked up new skills too."

Programme flexibility enables Scouts to reach more young people


Thanks to the flexibility of Scouts' Green Champions programmes, they have been successfully adapted to a myriad of spaces and places, allowing them to reach groups who would normally struggle to visit a Scouts centre.

The day programme involved volunteers from Scout Adventure Centres heading into communities where young people live to deliver programmes. This is the first time Scouts have delivered day programmes in this way, marking a new way of working.

Young people have undertaken a myriad of activities in their local areas, including improving habitats for birds, bugs and bees, and growing plants. Or in the case of Scouts Phoenix Explorers, which are aged 14 to 18, they tackled some of the problems caused by plastic pollution.

Despite the logistical challenges of moving and supporting its teams as they go into the field, Scouts have described the initiative as 'a great learning opportunity.'





Growing the skills of young people for a greener future

It's 'all systems grow' for the Generation Green team in the Peak District National Park, with their inspirational programme connecting young people with nature.

The Peak District's Green Pathways programmes are reaching youngsters beyond the National Park boundary to provide motivation, experiences, skills, training and career development opportunities.

Assistant ranger Michelle Pickering explained: "During November, we delivered day visits and residential stays to school groups, Junior Rangers and young people interested in Green Career skills. We based the sessions at local YHA youth hostels – Ilam, Castleton and Edale – which gave us space for outdoor activities in the grounds, and easy access to the countryside for walks and practical conservation.

"We encouraged participants to use their senses in experiencing the place, from making a sound map to walking mindfully. From the feedback, the most memorable moments were experiencing dark skies and relaxing outside in a hammock – memories like these last a lifetime.

"We also carried out conservation tasks where groups took action to create habitat piles, restore hedges and try dry stone walling. By bringing young people closer to nature, we help them appreciate the place's special qualities.

"We had to innovate in the snow, creating snow sculptures inspired by wildlife and a giant snowball competition. Pupils from Hazel Grove High School had a truly memorable stay at YHA Ilam Hall."





The Outward Bound Trust brings adventure into schools

With Covid restrictions stopping all residential trips, The Outward Bound Trust's plan was simple - if young people couldn't come to them, then they would go to them and deliver outdoor adventures in urban school environments.

2,000 young people from urban and inner-city schools in areas such as London, Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester and Liverpool, were able to experience an In-School Adventure with Outward Bound thanks to funding from Generation Green.

Getting outside to learn in-school has many benefits. It improves team working, problem solving, communication and self-esteem, as well as boosting physical and mental health. And it's a brilliant way to encourage a lifelong love of nature.

Outward Bound's instructors also made a significant difference to the wellbeing of young people, helping them readjust to being back at school, to re-engage with classroom learning and to reconnect with their peers. Their engagement with the local environment improved as they felt the benefits of spending time in nature and realised that they could access nature around them.

Working alongside Outward Bound's instructors also gave teachers more confidence to include outdoor learning as part of their curriculum plan. The hope is that, going forward, more young people will spend more time outdoors in nature in their own urban setting.





Nature events prove a hit

Nearly 400 young people had the opportunity to get their hands dirty with tree planting and conservation work with Girlguiding in 2021.

Girlguiding's Connecting to Nature Day events and Caring for Nature Residential events enabled hundreds of young people the opportunity to take part in fun outdoor activities and nature wellbeing sessions. The events were supplemented with the Generation Green-funded Connect to Nature worksheets, which were handed out to attendees to complete whilst onsite, or to help continue their adventure once home.

The popular worksheets were also distributed to young people visiting Girlguiding's activity centres or staying at one of their locally owned network of campsites in the North and Midlands regions.

One residential event attendee said: "I just want to say again how much the girls really enjoyed their weekend at Blackland Farm in October, they keep asking me when we are going back."

Further day and Connecting to Nature residential dates are scheduled for 2022.

Thousands enjoy a night under the stars in 2021

During 2021 more than 3,400 young people enjoyed a night under the stars as a result of both Girlguiding's financial and practical support of a locally owned network of campsites in the North and Midlands regions.

As well as providing Generation Green-funded grants for young people to have their first night of camping with them for free, Girlguiding also supported the sites with advice to help them open safely.

Some sites were also provided with essential camping items, such as tented villages, outdoor sinks and lightweight tents, to help improve accessibility for families and youth groups.



More confidence-boosting training events for 2022

Additional dates for Girlguiding's Generation Green-funded walking scheme and outdoor training events for volunteers and adults have been released for 2022.

The popular day and weekend learning programmes have already given nearly 500 volunteers and adults fantastic opportunities to build their skills and knowledge in the outdoors, which they can then pass on to their members and young people.

Attendees have been introduced to a whole range of activities, including camping and campfires, walking and navigation skills, outdoor cooking, bushcraft and much more.

One attendee commented: "I would just like to say how much I enjoyed the Generation Green weekend at Waddow Hall. I very much appreciate being given the opportunity to attend. All the sessions were fun, interesting and so useful. The trainers were excellent! I'll look forward to participating in more outdoor sessions with our local units and sharing skills and ideas. Thank you once again."

Through the addition of more dates, it is hoped that even more volunteers will have the confidence to run outdoor activities with their young members, helping them create connections to nature and, importantly, have fun.

Details of dates in 2022 can be found [here](#).

Boggle Hole makes a big impression

The beautiful cove of Boggle Hole, which is also a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSI), left a big impression on one group of Year 10 students from Wallsend, an inner-city area in the north east.

"Being from a relatively deprived urban area they have less contact with wildlife, nature, and

the countryside," their teacher explained.

However, following a Generation Green-funded Caring for Nature two-night, three-day residential experience at YHA Boggle Hole, 91% of the students said they felt 'more connected to nature'.

The youth hostel sits on the beach, giving the students easy access to explore the rocky foreshore which abounds with fossils, rock pools, sandy strips and pebbles. Braver

members of the group even had a paddle in the sea, where they were greeted by a friendly seal.

"It's little head, looking at us all... I certainly hadn't, and I don't think anyone else would have, seen a seal in the wild like that. One of those moments you think, wow... it takes you by surprise," added the teacher.



The story so far...

At the end of 2021, we took the opportunity to ask the Generation Green partners – YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Field Studies Council, Girlguiding, Scouts and the National Parks – for their reflection on the year and their plans for the project in 2022. Here's what they said....

“It's been great to work collaboratively on this project to deliver experiences to connect more young people with nature and develop a more representative workforce for the green recovery. Our work with partners to develop more young leaders from a variety of ethnic backgrounds continues in 2022, and we look forward to having more female instructors from the Women's Outdoor Leadership Course join our team.”

Nick Barrett, CEO, The Outward Bound Trust

“The Generation Green project has inspired so many of our members to connect with nature and the outdoors this year. From the volunteers who have attended outdoor training courses, to the young people who spent a night under the stars or attended one of our caring for nature events. We look forward to the exciting opportunities planned for 2022.”

Angela Salt, CEO, Girlguiding

“In a year when young people and climate change hit the headlines, I'm proud that as a Generation Green partner, the Field Studies Council has reached over 10,000 young people with our wildlife guides, natural history courses, digital fieldwork resources and outdoor learning at our centres. We'll be delivering more in 2022.”

Mark Castle, CEO, Field Studies Council

“It's been great to try new ways of delivering our programme – going out into the community and training young people to lead the programme, creating more than 100 Green Young Leaders in the process. I know it's been difficult to get enough volunteers with everything that's going on, but the team have powered on and created some amazing opportunities for young people to make a positive impact in their community. A massive thank you to the partners and the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund for making this possible. I'm looking forward to hearing about more tree planting, recycling and nature habitat creation in the new year.”

Matt Hyde, CEO, Scouts





“In such challenging times, Generation Green is a real source of pride. Together with our Access Unlimited partners we have already reached many thousands of young people throughout England. This is testament to our collective passion for making the outdoors accessible. I know that the legacy of the Generation Green funding will be far reaching, and I am looking forward to YHA engaging with many more young people and connecting them to nature in 2022 and beyond.”

James Blake, CEO, YHA (England & Wales)

“This vital project is already transforming lives, allowing young people who may never have had the opportunity to visit the countryside to access, enjoy and learn about our wonderful National Parks.

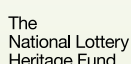
“We’re already connecting scores of young people to nature through some really inspiring activities, including hands-on conservation and residential trips to breath-taking locations. We know these outdoor learning experiences can spark a lifetime of interest in the environment, inspiring the next generation to meet the challenges of climate and biodiversity with confidence and innovation.

“National Parks have so much to offer in terms of connecting young people to nature and I’m excited to see what 2022 will bring.”

Trevor Beattie, CEO, South Downs National Park

Generation Green is funded by the government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



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Generation Green is the first 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

