



## **80,000 young people are changing the world**

As International Youth Day approaches this Sunday; thousands of 11-24 year olds across the UK have been equipped to make a difference in their local communities and for the environment, thanks to the Our Bright Future programme.

Led by The Wildlife Trusts, almost 80,000 young people have signed up to creating a greener future, smashing the programme's original target of 60,000 young people being involved.

Each project; from beekeeping, to sustainable construction and setting up social enterprises, supports young people gain training, skills and confidence; motivating them to make a difference in their own lives and improve the communities and environment around them.

Stephanie Hilborne, OBE, Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts said: "Every generation has what it takes to create real positive change. It is simply a matter of people having the confidence and support to do so. This programme is about just that – fuelling the creativity, inspiration and resilience of our young people. And in the face of escalating environmental challenge, it has never been more important."

More than 1,200 community spaces have been formed or improved, including planting orchards at hostels for the homeless and planting gardens for schools. These projects not only give young people a sense of achievement and pride in their local areas, but also provide habitats for wildlife.

Sarah-Jane Smith, Our Bright Future youth representative at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust said: "I got involved in Our Bright Future because I have always loved wildlife, but I lacked confidence due to mental health issues. Being part of the project has changed my life. I have gained self-confidence, knowledge and direction. Plus, my mental health is more stable than it has ever been."

Sophie Eddison, Our Bright Future youth representative at Lancashire Wildlife Trust said: "The reason why I decided to join Our Bright Future is because I wanted more people like me (who have mental health issues) to know that they can help the environment, even though they have an illness. I also get to meet different people all the time. It has changed my life for the better and I'm really grateful"

There are 31 projects across the UK. Each has received approximately £1 million from the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.

Peter Ainsworth, Chair, Big Lottery Fund said, "Our Bright Future is designed to unleash the ambition of young people across the UK to make a personal and collective contribution to making our environment brighter, happier and more resilient to threats like climate change and the waste of natural resources."

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