



Green Academies Project

Evaluating the National Trust's Green Academies Project 2018-19

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National Trust



COMMUNITY FUND



Our environment is our future

Green Academies Project – External Evaluation 2019-19

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This report provides a thorough evaluation of the **Green Academies Project** (GAP) which we conducted throughout 2019 with the support of the National Trust's staff.

Partner organisations have been **delighted** by the impact they have observed in their communities and once **neglected spaces** have been enhanced. Young people (YP) have been **empowered** to take ownership of green spaces and have **grown in confidence** and commitment to protecting their local environment.

Now at the end of the project, partners **do not feel equipped** to continue the work without the Trust's expert support. A **transition stage** working with partners to embed GAP in the communities is needed to

ensure the legacy of this valuable project.



How to read this report

Chapters 1-2 of this report detail the context of the evaluation at each GAP site and explain the approach and methods we used, including outlining the strategy tree and evaluation framework.

Chapters 3-6 explore the four lead strategies in turn: **Engage**, **Empower**, **Enhance** and **Embed**.

These are structured to provide differing levels of depth for different audiences at the Trust and include:

- An in-depth exploration of the findings grouped by the numbered objectives (#) in the strategy tree
- A summary table of the key findings, implications and recommendations for the Trust to consider.

Executive summary

A successful project, exceeding many of its aims

The National Trust's Green Academies Project has proven to be a deeply impactful project and a positive experience for the participants, partners, staff and communities involved.

It identified four primary aims at the start of the project, three of which have been exceeded:

- To raise awareness and **engage** local communities with their local green spaces
- To **empower** young people to take ownership of their green spaces and equip them with the skills needed to be part of the future of nature conservation – including formal and informal training
- To **enhance** local green spaces

Continuing work needed to handover primary responsibility to partners

The fourth aim of this project was to **embed** the programme and pass on the skills and capabilities needed to manage green spaces to the local communities the sites belonged to.

Partners believe in GAP and are keen for the current programmes to continue with the Trust's support, and increased Trust capacity if possible. However, communities and partners are not yet

at a point where they feel confident in managing these sites alone and rely on the Trust's specialist knowledge in conservation to make the GAP sessions so engaging for YP. The embedding aim was therefore not realised in fullness, though partners remained committed to seeing how they could work with the Trust to reach this point if possible.

Ability of GAP to boost YP wellbeing suggests potential for public health partnerships, amongst others

A significant outcome of GAP was that the wellbeing of communities and participants was enhanced through spending time in nature. The projects have delivered this in abundance, with participants and partners reporting significant improvements to the confidence levels, resilience, health and wellbeing of participants, many of whom were vulnerable¹, disabled or who had struggled in a traditional educational setting.

The Trust may wish to consider using evidence from this pilot project of GAP's ability to boost health and wellbeing to expand its scope. The Trust could reach out to public health providers, for example, and promote GAP as a joint project focusing on conservation and wellbeing in equal measure.

Flexibility, sustained commitment and genuine interest in youth work identified as critical success factors

Partners, participants and staff all contributed to the evaluation to explain why they felt GAP had worked as well as it did. The critical success factors included:

- The Trust making a long-term commitment to engaging underserved communities¹ from the outset. Partners and staff alike have seen shorter term projects fail to gain traction, but the three-year commitment investment in GAP has helped ensure its success
- The Trust's flexible approach in working with partners, forging truly equal partnerships and not being prescriptive about YP achieving XYZ to meet the Trust's outcomes. Flexibility helped partners and the Trust to develop trust and rapport with young people and helped improve retention
- The Trust's staff being genuinely interested in YP and treating them as equals was key in empowering YP to challenge themselves and have a real sense of achievement through taking part.

¹ Please reference Glossary of terms on the final page of this report

The Green Academies Project

The **Green Academies Project** was designed with and for young people aged 11-24, who worked across six National Trust sites on **various conservation activities** to develop their connection to nature and improve their skills in helping to **protect their natural environment**.

Some volunteers were engaged for a **one-day interaction** and others made a more **lasting commitment** of several months working, for example, to establish and maintain community gardens in their local area.



GAP aims to inspire and enable young people to look after their local green spaces

GAP forms part of the National Trust's work to support people to look after the green spaces where they live. Over the coming decade the National Trust is testing ways to connect people to their local green spaces and helping people to play a part in caring for these special places.

Funded through Our Bright Future

GAP is one of the projects that form Our Bright Future, an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts which brings together the youth and environmental sectors. This £33 million programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, is formed of 31 projects across the UK. Each project is helping young people aged 11-24 gain vital skills and experience and improve their wellbeing. At the same time, they act as catalysts for delivering change for their local environment and community; whilst contributing to a greener economy.

11,000 young people engaged

As of October 2019, over 10k young people had engaged with GAP, either as a one-off taster day (8.7k), for a short-term engagement of under 3 months (930) or a long-term engagement of three months plus (483 young people).

Six National Trust sites

Six of the Trust's places are working alongside young people and communities to look after the places important to them in Birmingham, South London, Greater Manchester, Newcastle and Wrexham.

Each site is tailored to the local context, with activities set up in a responsive way to best suit the needs of engaged partners, the local community and the green spaces in which they work.

The main activities undertaken at each site are detailed on the following six pages.

Birmingham & Clent Hills (West Midlands)

Core outputs

This is where the Green Academies Project all began, back in Birmingham in 2009. Young people have committed more than 20,000 hours of volunteering to date, including planting over 500 bluebell, wild garlic and wood anemone bulbs.

This established GAP site has been able to develop into offering qualifications such as Level 1 Land Management.

GAP participants who have graduated the programme have gone on to become trainee rangers, Urban Rangers and to have apprenticeships with the National Trust.



Volunteers on the Millennium Green near Kings Norton

Partington & Dunham Massey (North West)

Core outputs

The GAP team have been working with a local housing group to make the Redbrook Trail more accessible and improve the community garden at Partington Library. The team have inspired young people from the local secondary school to engage with their local green spaces and develop their love of the outdoors.

With poor local transport links, providing activities for young people in the heart of Partington has been both valuable and greatly impactful according to local partners.



Youth Rangers engaged in conservation work at Dunham Massey

Wrexham & Erddig (Wales)

Core outputs

Erddig has a history of connecting young people with nature, running the National Trust's only youth club here since 1999. Originally set up to inspire young people to volunteer, the club has since helped restore the surrounding landscape, creating an allotment, orchard and mindful garden for the benefit of local people and wildlife.

Through GAP, Erddig have continued to encourage young people to care for local green spaces, both on the Trust's land and within their local communities. The project has involved over 3000 people, through partnership working with youth clubs, education providers and other charities and programmes, many of which support NEETS and young people with additional needs.

The project offers a combination of volunteer taster sessions, regular volunteering, workshops, training sessions and work experience, each focusing on improved wellbeing, gained skills and experience, and connection to green spaces.



GAP volunteers tending the orchard at Felin Puleston

Newcastle & Gibside (North East)

Core outputs

GAP Gibside is working with young people and their local communities in Gateshead, Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland to develop their skills and confidence and improve local green spaces.

There are a number of GAP projects running across Newcastle, Gateshead and Durham including Millennium Garden (Leadgate), Burnopfield Woods (Burnopfield), Belmont Scrambles (near Durham City), Gibside and at The Gate (Newcastle City Centre).



GAP volunteers help to conserve woodland habitats in Tyne and Wear

Merton & Morden Hall Park (London)

Core outputs

Based in the centre of a densely populated and diverse community, the GAP team work with various groups of young people. This includes schools and colleges, youth groups, alternative education providers and open volunteering groups.

Groups work to improve green spaces by creating and maintaining habitats, growing vegetables, planting trees and much more. Urban Rangers at Morden Hall Park are particularly active in advocating for wildlife, holding events for their community and creating opportunities for local people to actively look after the park.

A key aim of GAP in Morden is to improve accessibility to nature for young people who might not normally have these experiences. Immersing young people in nature in unexpected places is their key route to inspiring these young people.



Laying hedges on a taster day at Morden Hall Park

Wythenshaw & Quarry Bank (North West)

Core outputs

A broad range of GAP partners supported a depth of community delivery both in and beyond Wythenshawe. With a specific focus on accessing young people through local colleges, volunteers helped transform a number of local green spaces.

As an example, the creation of a community Garden at Woodhouse Park Lifestyles Centre in Wythenshawe was supported by partners including Real Food Wythenshawe, City of Trees, Better Things and Wythenshawe Community Housing Group. Volunteer groups who in turn participated in this community space included Better Things, Virgin Media, Manchester United Foundation, and the National Citizens Service.



GAP volunteers carry the tools needed to site for the day's activities

Evaluating impact

MHM has pioneered a mode of evaluation which is rigorous, creative and highly-effective. We call this **vision-led, outcome focused evaluation**.

This approach was ideally suited for evaluating GAP. By tying each stage of the evaluation to our **strategy tree**, we ensured that the evaluation was **focused** even when it had to be adapted to the **differing needs** at each National Trust site.

The remainder of this report follows the logic of the **four key strategies** of the strategy tree. In the following chapters, we explore in detail how GAP activities delivered the **sought outcomes** and indicate what has been learned to guide the Trust's **future planning**.

Our approach to the evaluation

All activity in an MHM vision-led, outcome-focused evaluation is centred around the **strategy tree**. This tree can be read from top to bottom, to make sure there is a logical thread connecting the project's vision to its sought outcomes and planned outputs. We then list the components of the strategy tree in a spreadsheet and produce a **methodology matrix**

to ensure that all outcomes have a clear way of being measured as 'indicators' in the evaluation. We then have a clear and thorough plan which demonstrates how we will evidence in order to provide the evidence of the project's successes and limitations.

Both the strategy tree and a methodology matrix for this evaluation can be found in the appendix to this report

Vision	To inspire and enable young people to develop their skills and experience to look after the environment and become advocates for the important role nature plays in our lives.			
Aims	ENGAGE To increase local involvement and appreciation of nature and green spaces	EMPOWER To ensure young people have the skills and knowledge to look after green spaces	ENHANCE To enhance the quality and condition of local green spaces	EMBED To develop the confidence and skills of Trust staff, volunteers and partners, to collaboratively look after green spaces
Key Objectives	To engage the public and raise awareness of the value of nature and green spaces To reach a more diverse audience	To educate and equip YP with the skills to look after their green spaces To empower YP to advocate for green spaces and the impact of conservation	To improve local green spaces To make local green spaces more appreciated and utilised	To build the profile and capability of GAP within the NT To engage ambassadors and champions for the local environment
Outcomes	Communities take ownership of green spaces Communities working together to care for green spaces Green spaces are valued by and meet the needs of communities	YP acquire hard skills and qualifications A regular and more diverse profile of volunteers recruited Improved wellbeing of YP volunteers with enhanced social networks YP take ownership of future events	Communities feel a sense of connection with their local green spaces	YP advocate the value of conservation and for environmental change Better evidence for how YP improve their environments NT are felt to be a collaborative partner Partners continue to work in green spaces

Summarised strategy tree for the GAP evaluation: the rest of the report evaluates these four themes in turn

Measuring progress

The table to the right illustrates the eight research methods used to evaluate the project between December 2018 - October 2019. The sample achieved at each of the Trust's sites is given for clarity.

We are particularly grateful to the Trust's staff who personally took part in the evaluation and helped collect the participant and community data. In practice, some sites were more successful and/ or available to carry out the fieldwork than others, which means that there are concentrations of data where an analysis has had to be made based on the data from one or two sites. Where this is the case (notably the community evaluation under 'Engage') we have made it clear in the report text.

We also thank the partners, over half of whom contributed to the partner survey.

Evaluation research: Sample achieved by method by NT site

	Clent Hills	Dunham Massey	Erddig	Gibside	Morden Hall Park	Quarry Bank	Total
Participant survey(s)	3	4	18	34	37	-	96
Online diary (also called Indeemo, as this was the software used)	1	1	2	-	-	-	4
Community survey	-	-	48	-	-	-	48
Community vox pop	-	-	30	-	15	-	26
Partner survey	9	4	5	8	9	3	38
Partner depth interview	3	1	2	3	4	-	12
NT staff / partner / YP evaluation workshop	5	2	2	-	5	1	16
'Taster day' surveys	-	-	22	-	6	-	28



Engage

Aim: To increase local involvement and appreciation of nature and green spaces

Locals value efforts to improve green spaces

Communities have **noticed** and **appreciated** the efforts to improve their local green spaces. Some spaces had previously had a negative reputation which is slowly being improved. People have been **inspired** to see the changes made by young people and claim to be **keen to help** get involved themselves.

The green spaces provide a much needed **escape to nature** close to town and improve users physical and emotional **wellbeing**.

Objective #1 To raise awareness of the value of nature & green spaces

- Green spaces meet the needs of communities
- Community ownership of GAP activities
- Wider community have a passion for green spaces
- Increased value given to nature and green spaces
- Increased awareness of local green spaces

Communities value a quiet place to escape to in nature

A major appeal of the Felin Puleston* site at Erddig is that it enables respondents to enjoy peace and quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

‘It’s like having my own little wilderness in the middle of London.’

This may be seen by the local community as unique to the given space, or at least better achieved here than in other green spaces nearby.

‘There is a park closer but it is more natural here.’

‘It’s a beautiful oasis for walkers, visitors and locals - gives [us] an opportunity to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of the woodland.’

Locals believe sites are under used due to lack of awareness and negative reputations

When asked why people might not make use of the space, respondents revealed that a negative reputation remains.

‘It has got a reputation of people drinking, idiots lighting fireworks...’

‘2 years ago there were gangs coming down here and lighting fires.’

The Trust and its partners may need to continue to raise awareness of improvements to the site, as the lasting reputation no longer reflects the experience on site.

‘Possibly they don’t realise it is so close on their doorstep.’

Outreach events make the sites come to life...

Morden Hall Park’s vox pop interviews were conducted at a Fun Palaces community outreach day - this was a special event on site, with activities and live music to raise local awareness. 4 out of the 16 interviewees had never used the site before, suggesting the events do help raise awareness.

It’s important to note that these events, while valuable, encourage non-users to expect more of the site in terms of what’s offered there. They praise the activities and the community spirit created by bringing people together.

‘There’s a community feel, and these free activities are really good.’

* A note on the sample

Sample for the Community evaluation largely comes from parts of Wrexham neighbouring Erddig, with a sample of 48 surveys and 30 vox pops. The chapter is supported by 15 vox pops from Morden Hall Park and partner depth interviews.

...but raise expectations of what the site should offer

Regular users of the site say that to engage more locals you'd need to add picnic tables, toilets for the children, a play area etc, whereas others love having a wilderness to visit in the heart of the city. It is possible that the day-to-day users value the wild nature of the site (improved with accessible, maintained pathways) while occasional users who come for events would only return if it were more manicured. The Trust may need to provide information on the importance of *wild* green spaces to shift mainstream opinions on this.

Locals value the efforts to improve their local spaces

Some members of the community commented on how the green spaces had been neglected and how pleased they have been to see the input from the National Trust to boost their local area.

'We've lived here for about 20 years and Morden Hall Park was always underused and downtrodden. But now is the first time that we see this wonderful community and these activities here, so we're quite enjoying it.'

They now feel that it's somewhere very inviting that they want to visit and enjoy.

'It's been a massive improvement. Whereas before you felt you shouldn't go in because it was private or somewhere you wouldn't want to go in. Now you feel...you're drawn in, you're almost invited in by the layout.'

To continue to meet locals' needs, maintain access and suitable parking

Locals recognise that proactive maintenance is needed to allow access to these spaces.

'It gets very muddy [by the river] and you can't walk over when it's wet.'

Some shared that free access is an important factor in their decision to engage with green spaces. Some respondents said they stopped visiting Alyn Waters near Erddig when a parking charge was introduced. Offering free parking may not be feasible for the Trust to offer, but is a factor in communities choosing to engage with your sites.

'We used to use Alyn Waters a lot until they started charging for parking.'

#2 To engage the public with challenges faced by nature and the environment

- Enhances locals' health and wellbeing
- Community interest in learning about their environment

68% of users feel happier when they engage with these green spaces

Several respondents believe that the space benefits the community through improving their wellbeing. This includes observing healthier lifestyle choices among their neighbours. 73% strongly agreed it makes them fitter and 68% that it makes them happy.

'It is healthier to get out. I see all age groups coming down here. It caters for everybody.'

'It's nice and quiet. Away from the traffic. It's good for you.'

Gratitude for the Trust preserving disappearing wild spaces and protecting heritage

Communities are highly aware that their natural spaces are under threat from developers and are very grateful to see agencies like the National Trust cultivating areas of wilderness and preserving nature and old properties for the people.

‘I mean it is great because otherwise these properties would just be sold to big industry and they’d just be turned into offices or retreats.’

Several respondents praised the efforts to cultivate wildlife-friendly areas.

‘[I] liked the herb garden - and so did the bees, particularly the lavender.’

‘You’ve basically left it for nature, which is brilliant, but also accessible to the public. You’ve done a bit of work on the river where it’s been eroded away.’

Communities are not ready to take sole charge for the projects

Some partners indicated that communities in their area are likely to be interested in getting involved if they knew about GAP activities.

‘Communities would like to get involved if they knew there were activities going on’

‘I’d be interested in helping out in whatever they need.’

‘I’d help to organise it and make it safe for people.’

There are also some indications of YP taking ownership and feeling a stronger connection to the green spaces.

‘[We’d had] incidents of arson and setting fires on the land from young people in the area. What was great was young people getting engaged in the area and they were able to work with the local PCSOs. Young people responsible for their own community and reporting these concerns’.

However, communities are not yet equipped to take over management of the sites and with its remaining resource devoted to bridging the end of the GAP project, the Trust may struggle to implement a managed handover process. Ideally, support would taper off over time and catch ups

with community leaders would be held every few years after that. A national online hub for GAP alumni could help communities support their peers and link up former GAP sites across the country.

Communities see GAP’s work as a strong learning opportunity for all

There were a few instances of members of the community being inspired by the GAP projects to grow vegetables for themselves or try their hand at improving their gardens at home.

‘It makes me want to do something at the end of my veg garden! It’s never been anything to look at and I’m not exactly a gardener, but it does inspire you that’s for sure.’

There may therefore be an appetite for outreach days which gave people an opportunity to learn about container vegetable gardening and having something to take away as well as the knowledge of how to protect and nurture their crops.

Other learning opportunities suggested were focused on climate change, with locals demonstrating support for YP leading the way.

#3 To reach a more diverse audience

- Support community cohesion / enhanced connections within communities

Lack of evidence to assert if a more diverse cross-section of the community was reached

Survey data suggests **no real demographic differences** between first time users of the green spaces and existing users to infer that a more diverse audience has been reached across the community.

This is of course based on a small sample from the Erddig site alone, as this was the only site to return completed community surveys. We cannot then confirm if a more diverse cross-section has or has not been reached across the wider GAP project, there's just no evidence to support either way. It may be worth noting that the few interviewed at Erddig were mostly white (95%) and had mostly visited the National Trust before

(96%), so we spoke almost exclusively those who were already known to the Trust.

Engaging a more diverse cross section of the community is likely a longer-term outcome which will require more time and outreach work.

Greater diversity evidenced amongst GAP participants

This outcome is better evidenced in relation to the diversity of the GAP participants. The YPs of course are part of the community and a key gateway to the wider community if they feel empowered to advocate to their friends, parents and neighbours.

Diversity of Erddig community sample compared to Erddig regional census data 2011

Demographic	Community sample	Erddig census data 2011
Ethnicity:		
- White British	95%	85%
-BAME	2%	8%
Age (adults only)		
- 16-24	5%	} 76%
- 25-44	32%	
- 45-64	43%	
- 65+	20%	24%
Employment:		
- Employed	74%	69%
-Unemployed/ looking	-	6%
- Economically inactive	19%	31%
- Long term sick/ disabled	2%	11%
Base / population	48	2,200

Source: <http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/statistics/erddig.pdf> [Accessed 8.12.2019]

ENGAGE STRATEGY: summary of the key outcomes, implications and our recommendations

Objectives	Concise findings (from community members survey unless otherwise stated. Base:48)	Implications and recommendations
Associated outcomes		
#1 To raise awareness of the value of nature and green spaces		
Green spaces meet the needs of communities	Wildness of the Erddig site highly valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildness of both the Erddig and Morden sites is highly valued. Ability to find the balance of being wild yet accessible seems distinctive to the Trust. The Trust should promote this USP. • Accessibility is crucial and the introduction of parking charges seems to be a big barrier to inclusion at green spaces. The Trust to assess this in the local areas before introducing charges. • Further awareness raising initiatives needed to overcome the associations of some GAP sites with anti-social behaviour. • The Trust to find some way of 'handing-over' management with support tapering off over time. Communities willing but not yet equipped to help maintain sites.
Community ownership of GAP activities	Many have a sense of ownership of the spaces and would be happy to help with maintenance	
Wider community have a passion for green spaces	Universal agreement that it's important to have this green space in the community	
Increased value given to nature and green spaces		
Increased awareness of local green spaces	Awareness raising exceeded partners expectations	
#2 To engage the public with challenges faced by nature and the environment		
Enhanced health and wellbeing of communities	Universal agreement that spending time at the site makes users happy and fitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence for how the sites improve health and wellbeing is especially strong. The Trust could consider prioritising programmes that emphasise the use of its spaces for health and wellbeing • Feedback from course leaders indicates potential for knowledge sharing between site users and the Trust about environmental sustainability e.g. container vegetable gardening, as seeing the GAP eco-garden inspired some users to want to try this at home.
Community interest in learning about their environment	Course leaders and partners report participant and communities interest in knowledge sharing	
#3 To reach a more diverse audience		
Support community cohesion / enhanced connections within communities	Awareness had been raised of green spaces and people have made new personal connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued focus is needed on programmes that increase diversity of users on site, this is likely a long-term aim.



Empower

Aim: To ensure young people have the skills and knowledge to look after green spaces

Empowering young people

YP participating in GAP learned new **skills** and increased in **confidence** by being inspired to try new things and achieve something **worthwhile**. **Wellbeing** was boosted by being in nature. The Trust's staff and partners treated YP as rounded individuals and **valued volunteers**, which was key to the success of the project.

#1 To equip young people with the skills to look after their green spaces

- YP acquire hard skills
- YP acquire soft skills
- Qualifications achieved / YP graduate

GAP helped YPs develop new skills

While 60% of participants expected they would learn new skills, most (84%) included this as an outcome of their experience.

‘[I loved] doing bush craft, learning how to make a fire and toasting marshmallows.’

YP relished the chance to learn and have fun

‘To learn new skills’ was the most frequently cited expectation of YPs who were first getting started with GAP. 54% took part in GAP thinking it would be something interesting and different to

do. In the end 84% agreed they were having an enjoyable time.

‘[There’s] always new skills to be learned and new people too meet. I like how every day or work placement is never the same. I really enjoy volunteering.’

Several participants cited the learning opportunities as the best thing about being involved in GAP.

‘[I liked] working with new people and learning more about nature.’

‘[I liked] learning about trees.’

Interest in the environment mainly developed through, not before, GAP

Few got involved in GAP because they had an interest in the environment and conservation (35%) but at the end of the project, 74% agreed they’d learned something about the environment and conservation. 62% had a better understanding of the importance of green spaces. This suggests a decent cohort of young people who became more engaged with understanding the need to protect green spaces through GAP.

GAP contributed to YP’s personal development

Partners believed taking part was helping to build resilience in YP, showing them that things don’t always work as planned but to try again e.g. when growing vegetables or lighting a fire.

‘You have to be really patient with some of these children. They get there in the end, but it takes a while. 30, 40, 50 strikes of the flint before they actually get a spark. But by the end of every session, there’s never been a child who hasn’t managed to do it.’

The YP agreed they had faced challenges (mostly getting up early and braving the elements) but were proud of their commitment and achievement.

Overall, 57% of participants agree that being involved in GAP has made them more employable, which is an uplift on 34% that included this within their expectations.

51%

of participants have ‘personally changed’ as a result of being part of GAP

GAP boosts the confidence of YP

A major way that young people feel they've personally changed, from being involved in GAP, is a greater sense of self-confidence. This is associated by many with being more knowledgeable and skilled, in relation to nature and conservation.

'I've become more confident'

'Increased confidence and self awareness with nature'

69% of participants said they were more confident as a result of taking part in GAP.

Getting out of the classroom was key to their success

Many YP said that the best thing about GAP was getting out of the classroom. These were often YP who have struggled in a traditional educational setting and they relished the chance to find themselves and learn new skills in a new environment.

'I get to spend more time in the outdoors and I have learnt so much along the way.'

'I didn't think anyone would run such a course that heavily involved the outdoors and not sitting at a desk writing all the time.'

#2 To educate YPs and communities on habitats and biodiversity

- Sustained progression via training / development
- Regular volunteers recruited

Long-term participants increased their opportunities for learning

A small number of participants kept online diaries of their GAP experience. Here, the impact on the young people's learning seems to have been significant. The level of knowledge demonstrated about animal habitats and biodiversity was often very detailed, as shown by the quotes (right).

483 long-term volunteers recruited

483 young people participated in GAP for a period of over 3 months and were recorded as long-term volunteers. This represents 4% of all engagements with GAP (over 11,000 in total).

Some young people who participated for over 1 year were able to access opportunities to network with other partner projects, and to become more

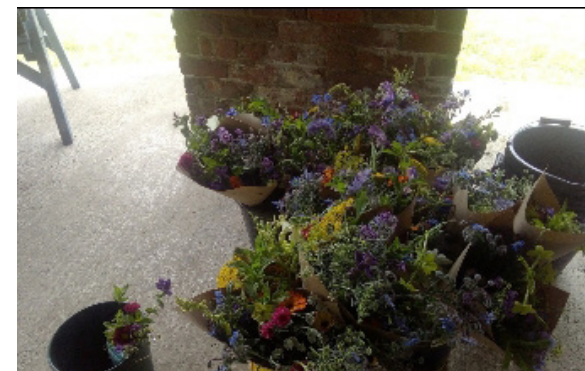
involved in the wider National Trust. For example, in 2019 14 young people across three project locations got together and met with young people from other GAP and OBF projects. As part of this, 5 young people from Birmingham led a tour of Clent Hills and 2 young people from Morden led workshops with other sites to help them share their stories through a newsletter for young nature volunteers.

'I have learnt about the importance of having older woodlands, as the older trees absorb more carbon dioxide, and boost forest biodiversity.'

'It's amazing how the flowers sprout back up after each week's harvest, as if they hadn't been just a few stalks after the last session.'

'I have become much more confident around bugs as we even do bug identification occasionally.'

'Before we put the [do not feed the deer] sign up - and still occasionally - people were trying to feed the deer all sorts, pretty much whatever they had on them at the time. I don't know much about the deer-keeping at Dunham but what I do know is that they have to be fed in winter.'



#3 To change participants' perceptions of conservation and its impact

- More diverse volunteer profile
- Volunteers feel valued

Two thirds were first time volunteers

A major achievement of GAP has been engaging YP in volunteering for the first time. 68% of participants have never volunteered before taking part in GAP.

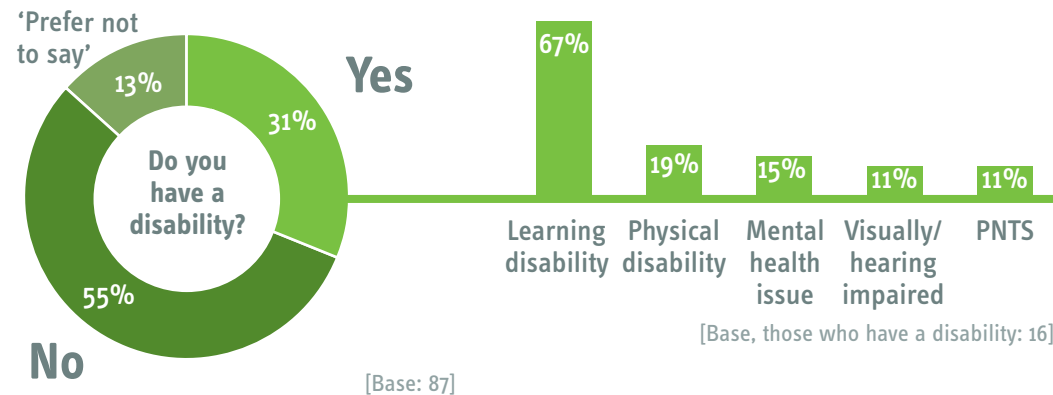
1 in 4 are new to volunteering for the Trust

24% of participants have volunteered somewhere else, but are engaging with the Trust for the first time through GAP. A minority have already volunteered with the Trust (10%).

Accessible to disabled groups

Despite the physical nature of most GAP outputs, the project is seen to be accessible for those with a disability. 31% of participants report having a disability.

Disability profile of GAP participants: proportion of participants



Volunteering history of GAP participants



Among the disabled participants, most have a learning disability (67%). At 31%, this level of participants with a disability is significantly higher than for Trust volunteers overall (5% in 2018).

GAP was welcoming and inclusive

Feeling welcomed, treated like an equal and free to be yourselves were the top three outcomes for GAP participants, suggesting that a really key success of GAP was in its power as an inclusive space.

A strong sense of pride in doing something worthwhile

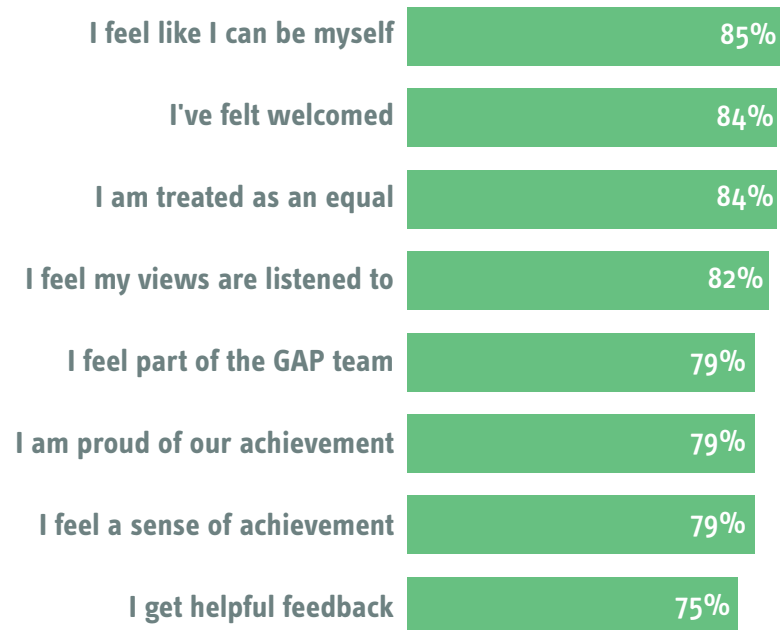
Many participants reported strong feelings around being proud of what they have achieved with their fellow participants. 79% of participants felt 'proud of what the team achieved'.

This chimes with the partners' observations. Partners witnessed young people develop a sense of independence and achievement as a result of the support provided within GAP.

Young people's pride in what they have achieved is enhanced by the perception that outcomes are meaningful. Participants describe GAP as a good thing to do, which makes a real difference.

'It makes you feel like you are part of something.'

Participant outcomes: experience of GAP



Base: 61

'[It's] hard work but rewarding.'

'It helps to make a difference to nature, myself and others.'

#4 To empower YP to become advocates for green spaces

- Improved health and wellbeing of YP volunteers
- YP have improved social networks
- YP take ownership of future events

Improved health and wellbeing of YP volunteers

There are a number of models and measurements in use in the UK to capture the impact of volunteering on an individual's wellbeing. One model that's commonly used is New Economic Foundation's *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, which identifies five evidence-based actions in daily life that contribute to improved wellbeing. Volunteering or participatory activity can deliver opportunities for each of these actions:

‘Working with the National Trust has helped me grow as a person.’

1. Connect

Meeting or socialising with other people

2. Be active

Taking part in physical activity

3. Take notice

Providing people with opportunities to see beautiful things through improved green spaces and spending time in nature

4. Keep learning

Providing people with opportunities to participate in lifelong learning

5. Give

Providing people with opportunities to volunteer their time

Five Ways to Wellbeing expectation to outcome shift: numbers of participants who agreed

Five ways	Expectation	Outcome	Difference
To take notice	63	91	+28
To be more connected	46	82	+36
To learn new things	51	83	+32
To be more active	23	55	+32

Base 63 97

‘Taking notice [of nature]’ was the main way in which wellbeing was enhanced for 91 of 97 participants. This was a major reason for getting involved in GAP but exceeded participants’ expectations.

Few participants got involved in GAP to get fitter but over half found that their involvement improved their fitness.

Being in nature made the YP feel happy

Participants report strong levels of agreement with outcomes related to an enhanced state of wellbeing:

- 40% 'strongly agree' that being in nature makes them very happy (77% agree)
- 34% 'strongly agree' that they find being in nature really amazing (75% agree)
- 35% 'strongly agree' that they always find beauty in nature (80% agree)

This reinforces the success of GAP in boosting the wellbeing of young people across all measures in the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* model.

YP developed social skills in being able to work with adults and their peers

A major outcome of taking part in GAP was feeling part of a team, with participants reporting gains in their ability to work with others.

The supportive network empowered many to try new things. Subsequently achieving unexpected outcomes boosted young people's pride and confidence.



Most participants agreed that they felt 'part of the team' (79%). This chiefly reflects that the Trust respect the young people as individuals. 52% of participants 'strongly agree' that they are treated as an equal and 43% 'strongly agree' that they 'feel like I can be myself'.

'I have become a more open person'

Partners said the ability of GAP rangers to relate to YP as individuals with genuine interest in them and with friendship was invaluable (explored further under 'Embed').

'The respect the children give your staff - that respect is going both ways, as well. It's brilliant.'

Helping YP to work better with others

Many participants felt that being involved in GAP has made them better at working with others.

'[I'm now] more of a team player'

Working on GAP has helped young people to engage with new people and be flexible to the needs of others.

'More energetic and friendly towards strangers'

'I have become a more open person'

Meeting new people was a key benefit

When asked what was the best thing about being involved in GAP, there was consensus that this included meeting new people, with some also making new friendships. This demonstrates the importance of GAP from a social capital perspective i.e. people mixing with people they wouldn't normally encounter.

'You get to meet amazing people'

'Making new friends and improving the area'

A third of participants 'strongly agree' that they are meeting new people through being involved (32%) and 34% 'strongly agree' that they are making new friends.

YPs empowered to try something new and exceeded their own expectations

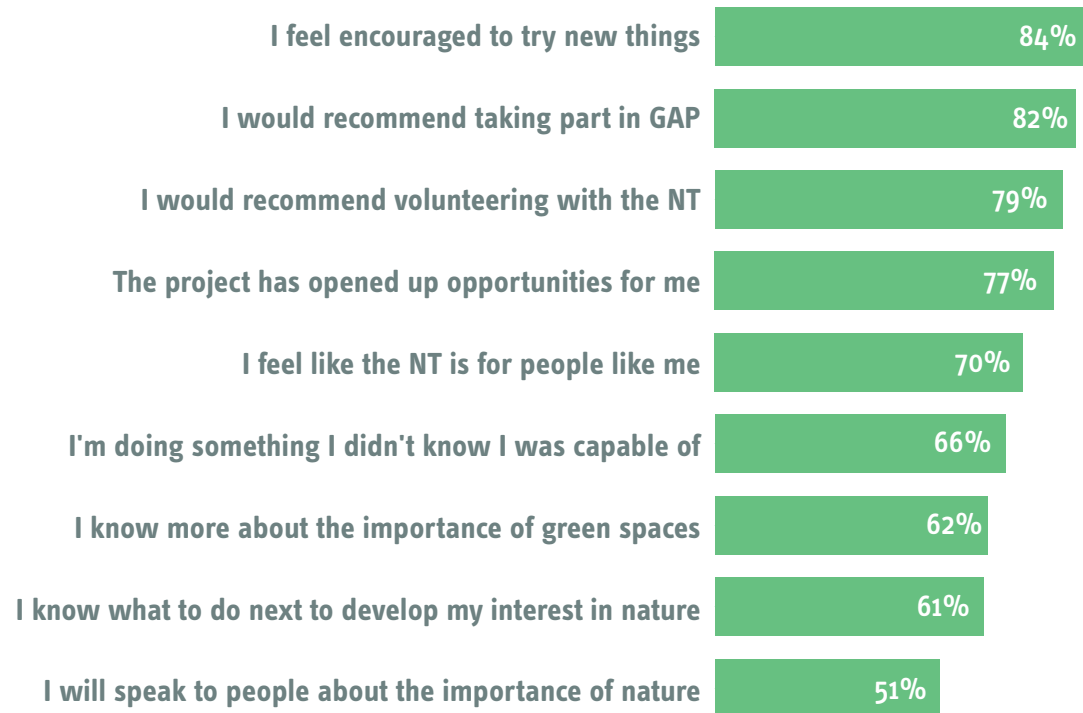
Being involved in GAP was an empowering experience for most. 84% of participants agree that they felt encouraged to try new things, of which 44% 'strongly agreed'.

'I've enjoyed working with them and I think it's worthwhile.'

'Amazing and eye opening'

66% of participants agreed that they did 'something I didn't know I was capable of'. Together this suggests that GAP is run on a well thought-out delivery model: young people complete activities within their capabilities but are stretched to expand their skills.

Participant outcomes: legacy of GAP



Base: 61

Over half intend to advocate for nature

A further success of GAP has been to establish likely advocates for the environment and conservation among young people. 51% of participants agreed that they will speak to other people about the importance of nature.

Over a quarter are active promoters of NT

Participants feel that the Trust is welcoming, with many describing the Trust as a place for them.

Leading from this positive relationship with the Trust, GAP has succeeded in establishing promoters of the Trust. 58% of participants would recommend the Trust to friends and family. Of these, 27% have already recommended the Trust.

Young people would recommend GAP to others

Most participants also agree that they would recommend taking part in GAP to others (82% agree). 38% of participants 'strongly agree' that they would recommend the project.

Some may need more direction to aid their development

61% of participants agree that they know what to do next, in order to develop their interest in nature and the environment.

'I am planning to build a few bug houses in my garden.'

However, over a third do *not* know what to do next and need direction. It will be important to provide additional guidance or signposting on next steps to help channel participants' enthusiasm into further activity.

One participant (below) demonstrates a good understanding of the difficulty in finding conservation work, but has established good networks through GAP that should help keep her informed of opportunities and further develop her skills.

'I'd like to try and find some sort of apprenticeship, job or volunteer role... then I hope to go into conservation part time at least, as obviously it's really hard to find a full time role.'

A network is needed to ensure this enthusiasm is not lost

Many participants agree that they need signposting for what to do next and the Trust will naturally want to try and support the enthusiasm for conservation that GAP has inspired. There may be great benefit in establishing a GAP alumni network for participants to keep in touch and support their peers in their ongoing efforts to learn about and act to protect the environment.

For a national project, this is likely to comprise an online social forum lightly managed by the Trust, but it could be a valuable resource to tap into for the Trust to ensure that youth voices are championed and heard at every level as the Trust strives to further empower its young volunteers.

EMPOWER: summary of the key outcomes, implications and our recommendations

Objectives	Concise findings (from participants survey)	Implications and recommendations
Associated outcomes		
#1 To equip young people with the skills to look after their green spaces		<p>A need has been identified to find ways to sustain and further develop this increasing interest. Signposting GAP alumni to any known stepping stones to further their development in the Trust or wider sector organisations will be key to maintaining momentum.</p> <p>Developing an online GAP alumni social network / youth steering group could help keep potential advocates and conservationists of the future informed and peer supported in their development.</p>
YP acquire hard skills	New skills learned in an engaging environment	
YP enhance soft skills	Confidence increased	
Qualification achieved / YP graduate	Half of YPs feel more employable	
#2 To educate YP and communities on habitats and biodiversity		
Sustained progression via training / development	Long-term volunteers learned the most	
Regular volunteers recruited	469 volunteers involved for 3+ months	
#3 To change participants' perceptions of conservation and its impact		<p>The decision to work with vulnerable YP and other groups to improve the Trust's inclusion requires a long-term commitment. It also suggests the success of initiatives to engage communities in the 'Places where people live'. This might mean the Trust needs to establish further links with specialist providers and it may take longer than anticipated to handover responsibility for sites.</p>
More diverse volunteer profile	31% GAP volunteers identify as disabled (2018 Trust volunteers survey: 5% NT vols. are disabled)	
Volunteers feel valued	Volunteers feel part of the team	
#4 To empower YP to become advocates for green spaces		<p>The ability of GAP to improve the wellbeing, self-esteem and resilience of vulnerable young people is powerful. The Trust could explore the potential for joining with public health partners to champion GAP as a joint initiative for conservation and increased wellbeing of vulnerable people, thereby accessing potential new funding streams.</p>
Improved health and wellbeing of YP volunteers	Wellbeing noticeably improved	
YP have improved social networks	Most have made new friends	
YP take ownership of future events	Half will speak to others about conservation	



Enhance

Aim: To enhance the quality and condition of local green spaces

Continued commitment needed from the Trust and its partners

Partners, participants and members of the community alike noted that the green spaces in GAP's care had **visibly improved**.

Community members commented on how sites which had been forgotten, overgrown or unsavoury were now **pleasant, accessible** places to visit.

Participants noted **pride** in what they had achieved and one reflected happily on the state of the site at Erddig before and after GAP.

There have been **signs of local interest** in helping to maintain the sites by the community, but this is **not yet embedded**. Continued outreach is required to empower communities to manage sites independently.

#1 To improve local green spaces

- Communities notice significant improvement in green spaces

Communities pleased at how GAP sites have improved

Partners, communities and participants all noted significant improvements to the green spaces which benefited from GAP's involvement.

"It's lovely to see that it's finally coming to life.... And no one has vandalised it. People have looked after it and it feels [like] a safe environment."

Morden Hall, nearby resident

"The fences have been painted, added wicker garden features, planted flowers and generally tidied up." Erddig, nearby resident

The main picture on this page shows an entry in the online diary method from a participant who was really proud of how much the site had changed over the time they had been involved. It also suggests improvements to make it a more ecologically diverse and vibrant site.



Improvements increased pride locally

Communities noted how the sites are easy to use now and are more pleasant to visit.

'I think that a massive thing [is that once] they would have thought it is a bit of wood, it's a bit of dirt and they just didn't see what was going on underneath there and the fun that they could have.'

Caption & Comments

Tags

Notes

23 Jul 2019 13:39

This is the eco garden that we have created over the past two years of volunteering. I'm really proud of how it has come along, and all the visitors we receive, since it used to just be a fairly empty space but is now complete with benches, flower beds, vegetable beds, a herb garden, benches, a willow dome and manmade pond. Today was mostly maintenance in the form of watering, dead heading, and removing blanket weed, but we also planted some seeds. Its nice to have a session like this sometimes, it reminds me of how much this space has changed over the years, and how we can continue to alter it for as long as their are volunteers to look after this wonderful community space.

By:

Target Group: L

Task: Task 3: Your GAP Diary

Tags:

Download



'When you're working down there you can see people walking their dogs, and they make a comment about that it's easier to use. You can see that it's being used more than it was.'

'Even if people don't particularly use it, it's not seen as a bit of a grot spot any more. It's seen as something that's nice.'

#3 To support sustainable environmental management

- Uptake of infrastructure and networks that allow communities to continue managing green spaces

Partners still need input from the Trust

This is likely the biggest ongoing challenge for GAP: to get to a point where the knowledge and experience has been passed on to partners so they can continue independently.

This central issue is also explored on **pages 45-46**, but in summary the partners truly believe in the power of GAP to drive great change in their communities but still rely on the input from the Trust in terms of:

- encouraging volunteers to stay on (cache of being part of the National Trust)
- their expert knowledge on conservation, bushcraft and gardening

Partners were still concerned about the practical sustainability of the partnership

Partners were 100% sure that their relationship with the trust was sustainable in terms of how well it worked in their communities and how well they worked with the Trust.

There was less certainty, at the time of conducting the interviews, that there would be funding to allow the Trust to contribute. Some partners were sanguine about this - they've worked in community projects for years and know that sometimes, that's how it goes. But some were very concerned that their projects would fold without support. This was particularly a concern when working with vulnerable YP who really need long-term and committed support to be able to grow.

'[Obviously], we want answers now but you can't get them answers overnight. We are talking about youngsters that have been extremely damaged sometimes and so actually to see the effect that we have had will take some time. It is always going to go back to [the fact that] our faces need to be around for the foreseeable future.'

'I mean as I said it's more ongoing maintenance [that's needed]. If we don't have involvement from projects like the GAP project then things might be looking a bit bleak in future.'

ENHANCE: summary of the key outcomes, implications and our recommendations

Objectives		Concise findings (from community members survey unless otherwise stated)	Implications and recommendations
Associated outcomes			
#1 To improve local green spaces			<p>Future sustainability of the programme post-Trust is a key issue for partners. In terms of GAP, for some projects the opportunity may have already passed if the Trust (centrally or at property level) cannot fund a further bridging period to help pass on the necessary skills to other community groups to run the sessions as effectively. We do not mean to put the onus on the Trust, given this is a partnership project, but it is clear from partners that the Trust's staff have specialist skills which the partners at present do not share.</p> <p>In future projects, the Trust will need to plan from the outset on how to deliver guidance, training and support to handover long-term responsibility to communities.</p>
Communities notice significant improvement in green spaces	Most community members notice and appreciate changes to sites		
#2 To make local green spaces more appreciated and utilised			
<i>Not included in this chapter. Please refer to pages 17-18, there is overlap here with the Embed objectives</i>			
Communities feel a sense of connection with their local green spaces	New users engaged, community values the space		
#3 To support sustainable environmental management			
Uptake of infrastructure and networks that allow communities to continue managing green spaces	Interest found within the community to help maintain spaces, but little/ no practical help thus far		



Embed

Aim: To develop the confidence and skills of Trust staff, volunteers and partners, to collaboratively look after green spaces

Partners eager for more support

A big part of the success of GAP relied on the **unique knowledge** held by the Trust's staff, as well as their **flexible** approach and genuine interest in working with YP. **Strong partnerships** were established, with most partners keen for the projects to continue as long as possible.

Continued commitment from the Trust is needed. While partners have learned a lot, they **defer to the Trust's expertise** in conservation to deliver programmes that **excite and engage YP** and keep them coming back week after week.

#1 To raise the profile of GAP within the Trust

- Sustained role of the Trust in events
- Embedded in local and national campaigns

This was not part of our evaluation, but the Trust's staff have provided some supporting information on how GAP has been viewed internally at the Trust during the pilot phase.

Young people going on to become ambassadors for environmental change

The representation of GAP at Countryfile Live was a great example of 'young people going on to become ambassadors for environmental changes'. But in addition:

- 51% of participants will talk to others about the importance of green spaces, (based on the post-participant survey)
- GAP students from Birmingham have gone onto new roles championing environmental conservation as apprentices – both within the National Trust and their regional Wildlife Trust.



Young environmentalists with Hilary McGrady, Director-General of the Trust, and Theresa Villiers, Secretary of State at Countryfile Live, August 2019

GAP featured in high profile National Trust communications and workshops

National Trust viewed Countryfile Live as a chance to amplify youth voice by offering space for young people to meet and collaborate, working with OBF and NYA to facilitate workshops with others in the OBF network. Hilary McGrady (the Trust's Director General) and Patrick Begg (Outdoors and Natural Resources Director) attended workshops which highlighted the importance of listening to and responding to the asks of young people.

In December 2019 the Executive Board discussed the opportunities to amplify youth voice within the trust, as a central element of a national children and young people's plan.

GAP has featured consistently in national communications from the Trust – including numerous features in the Trust's magazine circulated to its significant membership, television interviews with young participants, regular mentions in social media, and a film of the Trust's GAP work in Partington as part of its 125th anniversary celebrations.

#2 Building confidence and capability within the Trust

- Staff culture of reflective practice / sharing learnings

National Trust staff have been reflective throughout the process, providing case studies and commentary to the GAP co-ordinators throughout the project and on a one-day workshop as part of the evaluation. Their reflections and recommendations are summarised here.

Invest time in building relationship with community partners

Take time to build relationships with partners. Due to cuts to youth services, making and sustaining these relationships requires several points of contact and a significant amount of effort.

Establish long-term goals with partners and invest in projects of **18-months minimum commitment**. Any less and the project is setting itself up to fail. This is the necessary reality of working with at risk / hard to reach young people and they need a solid time investment from you in order to make a positive difference.

The Trust also needs to stay visible in the communities to avoid GAP being seen as tokenistic. Listen to their situation and be adaptive to offer opportunities that resonate with the community.

Recognise the skillset of a successful GAP team and increase capacity if possible

Recognise the unique skillset required of GAP leaders: must be knowledgeable in conservation and highly skilled with young people. Be aware that being flexible to meet partners' needs regarding timings and delivered project outcomes is crucial to keeping vulnerable YP on board and making the Trust more inclusive with these groups.

Increase the Trust's staffing capacity to offer provision for more young people where possible.

Champion youth voices to make the Trust truly 'for everyone'

Champion young voices at every level. GAP leaders learned from the young people as much as the young people did from them. Give them a platform to be heard to ensure the Trust is relevant to their lives.



Partners have high praise for National Trust staff - and have full confidence in the Trust

As our society has become so disconnected from nature, the ability of the Trust's staff to light fires using flint and steel, to identify plants and birdsong and to share this knowledge with participants and partners was felt to be very special.

Partners were keen to convey in our depth interviews just how instrumental the GAP rangers had been to the success of the projects. They have this knowledge but also an invaluable ability to connect with the young people as equals.

They said that YP can tell when staff are faking interest, and they never had this issue with GAP: the respect between staff and participants was wholly mutual.

'I would express – it's most important you highlight this [the staff] have been fantastic on this project. Without them, it wouldn't have happened.'

'Her engagement with the children is second to none. There's one of the volunteers, he's a really nice guy. The way he interacts with the kids is brilliant.'



'If you've got another 10 [Rangers like them] in a box somewhere, that would be great. Bring them out!'

#3 Positively changing perspectives of green spaces

- Increased awareness of local spaces
- Improved local green spaces
- Boosted the value given to nature locally

Increased awareness of local green spaces

82% of partners felt that awareness of local green spaces had been boosted, actually exceeding their expectations.

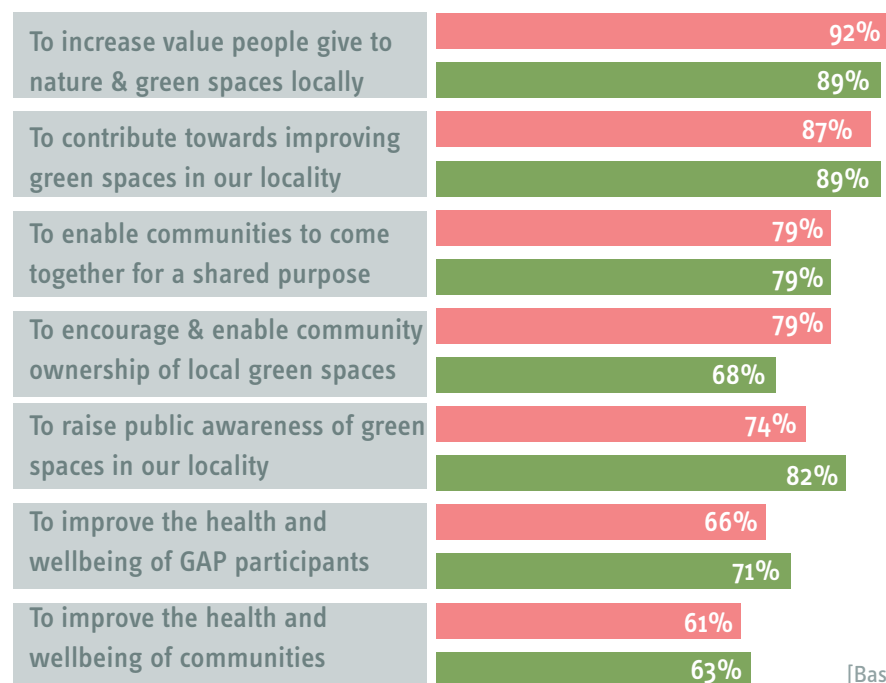
'A lot of comments I get from the site – people turn up and say "I live only over there". I'll say to them: "Have you been here before?" "No, never."'

Improved local green spaces

Almost all partners (89%) observed physical improvements to local green spaces, as a result of their involvement in GAP. Partners who did not agree were involved in projects with a different emphasis, such as a student's work experience.

Partner expectations vs outcomes:

How GAP has changed perspectives on green spaces locally



Expectation

Outcome

[Base: 38]

Boosted the value given to nature

89% of partners noted an 'increased value that people give to nature and green spaces' in observed outcomes. This was the joint highest

outcome in terms of perspectives on green spaces, equal to the physical improvements on site.

#4 Engaging ambassadors for the local environment

- Consolidating the role of partners in sustaining GAP
 - Site specific continuation strategies for GAP activities
 - YPs feel empowered to advocate themselves
 - The Trust felt to be a collaborative partner
 - Sustained partnerships developed
 - Building capacity in the community
- Please also reference Enhance chapter

Great interest in making GAP a lasting partnership

Forging partnerships has been a particular strength of the GAP project. 34 out of 38 partners want to continue engaging with the Trust and 32 specifically want to continue with GAP, and this was because the projects were both enjoyable to work on and impactful for their communities.

Partners across all sites said unprompted that the partnership was sustainable from their

perspective, so as long as the Trust wanted to partner them then they would also be keen.

‘As long as the GAP project or the National Trust have got room or capability to take us, the group assumes they’ll be there every year.’

Strong appetite amongst partners for GAP to be rolled out wider across the National Trust

Indeed, it seems that demand for GAP is higher than the current capacity and partners are keen to see greater investment from the Trust in terms of staffing so they can offer the opportunities to more young people.

‘[I’d like to see] more investment from the National Trust hierarchy to nail their colours to the mast and say this is worth developing.... We’d love to start projects in both Cambridge and Peterborough.’

Some partners also need to work to secure a firmer commitment to the project at their end; front-line partners believe in the programme and understand that it takes time and effort to demonstrate its impact to management.

Next steps and hopes for partner organisations: number of partners (base 38)

Outcome	No.
Continued engagement with the NT / partners	34
Further engagement with YP / communities contact through GAP	32
New skills / knowledge / expertise in engaging YP in nature and conservation	28
Confidence delivering future conservation activities	22
New skills / knowledge / expertise in engaging communities in nature and conservation	21

‘That’s not just the National Trust side..., it’s [about] freeing me up from other duties to be able to do this programme. Because I really believe in these courses and in working together.’

National Trust seen as a collaborative and supportive partner

Partners believe the Trust GAP was a model of how partnerships should operate

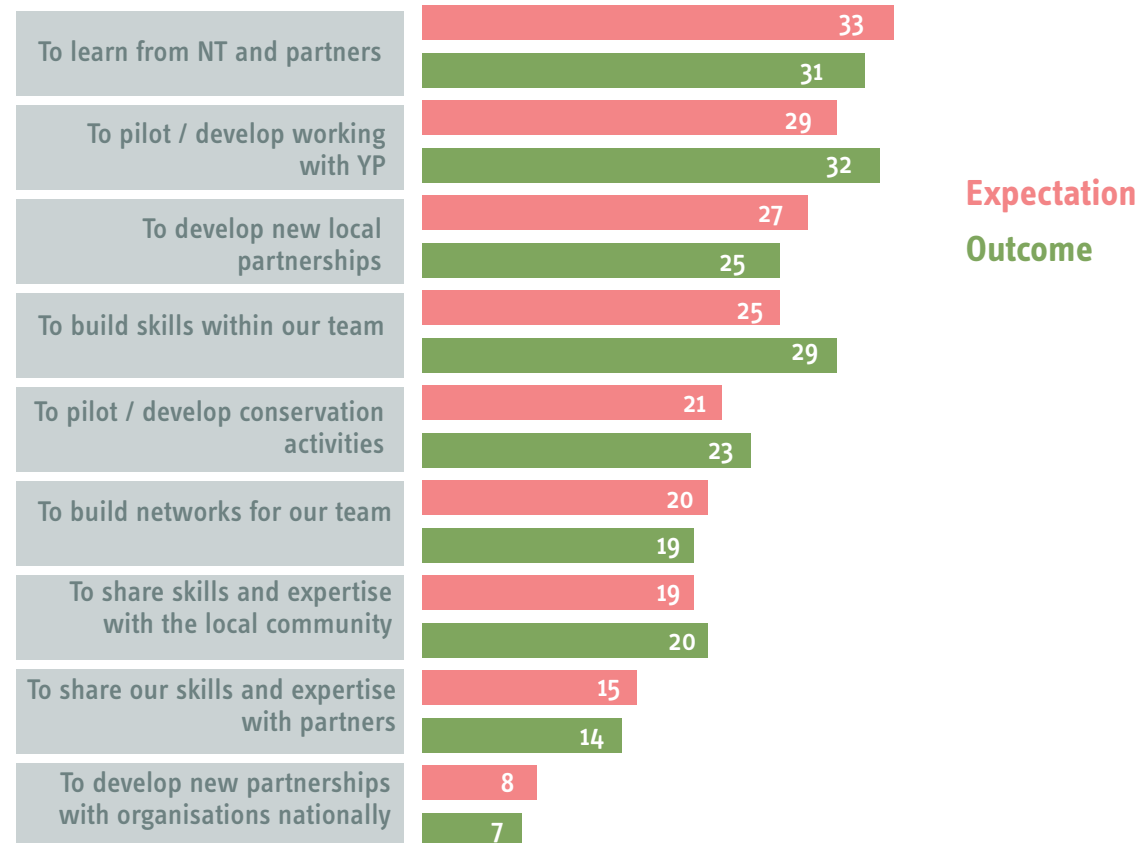
A few partners commented specifically that GAP was a strong model of how partnership working should be, for several partners.

‘Probably with the National Trust I’ve found the way I think it should be done, and it can be done. Rather than sometimes you get just the council building, and they talk about things but don’t actually have the resources to do it’.

Flexibility of approach was vital

National Trust staff were seen as being truly accommodating of participants’ limitations and understanding of their personal situations. All of the partners we interviewed praised the Trust’s flexible, ‘no pressure’ approach. The Trust’s staff were consistently welcoming and non-judgemental if participants skipped a few sessions. This was vital in improving retention rates, building trust with anxious participants and therefore delivering on all of the other outcomes for the YP and partners.

Partner expectations vs outcomes



[Base: 38]

‘The flexibility on their part has been tremendous.’

‘I don’t feel there’s an expectation of ‘oh well if you’re coming down here then you need to be doing this, this and this for us to fulfil our outcomes.’

The Trust's staff possess rare, specialist skills as well as excellent interpersonal skills with YPs

Partners agree that the Trust's staff have a rare skillset and knowledge about wildlife which they've developed over years and this is not something that can be easily transferred to partners in a relatively short-term project.

The knowledge the Trust's staff share is part of the magic of making GAP different and engaging YP, many of whom had struggled in traditional classroom environment.

'They've done things like riverbank clearance with the kids and things like that. So it was really to get their expertise on what could be done down there and how we go about it.'

Partners rely on NT to facilitate learning activities

Partners agree that they have learned a lot from working with the NT on GAP, but not consistently to a point where they feel confident they could carry on and deliver the work to the same standard that the Trust delivers.

Skill sharing still goes both ways between NT and partners

It's valuable for NT staff to reflect on the fact that this often goes both ways, as partners bring a lot of expertise in working with young people.

'It was more of a 50-50 relationship. The National Trust have obviously got all the knowledge to do with the wildlife, the environment, the tasks. Whereas I was there mainly making sure that the students were behaved, they listened, that type of thing. So supervised them that way.'

Accessing specialist help from NT is crucial to achieving some partners' outcomes

For some partners, there is actually benefit in them not being the expert personally in the task at hand e.g. building a shelter, lighting a fire.

With the West Midlands engagements with the police, for example, it was valuable in breaking down barriers between the YP and their perceptions of the police to see that the police officers were just like them, they were new to this and struggling too. This was actually crucial to the success of the project from the West Midlands' Police perspective.

'The children get more out of it when we are involved, so when we are helping them build dens, looking at how to forage things. They like us being involved and that is what we are trying to show: we are not different to you guys, you know just because we might be older and greyer, we still have [to learn]. The problem we have from our side is obviously we are police with a uniform and we always have a bit of a barrier.'

EMBED: summary of the key outcomes, implications and our recommendations

Objectives	Concise findings	Implications and recommendations
Associated outcomes		
#1 To raise the profile of GAP within the Trust		Learnings embedded in this report on what made the GAP pilot a success should be shared and existing Rangers empowered to share their knowledge and skills with wider staff / volunteers to safeguard against this knowledge being lost as people move on.
Sustained role of the Trust in events	Prominent platforms found at Countryfile Live and Welsh National Assembly	
Embedded in local / national campaigns		
#2 To build confidence and capability within the Trust		
Staff culture of reflective practice /sharing learnings	Learnings shared at GAP evaluation workshop Aug '19	
#3 To positively change perspectives of green spaces		YPs demonstrate keenness and intention to advocate for the environment. Previous recommendation to establish a youth panel or network for peer support will be important here as well.
Increased awareness of local green spaces	Achieved, as noted in previous chapters	
Increased value given to conservation		
Evidence for how YP improve their environment		
#4 To engage ambassadors and champions for the local environment		
More diverse profile of community participants	Ongoing outreach required	
YP act as advocates for environmental change	Over half will speak to others about conservation	
#5 Site specific continuation strategy for GAP activities		Partners and communities are not yet ready to go it alone and the Trust needs to develop plans for further training of partners and longer-term, but slowly tailing off, support to empower communities to manage the sites independently. Partners do not possess the specialist knowledge that the Trust's staff hold around wildlife and nature, so enabling partners to feel that they nevertheless have enough knowledge will be important.
YP feel empowered	YP achieved things they hadn't expected they could	
The Trust felt to be a collaborative partner	All partners agreed decisions were made together	
Sustained partnerships	High interest in continued partnerships with the Trust	
Building capacity in the community	Partnerships made, skills learned but more needed	

Conclusions and recommendations

Enhance more local spaces, with a signature combination of accessibility and wildness

The wildness of both the Erddig and Morden sites is highly valued by the communities we surveyed. The ability to find the balance of being wild yet accessible seems distinctive to the Trust. The Trust should promote this as its USP for engagements in outdoors spaces in the context of the urban places programme.

Accessibility is crucial and the introduction of parking charges seems to be a big barrier to inclusion at green spaces. The Trust will need to assess this in the local areas before introducing charges.

Continued outreach is needed in communities to increase diversity of users

Further awareness-raising initiatives are needed to overcome the associations of some GAP sites with anti-social behaviour. Continued focus is needed on programmes that increase diversity of users on-site. This is likely a long-term aim.

There is potential for knowledge sharing between site users and the Trust about environmental sustainability e.g. container vegetable gardening, as seeing the GAP eco-garden inspired some users to want to try this at home.

Plan for a long-term handover of sites to communities, passing knowledge to partners

Future sustainability of the programme post-Trust is a key issue for partners and the Trust's staff. For some GAP sites, it may be too late as the handover has not been completed and funding has ended. In future, projects will need to plan how to deliver guidance, training and support to handover long-term responsibility to communities from the outset.

Partners do not possess the specialist knowledge that NT staff hold around wildlife and nature, so enabling partners to feel that they nevertheless have enough knowledge will be important.

Increase scope of GAP by highlighting its impact on wellbeing and applying for new funding streams

Evidence for how the sites improve health and wellbeing is especially strong. The Trust could consider prioritising programmes that emphasise the use of its spaces for health and wellbeing

The Trust could explore the potential for joining with public health partners to champion GAP as a joint initiative for conservation and increased wellbeing of vulnerable people, thereby accessing potential new funding streams.

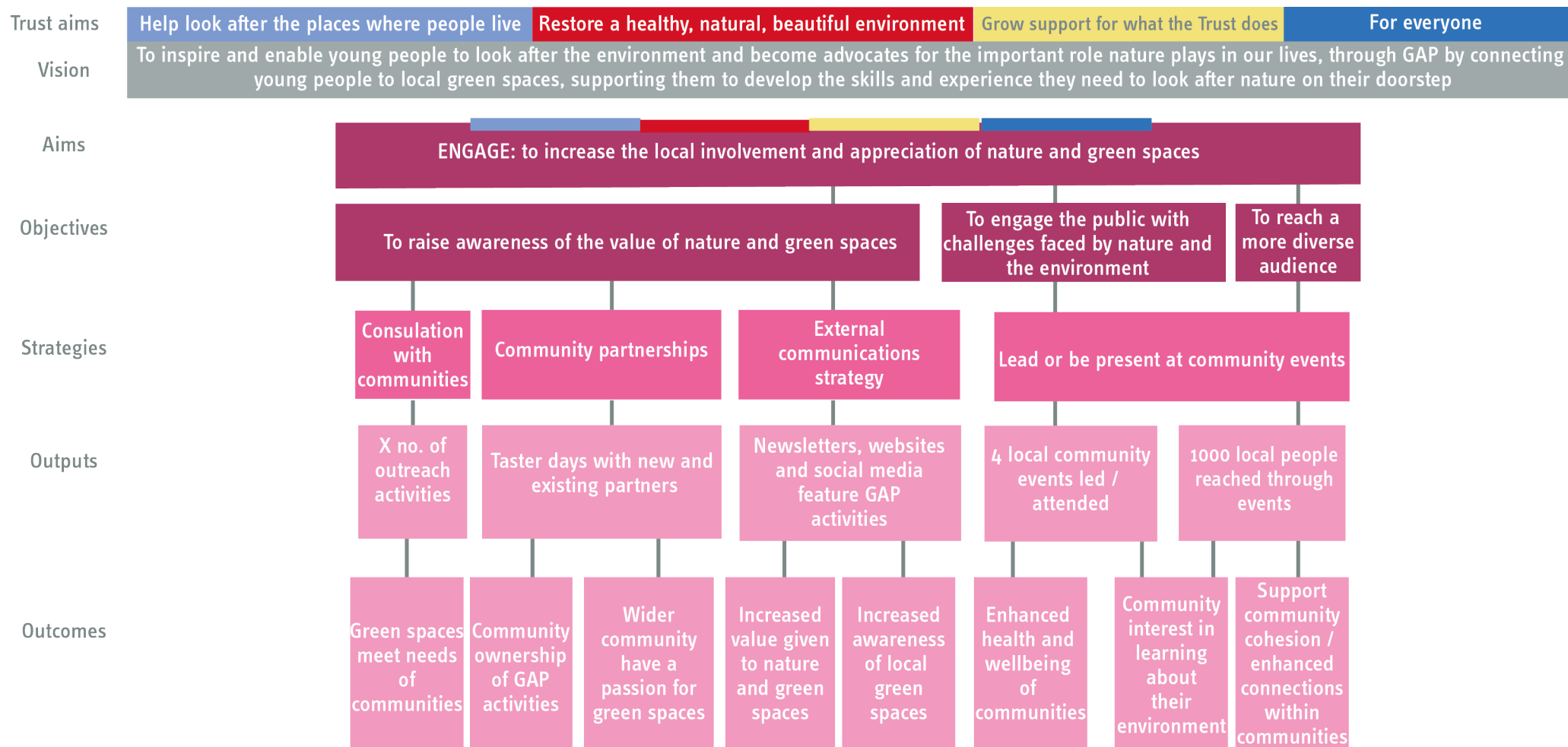
Develop a GAP alumni network and/or youth steering group

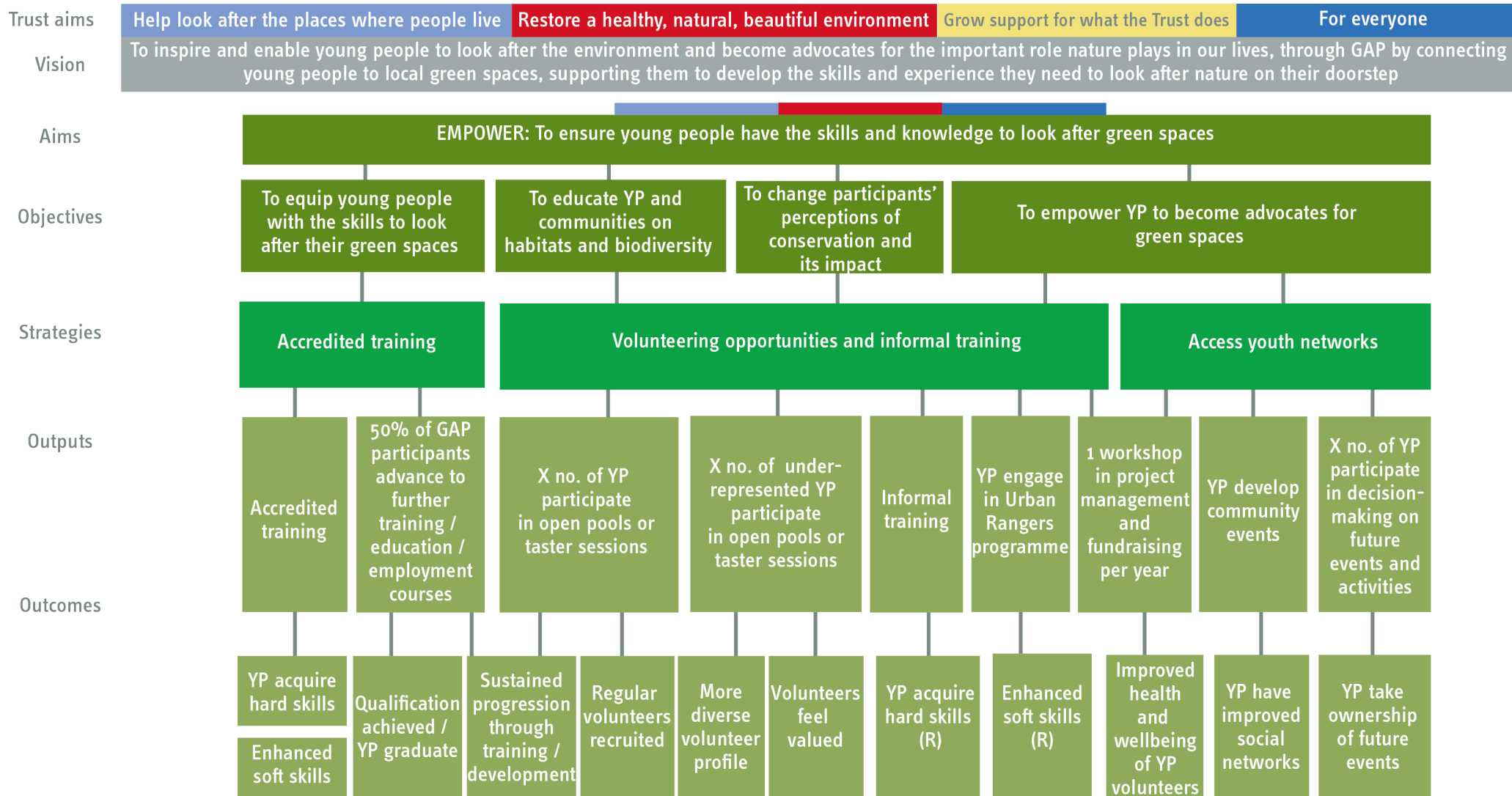
The project needs to sustain and further develop young people's interest as it grows. Signposting GAP alumni to any known stepping stones to further their development in the Trust or wider sector organisations will be key to maintaining momentum.

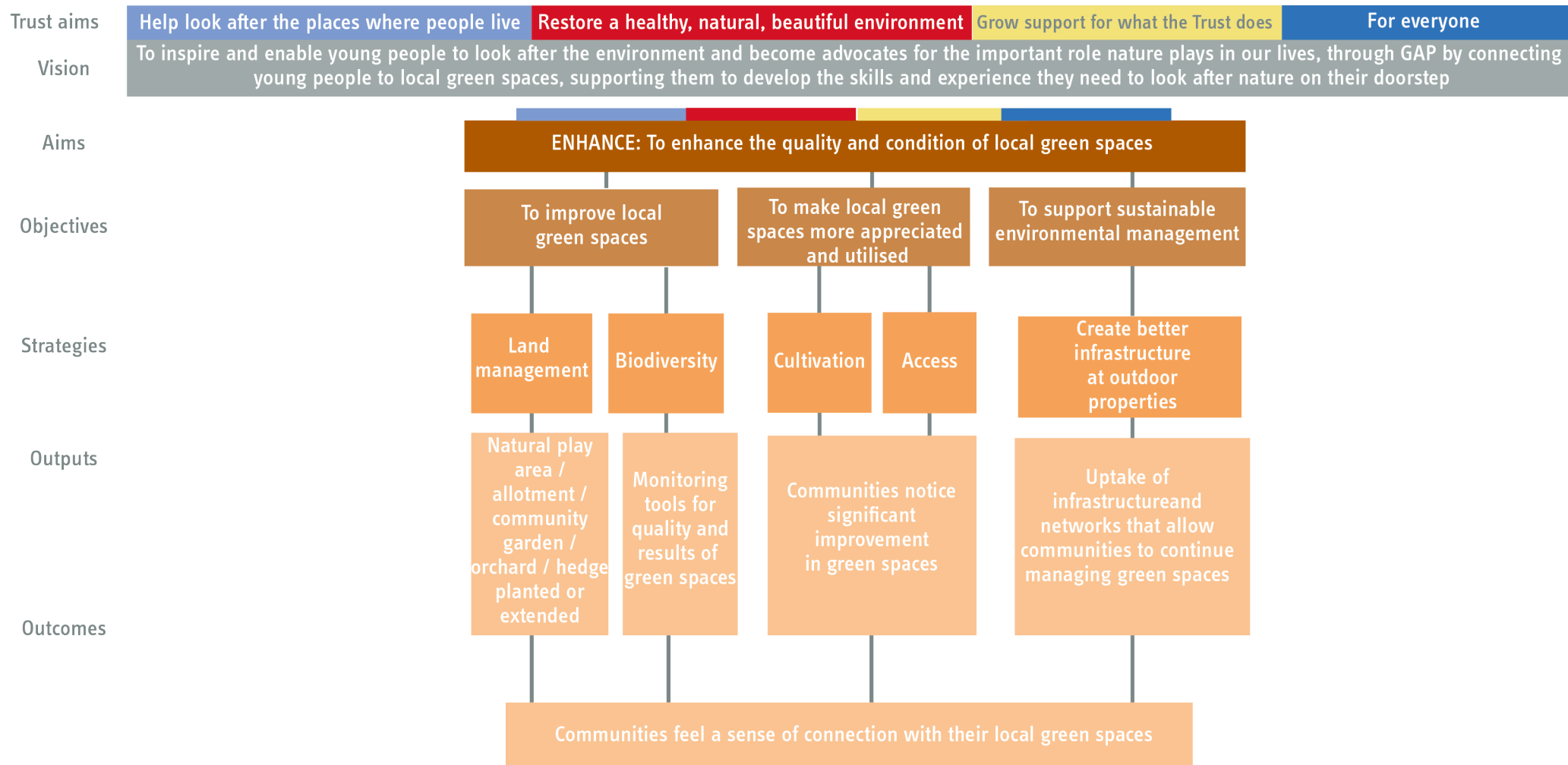
Developing an online GAP alumni social network and/or a face-to-face youth steering group could help keep potential advocates and future conservationists informed and supported by their peers in their development.

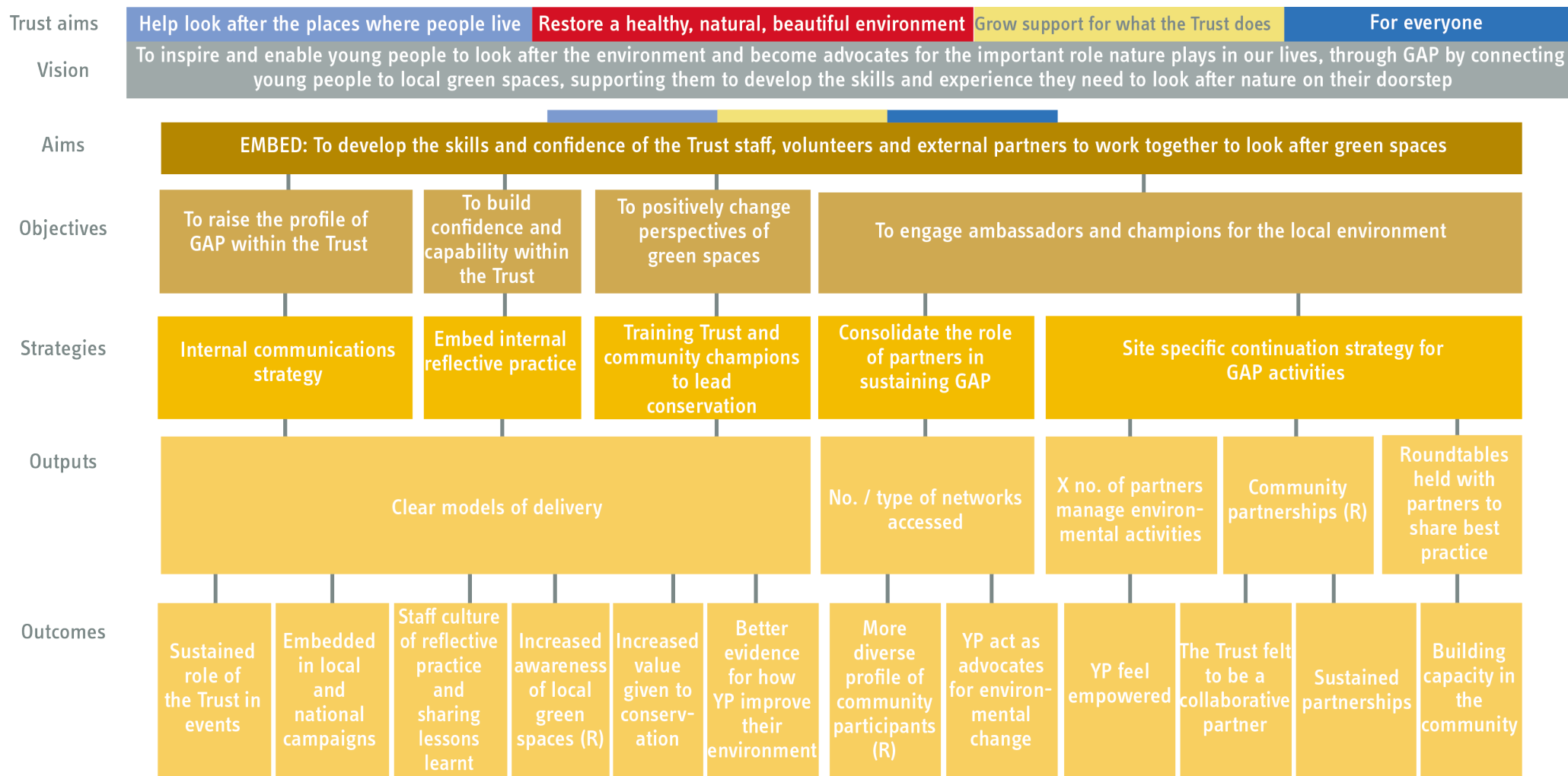
Continue to invest in long-term engagements with low-income communities to increase the Trust's diversity

The decision to work with vulnerable YP and other groups to improve the Trust's inclusion requires a long-term commitment. It also suggests this was key to the success of initiatives to engage communities in the 'Places where people live'. This might mean the Trust and its partners need to establish further links with specialist providers and it may take longer than anticipated to handover responsibility for sites.









Research parameters

This study was carried out for the National Trust by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

Target group for the research National Trust staff, young participants and staff from partner organisations involved in the Green Academies Project as well as members of the communities local to the six GAP green spaces.

Participant evaluation

Sample size 100 (4 qualitative)

Date of fieldwork May 2018 - September 2019

Data collection method A mixture of pre-participation, post-participation and combined paper surveys administered by GAP staff. Online ethnography delivered via Indeemo platform with MHM moderators.

Reliability of findings % quoted are accurate to within +/-10 at a 95% confidence rating.

Partner evaluation

Sample size 50 (12 qualitative)

Date of fieldwork May 2018 - November 2019

Data collection method Online survey emailed to participant contacts. Depth interviews conducted by phone.

Reliability of findings % quoted are accurate to within +/-16 at a 95% confidence rating.

Community evaluation

Sample size 74 (26 qualitative)

Date of fieldwork May 2018 - September 2019

Data collection method Paper surveys and vox pop interviews administered by GAP staff

Reliability of findings % quoted are accurate to within +/-14 at a 95% confidence rating.



This report was prepared for the National Trust, date in December 2019

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Glossary of terms

Vulnerable young person: used as an umbrella term to describe the a range of complex circumstances experienced by GAP participants, reported anecdotally to MHM by partners e.g. anxiety, depression, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), asylum seekers etc.

Underserved communities: used here to refer to people who live in communities of a lower socio-economic grade who are typically less often involved with the National Trust

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre is an international consultancy. We work with charities, heritage and cultural organisations of all sizes.

We're fascinated by what makes people and organisations tick. Our strategic thinking, insight and creativity transform how our clients see their world.

Our clients use our work to connect more people, more deeply, with their causes, fuelling their success.



'[There's] always new skills to be learned and new people to meet. I like how every day or work placement is never the same. I really enjoy volunteering.'

GAP participant

'The respect the children give your staff - that respect is going both ways, as well. It's brilliant.'

GAP partner

mhminsight.com