

One Planet Pioneers – Project Evaluation



Executive Summary

One Planet Pioneers was a project set up to improve the life chances of young people by broadening and enhancing their skills and experience through engagement in designing, developing, implementing and evaluating environmental sustainability initiatives using the One Planet Living approach.

The project used the One Planet Living model of sustainability as the basis for engaging young people in developing, designing, delivering and evaluating a range of environmental sustainability initiatives. At the start of the project the hope was that participants would bring community and environmental benefits to Middlesbrough whilst broadening their own skills, experiences and life chances.

Although it is one of the most disadvantaged towns in England, Middlesbrough has a long track record in promoting sustainable living, particularly using the One Planet Living model. The town, and young people, face significant challenges regarding employment, education and health. The proposal built on and added value to current work and best practice utilising the established links between environmental, economic and social sustainability to improve the life chances of young people and bring about lasting environmental change.

One Planet Pioneers was led by Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC), a registered charity, with other formal partners being Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (TVWT) and Actes Trust

Working with a broad range of young people from across a variety of the towns socio-economic backgrounds the aim of the project was to empower disadvantaged young people, 14-21 years old, through engagement in environmental action in the broadest sense, using volunteering, training and apprenticeships to develop young people as environmental advocates and leaders.

We are really pleased with the outcomes the OPP project has been able to achieve, having positively impacted the lives of more than 3,000 young people through engaging, experiencing, and being taught valuable Green Sector skills. Where appropriate and as much as possible, young people have been involved in designing, developing, implementing and evaluating initiatives.

Through their volunteering as part of the project 169 young people successfully completed their John Muir Award, and 22 Young People gained their Level 1 Peer Mentoring Course.

Between Middlesbrough Environment City and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust the project has been able to offer 24 Young People apprenticeship opportunities in local environmental services, environmental conservation and business administration and customer service. In the final year of the project MEC offered 5 Young People Kick Start Places to replace Traineeship opportunities. Of the 24 apprentices and 5 Kick start Trainees, MEC have been able to offer 2 apprentices full time employment as OPP Officers, taking a lead in the final year of the project. A former TVWT OPP apprentice also trained as and delivered Forest school to disadvantaged young people in Middlesbrough before moving away to work in a Forest school preschool in London. From the final trainee intake two kick start trainees have also been employed in other projects within MEC.

Although not always successful in receiving feedback from our young people, overall, we were pleased with the responses that we were able to gather, with 85% of participants stating that being involved in the project improved their health and well being and 87% of participants feel more confident as a result of engaging in the project.

Young people in Middlesbrough and across the Tees valley still have a lot of challenges to face. We have been overwhelmed with the positivity that has come from the OPP project and thank both Our Bright Future and The National Lottery Community Fund for allowing us to play our part in the programme.

Background

Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC) is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee that works across Middlesbrough to promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles. MEC was formed in 1992, becoming a company limited by guarantee in 1997 and a registered charity in 1998.

The overall aim of MEC is:

To promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles in Middlesbrough.

The objects as laid down in the Memorandum and Articles of Association are:

- To advance the education of the public and promote public involvement in all matters concerning environmental sustainability.
- To preserve, protect and enhance the environment within Middlesbrough; and
- To protect and enhance the health and well-being of people in the Middlesbrough area but not exclusively by providing information, advice and services regarding physical activity, dietary health and mental well-being.

MEC has a close working relationship with Middlesbrough Council and other public sector organisations as well as a range of Voluntary, Community and Private Sector partners. In addition to its own projects, MEC also supports the development and delivery of projects by partners.

Formal OPP Project Partners:

Actes Trust (Actes): Founded in 2001, Actes specialises in community engagement and delivers employability and enterprising services in neighbourhoods across the Tees Valley to people with chaotic lives. Actes has a successful track record of delivery of youth provision, life coaching and reducing unemployment.

Actes client services include end-to-end delivery comprising diagnosing needs, action planning, and delivering support services such as training. Actes also provides ongoing support to those on placements or in employment to provide re-assurance and help to embed sustainable working practices.

Actes' role within this project focused on the engagement and ongoing participation of young people, managing and supporting a Youth Panel and providing peer mentoring training and delivery opportunities.

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (TVWT): TVWT conserves a varied range of wildlife habitats and species across the Tees Valley. This is primarily achieved through wildlife conservation, nature reserve management, education and community involvement in urban areas. The Trust has a proven track record of delivering projects that provide young people with opportunities to get involved in environmental improvements. TVWT took a lead role in practical conservation, delivery of John Muir Award and other environmental initiatives with participants.

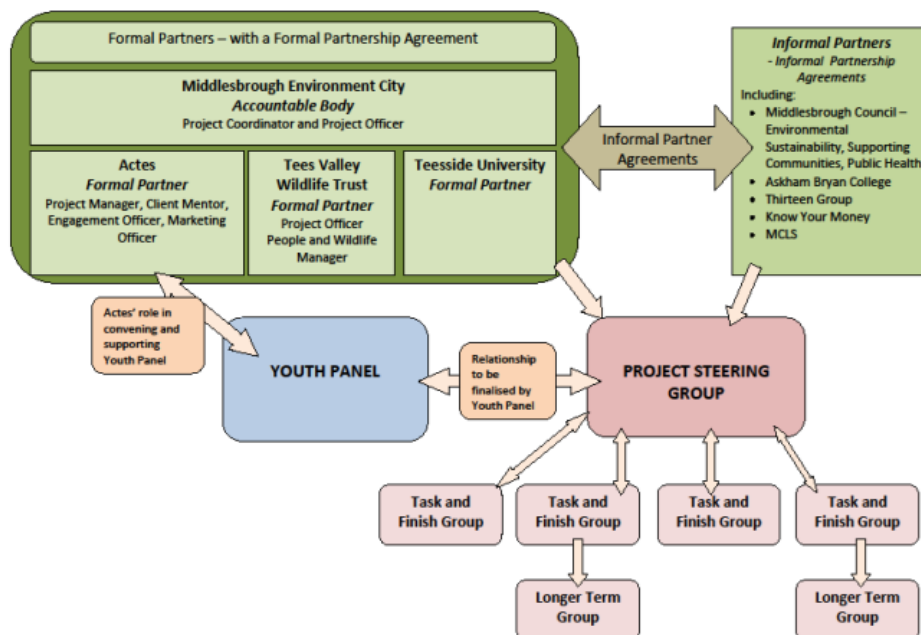
Teesside University – initially provided expertise to support the project evaluation, unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control the university could no longer support this role and Evaluation was brought inhouse

Informal Partners

At the beginning of the project, we had a range of informal partners in place ranging from Middlesbrough Council, Askham Bryan College, Thirteen Housing, Know Your Money and Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCLS)

Middlesbrough Community Learning Service (MCLS): MCLS is an arm's length service of Middlesbrough Council that provides and commissions a range of learning courses and programmes targeted at the wider community of Middlesbrough. They also manage an apprenticeship programme and were an important part of our apprenticeship route for this project. MCLS worked with MEC and TVWT to recruit apprentices to the project and undertook the initial assessments to ensure that the participants were able to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship and, the associated qualifications. MCLS also provided the accredited qualification relevant to the variety of apprenticeship roles along with providing other functional skills support.

A Steering Group was formed, bringing together the formal partners and those informal partners to oversee the delivery of the project. The Steering Group met monthly early in delivery, moving to bimonthly then quarterly after establishment. Unfortunately, due to internal changes and pressures amongst our informal partners we had to make adaptations to the Steering group throughout the project.



Rational – Why was the project needed

One of the most disadvantaged towns in England, Middlesbrough has a high proportion of young people between 14-21yrs old that have become disenfranchised with life chances and disconnected from their communities. OPP aim was to improve the life chances of young people by broadening and enhancing their skills and experience through engagement in the project.

At the very beginning of the project, we found it extremely difficult to engage with young people, with the majority associating the 'Green Economy' with gardening and growing vegetables, as the project grew and with the help of national and international news, social media campaigns and the work with Our Bright Future we were able to refute this idea, over the 5yrs. of the One Planet Pioneers project we witnessed a huge change in attitude with the response from our young people being open and positive to changes in mindset.

Although much of our engagement was through the management of local nature reserves carrying out day to day management tasks and developing onsite infrastructure. Developing, maintaining and in some cases creating new school and community gardens we also looked at the local issues such as influx of local wind farms and spent a day on the river with the Harbour Master, Our Young people took the lead researching the Fracking industry and what the implications of it would mean both locally and nationally, Our Youth Panel took an active role in Climate action campaigns and demonstrations, they have engaged with politicians on a local and national level along with working in collaboration with other local groups and societies, the understanding of many of our young people has grown immensely, by the end of the project many realising that 'Green jobs' come in all forms, but at their core they contribute to a more sustainable society. Green jobs can be directly linked to the environment, such as manufacturing or installing environmental technology, or can simply mean 'greening up' already existing jobs. Green jobs encourage the sharing of skills and the maintenance of a fair living wage.

OPP successfully impacted the lives of more than 3,000 young people each of those being taught valuable skills in the Green Sector. Trainees such as Apprentices (24) with 20 young people finding either full time or seasonal work within all areas of the green economy from the local council, Environmental organisations, retail and admin role and education, of our 5 Kick Starts trainees 2 were offered roles within MEC and Longer-Term Volunteers all completed a wide range of training giving them transferable skills to use in future employment.

18 young people took part in Cycle Maintenance courses and received a free bike so that they could change their travel habits and become more sustainable reducing their dependency on fossil fuel transportation.



The project has been able to make not only impacts to those young people that have been part of the project but the areas of land that the project has been successful in developing this ranges from a Community Allotment Site to Orchards.

Project Delivery – Activities

Apprenticeships – 24 Apprentices and 5 Kick start trainees

Apprentices were employed for 12-months and completed a level 2 qualification either Local Environmental Services award, Environmental Conservation & business skills or Business & customer services awards along with gaining functional skills qualifications - English or Maths. Along with these formal qualifications they have gained many transferable skills such as team work, problem solving, planning and implementing local fun days and events, apprentices gained valuable practical skills ranging from horticultural operations such as mowing, strimming, developing and nurturing local community allotments and gardens, carrying out practical conservation tasks on local nature reserves, they took part in a National Seal surveys at Tees Barrage and worked in collaboration with a number of local groups and organisations.

Supporting young people to work together has been an important part of the OPP project, for example two off our apprentices were able to take a trip to London, James and Daniel attended and took part in the Our Bright Future Youth Forum. The forum demonstrated how young people from across the country, from differing social demographics can get to know each other and work together. It is all about relationships, young people need to feel responsible and trusted to take ownership of their project.

When asked James (20 yrs. old) said *'Attending a national event like the Youth Forum initially made me feel nervous and anxious about what it was going to be like. I think this may be because it was the first time, I have ever been away to represent the organisation I work for'*

'One Plant Pioneer apprenticeship and attending the youth forum, has been great. Every day is different, the support from staff and training has been great and I feel really valued'

Dan, also 20yrs old, started volunteering with One Planet Pioneers in July 2016 after completing a qualification with Askham Bryan College, Dan a keen conservationist hoped to go on to work in conservation abroad. After completing 30 OPP volunteering hours Dan applied to become an OPP apprentice in September 2016 and was a regular member of the youth panel.

Attending the Youth Forum had been a great confidence builder for Daniel, when asked about how he felt about attending the Youth Forum Dan said

'Getting the train and making the connections was fine, but as we got closer to London I began to feel apprehensive about being in a new place without my parents, but as the weekend developed and once we were met by the OBF staff I began to feel fine, my confidence built during the youth forum and I enjoyed talking to the other youth forum members', I feel happy that I attended the youth Forum and would like to represent OPP at other event in the future'

On completion of his apprenticeship Dan found full time job away from the green economy, however he is now working Full time with MEC as an Horticultural Operative on the Garden Team

As project officers were constantly learning from our young people that their views and thoughts must be taken seriously. For the project to succeed, we needed to take a lead from young people and activities needed to be in demand if they were to be successful? Because of our young people activities offered through the project were constantly under review and needed to change to reflect the needs of young people. This was particularly important to maintain overall numbers and ensure repeat participation.

The River Runs Through Us – September 2016



In September 2016 Teesside and Cleveland History Society in partnership with River Tees Rediscovered held a day school which explored the river Tees, past, present and future, OPP (One Planet Pioneers) volunteers and apprentices were invited to take part. Over the summer of 2016 we explored many topics relating to the Tees including Transport, Housing, Industry, Green space, Climate then asked the young people to reflect on their own views of the Tees today.

The river Tees has played an important role in the development of Middlesbrough as a major industrial town, and this is reflected in its people. Heavy industry resulted in a heavily populated town, but at a cost to the detriment of the river and the habitats that rely on it. Due to the employment opportunities and prosperity that the river Tees brought to Middlesbrough for

generations, people have had a strong emotional connection to it, but as employment prospects have become reduced One Planet Pioneers wanted to explore how the river Tees is relevant to this current generation of young people, how it reflects on their identity and how sustainable the river is for people and its wildlife.

The OPP young people presented their findings and thoughts at the day school, they created an information board which illustrated through pictures, quotes and artwork what they had completed over the summer. The young volunteers/apprentices talked to members of the public answering questions and expressing their thoughts and feeling on being a Teessider and what they had experienced as part of the project.



The activities our young volunteers and apprentices had the opportunity to take part in included, completing Seal Survey's as part of 'The Tees Seal research program' coordinated by the Canal and River Trust in partnership with INCA (Industry Nature Conservation Association), TVWT (Tees valley Wildlife Trust) held a taster session for OPP volunteers, entitled 'Capture your views of the Tees' we explored a local nature reserve which runs between the River Tees and a heavily populated urban area on the edge of Middlesbrough, boarded by railway line, road and housing enclosing the site. We helped with maintenance work at TVWT Maze Park a local conservation area, had a guided walk from Newport Bridge, through St. Hilda's area to the transporter bridge, discussing the history, past industry. Our young people enjoyed sharing stories of parents and grandparents living and working in the area. Finally, thanks to Pd Port's we spent a bright sunny September morning on a river tour with the river Harbour master, between the harbour master's jetty out to Hartlepool docks, over to the wind farm at Redcar and finally along the Tees, under the Transporter bridge and as far as Newport bridge.



Nicky OPP Project officer - *As Project Officer I have seen our young people grow in confidence, they have developed both personal and teamwork skills and believe they are better equipped for the future as young adults due to taking part in this summer's project.*

Our young people thoroughly enjoyed all the experiences they had throughout the summer along with sharing their memories with all that attended the day school. The finale to our involvement, one of our young people had the opportunity to perform a song that she had written especially for the event expressing her feelings on the river Tees at both the 'River runs through us' celebration evening and the local Town Meal.

Title: In the Water

Come all ye who know me
Come all who know why I speak
I'll you a tale of a legend, a great glory

Forging the path of our history
I know that they may not believe me
Once they open their eyes,
emerging out from the night

It's in the water, where we came from
It's in the river, as we float upstream

To a land that is built from a dream

The smoke is thick, and the dirt is deep

Blackened clouds reign over me

Not on your parade, not to slight nor to shame

Industry taking over the Tees

The culture, the way of life

Threatened by a sharp steel knife

The ache of our modern times

Hurting the one whom we rely on

The shoulder we have to cry on

It's in the water, where we came from

It's in the river, as we float upstream

To a land that is built from a dream

Written by Ellie. M. Morgan



James Stubbs OPP Apprentice - James Stubbs was one of the first cohort of apprentice trainees for OPP. He went on to being offered full time role with Middlesbrough Environment City and subsequently progressed to become Project Officer. James was asked to speak at the Our Bright Futures annual seminar on his progression on the OPP project. In his presentation he explains how he left school and spent over two years mostly in unemployment, with the occasional job in between lasting no more than a month. He explains how this unemployment left him with several mental

health issues including anxiety and depression. He was then successful in the apprenticeship for OPP and describes how he suddenly had a purpose and his mental health problems started to disappear. After completion of the apprenticeship, he was successfully appointed as an active travel trainer with Middlesbrough Environment City which he enjoyed for three years. And then went on to be successfully appointed as OPP Project Officer. He is passionate about the project and is grateful for everything it has given him. James is currently Horticultural Officer on the Growing Active project with MEC.



We are all incredibly proud of our young people, when interviewing for a cohort of apprentices, when asked ***'Why do you want to be part of the OPP project'*** one candidate answered ***'I want to be part of something that is bigger than me'*** this young man has had a challenging upbringing, having been moved between relatives, has often relied on friends' sofas and left school with little or no significant qualifications. Although, his life continued to be unsettled throughout his apprenticeship and his attendance was questioned at times, it was evident to all involved in the project that he was clear in his determination to improve his life chances and would like to do that by pursuing a career working in an outdoor setting. He is now a full-time serving member of the Royal Navy



Feedback after a Community Action Day

Vice Chair Friends of Linthorpe Cemetery & Nature Reserve -

'Working with the OPP apprentices is always a joy - skill, amusement, determination are all attributes displayed on all the occasions that I have worked with them. Notwithstanding that, their leadership must have mention, dedication produces good team leaders, this is shown'

Volunteering / Youth Panel –

Richard Yuille was referred by Middlesbrough Job centre plus to Actes Trust, Talent Match programme. Richard was allocated a youth advocate who placed Richard on their Defining Futures project that included a Level 2 employability course. On completion of the four-day course Richard asked if he could be a volunteer to support other people doing the course in the future.

While volunteering Richard heard about the One Planet Pioneers Project Youth Panel which he was keen to join due to his interest in environmental issues. Richard contacted OPP Client mentor Amy Copeland and asked if he could join the panel and train to become a Peer Mentor.

Richards's involvement on the youth panel was varied, from helping secure funds from the Grow Wild project to improve the garden at a local resource centre where the youth panel hold their meetings, assisting with research by the Youth Panel into the potential risks, and in response to escalating public and environmental concerns around the Fracking industry. As a result of this research Richard and the other youth panel members had the opportunity while working alongside OPP client mentor Amy to talk to anti Fracking campaign groups. Through this contact at 'Kirby Misperton Protection Camp' they were invited to visit and see what the campaign was all about? The panel visited the site twice and met Carol Newmarch from 'Frack Free Middlesbrough' who sponsored the youth panel with £100 to create an anti-Fracking poster. In order to gain a balanced understanding, the youth panel contacted the Fracking industry, but had no response. Due to all the work around the anti-Fracking campaign the youth panel became much more aware of the environmental concerns associated with the Fracking industry, it has increased their social conscience and were keen to get out the message to others, especially young people.

As a result of Richard's volunteering, employability training and especially being involved with and around other young people with similar issues and concerns on the youth panel staff witnessed significant growth in Richard's confidence, self-esteem and interpersonal skills. Richard successfully completed the Peer Mentor programme as well as continuing to volunteer on the Defining Futures project and Youth Panel, Richard felt confident to apply for a post that became available as Admin/Youth advocate, Richard applied and was successful at interview. Richard now works full time on the New Directions project.



Richard - "I have really enjoyed volunteer and being part of the Youth panel, I feel I have learnt so much and have a much greater understanding of environmental issues as a result. It was nice to get an opportunity for a paid job after volunteering for so long in a job that I enjoy"



In June 2017 Zhuhaa Siddiq spent two weeks volunteering with One Planet Pioneers; Zhuhaa was an extremely motivated and driven young lady who hopes one day to work within Environmental Science. She was referred by OBF who in turn introduced Zhuhaa to Middlesbrough Environment City. Zhuhaa proved to be a motivated, punctual and enthusiastic young woman. She was engaged in numerous tasks in various settings: working with apprentices carrying out conservation and horticultural tasks; school groups; and other community and school growing projects.

Zhuhaa was asked what she was expecting before her work experience started, she replied *'When I met Brian, I was made aware of the various projects going on at MEC as a result I felt as though I understood more about what everyone does and was briefed in how I would help when needed. However, I didn't expect how actively involved I would be which in many cases made the experience better.'*



Did the volunteering live up to your expectations? Zhuhaa answered *'Yes, I had expected to be in an environmentally conscious environment; working to help the local community in a practical, more hands-on way. I felt that the overall volunteer experience in many ways exceeded my expectations as it involved a lot more community influenced projects such as in local schools which I hadn't expected to such an extent'.*

One outcome of OPP is to enhance the life chances of young people. Zhuhaa was asked if she felt that the time spent working with OPP had benefitted her in any way, and if so how, she replied *'I feel more inclined to engage in my own community, as I felt volunteering was especially rewarding and is of great importance, especially in the changes it can make. For example, when visiting some of the schools where OPP have transformed the garden areas, you can see a significant difference due to the hard work put in and the enjoyment of the young people'.*

We were also interested to know what Zhuhaa had enjoyed; she said *'I enjoyed the community-based projects, as they allowed for more of my time to be spent outdoors despite the weather, I thoroughly enjoyed the likes of gardening with the varying array of people such as schools and local people and helping on the MEC site. I also enjoyed the fact that everyone was very welcoming, and this made the whole experience thoroughly enjoyable'.*

Finally, keen to know if Zhuhaa had a better understanding of the OPP project having spent time with us and would she consider doing more volunteering. Her reply was very reassuring, *'Yes to both questions, I understand the hard work the OPP project put into making the local community better*

and the very active and involved aspects of ensuring everything goes as planned and is a success', I really enjoyed my time volunteering here, I have felt as though the community orientated spirit of the project made it even more worthwhile'.

Schools and community groups

Working across several secondary schools, pupil referral units and alternative education venues we have delivered a range of activities with students and teaching staff. Activities include 169 young people successfully completed the John Muir Award, developing and management of school gardens, Forest school sessions, litter picks, tree planting and apple picking

Feedback from teacher (Beverley school) Apple picking session –

'This was a really excellent session, all students were engaged, one student who usually dislikes school said he was really enjoying himself' she added that this had helped the whole group in terms of health & wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence and with their communication skills'



Becky OPP officer TVWT - *A highlight of the project for me was being invited to speak at Beverley school leaver's assembly to young people and their parents about the achievements of young autistic people who had worked towards gaining a John Muir Award.*

Archway School

Reon initial engagement with 'One Planet Pioneers' was as part of a group from Archway school. Archway is a pupil referral school and deals with young people who are having issues fitting into mainstream school. Activities were delivered to the group for three hours a week over the course of seven weeks with the purpose of pupils achieving the John Muir 'Discovery' Award.

Pupils are selected for the John Muir Award by teachers with the aim of building and improving their team working, relationships and behaviour. The aim (which had been tried and tested successfully with other groups) was for participants to explore valuable wildlife habitats including mixed woodland, freshwater, and coastal. We enjoyed using the John Muir Award with the 'One Planet Pioneer' project as it provides young people with a recognised award that links to our aim: To

empower disadvantaged young people from Middlesbrough aged 14-21 years through positive environmental action.

From the start Reon showed a great interest in wildlife, he always asked lots of questions and shared stories about his wildlife knowledge and experience. Reon came across as a very bright and enthusiastic young person with a great passion for the outdoors. Reon spoke to Becky and our apprentice team about working in environmental conservation when he left school and she was able to encourage this by explaining that volunteering would provide him with valuable experience.

Due to Reon's enthusiasm his teacher was spoken to about the potential of volunteering, and we were able to set up a one day a week volunteering agreement for Reon. Between November 2018 – March 2019 attended nine different activity days with a total of 27 volunteering hours. Activities included installing steps, thinning woodland and planting wildflowers. This has resulted in Reon gaining skills in using hand tools along with strengthening knowledge and appreciation of habitat management.

Becky OPP officer TVWT *'I've observed Reon developing his listening, concentration and communication skills. Our apprentice team have acted as good role models for Reon, and I believe he has benefited from becoming aware of their work and commitment towards achieving a qualification in Environmental Conservation. We awarded Reon with the John Muir 'Discovery Award' and with a bronze volunteering Award and due to his continuing to volunteer one day a week he successfully achieved a silver volunteering award.*

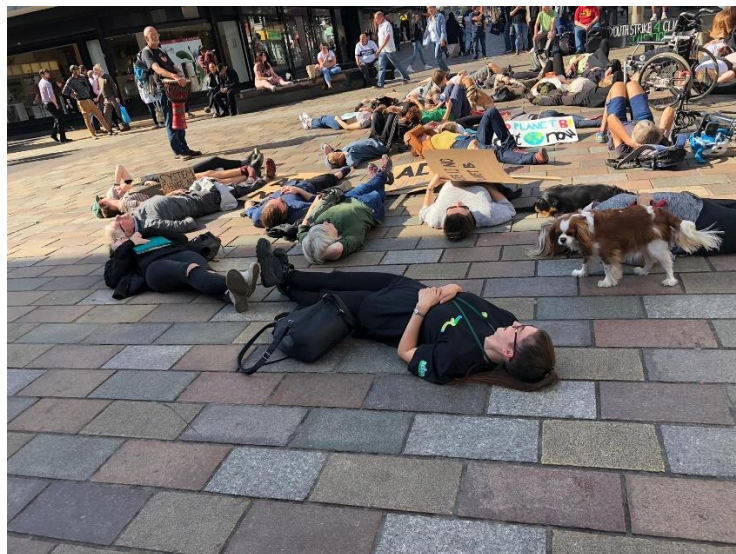


Hemlington Linx – Allotment sessions

In 2017 we helped set up and run a young people's allotment group with Hemlington Linx Youth Project, Linx Youth Project aims to support young people in their personal, social, and educational development through access to and involvement in new opportunities and experiences, OPP has developed a strong working relationship with the staff and young people at Linx, throughout the project, together we engaged young people in a wide range of activities from Litter picks, Forest school sessions, healthy cooking and gardening. In January of 2018 the young people won Northeast Youth Focus 'Young Peoples Environment Award' in recognition of the hard work and dedication they demonstrated during in the allotment sessions



Macmillan Sixth form and Climate activist - Banna Faidulla 18, first got involved as a volunteer on the One Planet Pioneers Project in the Spring 2018 working on a campaign within her Sixth Form Academy to successfully reduce the alarming rates of single use plastics that students were using in the canteen daily. When asked about how One Planet Pioneers has empowered her to make a real difference she said,



“This project has helped me make a difference to our local community as it’s enabled us to pinpoint the problems that we felt were significant, rather than being told what to do. It’s very empowering to be trusted to deliver a campaign and make decisions on our own (with the help and guidance of OPP) and we’ve learned many skills along the way. Seeing students in school and college using our bottles is incredible as it shows how everyone is coming together, and how collectively we can lessen our own plastic waste within such a large institution.”

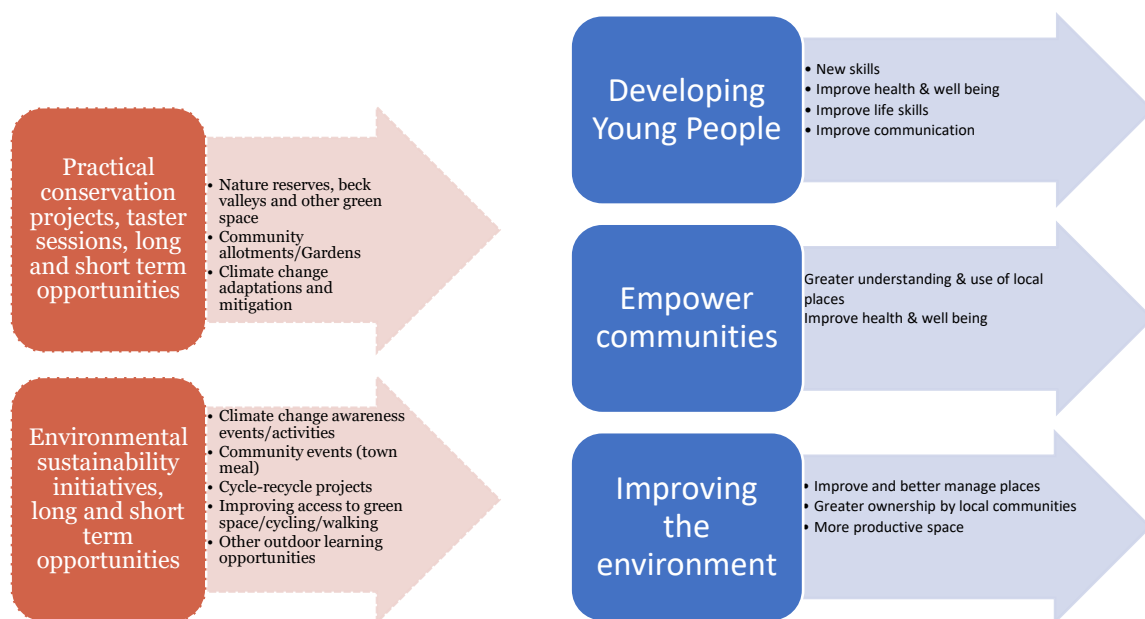
On completing her A-levels Banna moved out of the area to study Geography at University, leaving a legacy within the Academy to continue with focusing on reducing the use of plastics. Alongside this hard work, Banna also contributed a lot of time to the project by being an active member of the Our Bright Future Youth Forum, attended Youth Strike for Climate Change and was nominated at the local BME awards.

While the protests stirred a sense of urgency for environmental action, it's important to be encouraged by the action already taking by young people through Our Bright Future. OPPs 11–24 yr. olds are being given a seat at the table with key decision makers, contributing towards Government research, bringing local communities together and enhancing local green spaces for everyone.



Aims & Outcomes

Opportunities



Outcome 1 - 160 young people will progress into further training and 30 into employment, stating that this has been through the support of the project

Did we meet this outcome?

Yes. Through their volunteering as part of the project 169 young people successfully completed their John Muir Award, 22 Young People gained their Level 1 Peer Mentoring Course, and 18 Young People completed their OCN Cycle Maintenance Level 1.

Several young people who have been involved in the project have also gone on to gain employment in the green sector.

Between Middlesbrough Environment City and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust the project has been able to offer 24 Young People apprenticeship opportunities in local environmental services, environmental conservation and business, business administration and customer service. In the final year of the project MEC offered 5 Young People Kick Start Places to replace Traineeship opportunities. This scheme was part of the Government COVID recovery programme and allowed us to offer the opportunity of 25 hours a week of paid work at the National Minimum Wage to the successful candidates.

The apprenticeship scheme and KickStart scheme were particularly successful in preparing and supporting young people into employment, and specifically into the Green Sector. Of note is James, an apprentice on the project who then gained employment at MEC, and then progressed into the officer role on the OPP project for the final year. Other apprentices have then progressed onto the KickStart scheme, with one gaining employment on OPP. Of the recent KickStart cohort, all but one has gained employment.

Outcome 2 - To have provided a total of 400 volunteering places, with 30,000 volunteering hours of participation, and to have created 24 apprenticeships and 20 peer mentors and 150 One Planet Pioneers

Did we meet this outcome - The collection of data regarding the number of volunteer hours of participation became very onerous and wasn't recorded rigorously, participation was also a little sporadic, with greater involvement during spring and summer months, and less in winter months. We have data detailing between 180 and 500 volunteer hours per quarter, and so can infer that the total volunteering hours would be near to the target of 30,000. Covid also played a huge factor in the momentum of the project and participation of volunteers, and staff change has also meant that momentum was lost.

However, the project has been successful at providing 24 Apprenticeships, 5 Kick Start work experience opportunities and 22 Peer Mentor opportunities.

Outcome 3 - 80% of participants surveyed will identify that their confidence, self-esteem and/or skills have improved as a result of involvement in the project

Did we meet this outcome - Project participants, apprentices, traineeships and volunteers that had a meaningful engagement with the project that spanned several weeks were asked to complete a short longitudinal survey to ascertain if there had been an improvement in their confidence, self-esteem and/or skills as a result of involvement in the project. Below is the average of all young people surveyed.

Health & Wellbeing	85%
Communication skills	85%
Self Esteem	60 %
Confidence	87%

Outcome 4 - Young people involved in the project will have managed and improved 200ha of natural habitat and green space within Middlesbrough, including at least five nature reserves and community wildlife sites, eight community gardens and allotments and three other sites



Did we meet this outcome - young people were involved in improving five nature reserves, these were Maze Park (10 ha), Portrack Marsh (25Ha), Woodhill Meadows (2Ha), Bowesfield (150ha) and Gravel Hole (1ha) nature reserves. Other sites improved for nature and wildlife benefit included sections along the River Tees, Linthorpe Cemetery, Bluebell Beck, Mealor's Wood and Stainton Village improving around another 2 hectares for wildlife.

Of note, the project has also improved:

7 community gardens, including 1 completely new site

6 allotments, including 1 completely new site

6 community orchards, including 2 completely new sites

8 school growing spaces, including 4 completely new sites



Outcome 5 - To have engaged 10,000 local people in community events and activities undertaken through the project, with 60% of participants surveyed stating that they have a greater understanding of environmental issues and have been inspired to make changes towards a more sustainable lifestyle as a result of involvement

Did we meet this outcome - For four years the project played a significant part in organising and running the Middlesbrough Town Meal, a popular public engagement event promoting sustainability, environmental issues and One Planet Living. At each event, the OPP project engaged with at least 1,000 people through a range of activities and interpretation, resulting in at least 4,000 people more knowledgeable about OPP and sustainability.

Throughout the project the partners also delivered a range of events at a variety of settings, such as community groups, schools, Teesside University Fresher's week, community fun days, local attraction open days, green space/ Friends of open days, Youth Strike for Climate Change, corporate practical workday, NCS and careers / training fair at Middlesbrough College.

Due to the rise of COVID and Government restrictions the final 18 months of the project we experienced significant limitations to engagement opportunities, such as the Town Meal was cancelled for the past two years and face to face activities had to be cancelled or postponed.

Staffing was also affected, with staff placed on Furlough and then leaving the project.



Training and Development

The main aim of OPP was to improve the life chances of young people by broadening and enhancing their skills and experience, as a result of this commitment we had many young people leave the project with nationally recognised practical qualifications that they can take with them to broaden their employment prospects:

No	Qualification
4	City and Guilds NPTC Level 2 Brush Cutter
9	City and Guilds Level 2 Environmental Conservation
9	City and Guilds Level 2 Business in the Environment
12	City and Guilds Level 2 in Local Environmental Services
1	City and Guilds Level 2 in Business Administration
1	City and Guilds Level 2 in Customer Service
22	One Award Level 1 in Peer Mentoring
30	RSPH Level 2 in Food Safety and Hygiene
169	John Muir Discovery Award
18	OCN Level 1 in Cycle Maintenance
4	MHFA Mental Health Aware
4	One Award Introduction to Environmental Studies
4	One Award Conserving Wildlife, Green Spaces and The Local Environment

Reflections - Project Highlights

Over the course of the project there have been many highlights, many which stand out we have already mentioned in the early sections of this report, here we will highlight a few:

Highlight One – 23 of our apprentices went on to find employment, three of these James S, Charlotte D and Emily M all went onto employment within the environmental sector, 2 as OPP Project Officers, which is an enormous achievement and see them go full circle within the project. The benefits this brought subsequent trainees, apprentices and participants were huge, as all three could talk about their own experiences and support their peers to follow a similar path. And this happened, as three further trainees then gained employment in the environmental sector, after having guidance and support from James, Emily and Charlotte.

Highlight Two - Two female geography students from Macmillan Academy secondary school who contacted One Planet Pioneer in April 2018 to enquire about work experience and volunteering. At our initial meeting they explained that they very much wanted to implement a campaign within school to highlight the amount of one use plastic that was being purchased and disposed of on a daily basis, Ella explained that she had witness first hand while watching her younger brother empty a dozen empty plastic bottles from his bag, when she asked him to explain he said he purchased a bottle of water every day as part of the meal deal offer at school, when asked why didn't he use a refillable bottle if he was only drinking water, he didn't have a reply, he didn't know.

Along with their plastic campaign the students also spent a week carrying out work experience with MEC, they worked alongside other young people and apprentices engaged in a variety of tasks from growing, litter picks including spending a day working alongside another member of staff on the 'Refill scheme' contacting businesses by telephone, encouraging cafes and pubs and other food retailers to allow customers to refill a reusable bottle, they followed up all successful phone calls visiting the retailer to give them a displayable 'Refill' window sticker.

The experience was very beneficial for them. Bana said *'It's given us something to put on our personal statements and CV and has made us stand out being a unique opportunity'*

The students continued to work on the 'Refill not Landfill' campaign, managing to secure a small fund of money from school have sourced and ordered refillable water bottles and bamboo recyclable coffee cups, which they marketed at the school Christmas fair. They said *'the experience was very beneficial, a unique opportunity that gave us something to put onto their CVs which stood out'*

Highlight Three – The first idea we had right back at the beginning of the project in 2016 was to hold **Community Action Days** in the hope that we could engage across the generations, they proved very successful with one being held on the last Friday of each month. They were held in different locations across Middlesbrough such as Linthorpe Cemetery, Berwick Hills Nature Reserve and Viewley Hill Shopping Centre, we actively encouraged members of the community to participate in activities that would improve the local area, such as wildflower meadow restoration, litter picking, painting fences, planting trees and plants and hedge laying. This involved working in partnership with several organisations such as River Tees Rediscovered, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Groundwork, Sport England, Men's Shed and local 'Friends' groups to name but a few.

Highlight Four – A huge success was the John Muir scheme, it proved to be an inclusive, accessible environmental award scheme with a big focus on fun, adventure and exploration. 169 young people participated in this through volunteering as part of the project and successfully completed the

scheme. In addition to the John Muir scheme 22 Young People gained their Level 1 Peer Mentoring Course and 18 Young People completed their OCN Cycle Maintenance Level 1.

Highlight Five - The Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) is a cultural and community with ethics of equity, diversity and inclusion. It is part of Teesside University and is powered by a vision to positively contribute to society. MIMA enlisted the assistance of OPP in order to set a garden which would include a wildflower section and several raised beds, all of which would be constructed and created with the assistance of volunteers. The garden was successfully created, and a group maintain it to this day. It is used as a community space and to host events in the Summer.



Highlight Six - Between Middlesbrough Environment City and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust we have been able to offer 24 Young People Apprenticeship opportunities in Local Environmental Services, Environmental Conservation and Business, Business Administration and Customer Service. In the place of Traineeships, we offered 5 Young People Kick Start Places on the Project with Middlesbrough Environment City for the final 6 months of the project. This scheme was part of the Government COVID recovery programme and allowed us to offer the opportunity of 25 hours of paid work a week at the National Minimum Wage to the successful candidates making it much more viable for those taking part due to the financial differences between the scheme and the Traineeships.

Engagement

At the start of the project engagement and uptake was slow, although throughout the first-year great relationships were forged with other organisations who deliver to similar age groups and demographics and as activities and opportunities were developed engagement began to improve.

Successes - Three trainees that went onto employment in the green sector. Including James who became the OPP Project Officer.

Community Action days – carried out on the last Friday of each month.

The John Muir award scheme, 169 people participated.

The MIMA garden and established friends' group

Creating traineeships for five Kickstarters under the Government scheme, three of which continued into employment within the green sector.



Challengers - COVID 19 has had a negative impact on the project. Activities were postponed for a significant length of time and volunteers were unable to be enlisted. Even when restrictions eased the resulting mental health of many people meant that they did not feel in a position where they were able to volunteer or embark on something new.

Working closely with another MEC project, Green Shoots, OPP had ongoing supervision of 15 kickstarters, 10 of which started at the same time. This was challenging due to the nature of the kickstarters; typically, young men who have suffered with mental health problems and who had been in unemployment for a significant amount of time. The mentoring and motivation of these young people were challenging

Project management – Staffing, Steering Group and Governance

In 2016 a Steering Group was formed, bringing together the formal partners and those informal partners to oversee the delivery of the project. The Steering Group met monthly early in delivery, moving to bimonthly then quarterly after establishment running alongside these were monthly project meeting between all formal partners.

Steering group meetings and project meetings were extremely productive in the early stages of the project, especially in helping to establish the youth panel keeping it running and sustaining it was a notable success

Unfortunately, due to internal changes and pressures amongst our informal partners we had to make adaptations to the Steering group throughout the project. The project saw a complete change in project delivery staff at the end of 2020, and line management during the early part of 2021. This, coupled the COVID pandemic, saw significant disruption to project delivery and engagement. However, the project 'started afresh' in 2021 and delivered notable results in the final year.



Partnership work

Developing strong working relationships with other organisations across Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley were imperative to being able to offer such a wide and varied mix of activities, events and opportunities for our young people. Standing out as a particular highlight was the relationships that were made with other Our Bright Future project with both staff and participants benefited greatly from the seminars, exchange visit and the 'Share, Learn, Improve' workshops.

The project was able to develop and enhance fantastic partnerships working with the formal partners on the project, and then went on to work together on other funding bids to secure funding for other projects. All partners have taken the opportunity to learn from how each other operates to broaden their understanding and skills. COVID caused significant disruption to all partner organisations, and as a result of furlough, change in staff and change of priorities during the height of the pandemic, all partners became out of kilter and momentum was lost.



Monitoring and Evaluations

In order to coordinate all project monitoring a Google Drive account was set up, accessible by only project staff enabling all partners to input their data keeping records up to date with all relevant information, although slow to establish because of internal IT issues with some partners, this proved invaluable as the project went forward in supply information for quarterly and end of year reports.

The project partners were able to gain fantastic case studies and stories from several participants they worked with and developed a rapport with, helping to highlight the good work both staff and participants were doing, and the benefits our young people were able to take away.

Teesside University initially provided expertise to support the project evaluation, unfortunately seemed to not be able to fully understand and engage with the project and the project participants, and this was reflected in the lack of official project evaluation. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control the university could no longer support this role and Evaluation was brought inhouse.

Influencing change

Did OPP manage to influence positive change for young people and the environment, on a local, regional or national level? –

Although challenging at times we strongly believe the OPP team were able to influence positive change within young people through developing a good rapport and engaging them with a wide range of opportunities and activities of sustainability through the One Planet Living framework.

A great example of this is the work of two OPP volunteers Ella and Banna who were so enthused by OPP, they started a campaign to reduce single use plastic within their secondary school. They were very successful with this, and on the back of it, other projects developed, such as a small orchard and wildflower meadow.

one thing of note that became more and more apparent is that young people were 100% engaged with sustainability issues and wanted to be 100% committed to them, but often felt held back due to the financial implications and limitation, such as buying all ethically sourced products.



Conclusion

Between 2016 and December 2021 One Planet Pioneers worked with young people and communities across the Middlesbrough area, one of 31 other Our Bright Future projects working with a broad range of young people from across a variety of the towns socio-economic backgrounds. The aim of the project was to empower disadvantaged young people between 14-21 yrs. old, through engagement in environmental action in the broadest sense, using volunteering, training and apprenticeships to develop young people as environmental advocates and leaders. Funded via The National Lottery Community Fund and run by a consortium of 7 organisations led by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, Our Bright Future's aim was to tackle the three biggest challenges facing society at the time, a lack of social cohesion, a lack of opportunities for young people and the vulnerability to climate change. It can be argued that due to the subsequent Covid pandemic all three issues still exist and, in some cases, have been worsened.

The OPP apprenticeships programme focused on employing young people from disadvantaged areas in Middlesbrough, an area where people have experienced some of the worst social and economic impacts of the last 10 years due to increasing austerity. In these communities, Covid-19 has worsened health inequalities and led to a significant rise in youth unemployment, mental health problems and low self-esteem.

Employed for 12-months, apprentices completed a level 2 qualification in either Local Environmental Services award, Environmental Conservation & business skills or Business & customer services awards along with gaining functional skills qualifications - English or Maths. Along with these formal qualifications they gained many transferable skills such as teamwork, problem solving, planning and implementing local fun days and events along with many valuable horticultural and environmental practical skills.

Of the 24 young people who were employed as part of the programme, 20 have been successful in finding either full-time, part-time or seasonal employment in the local area with one eventually moving away to work in London. One of the recurring comments we had about the programme from our young people was that a 12-month apprenticeship wasn't long enough. Many had been long time unemployed with little or no former employment history so would have preferred the apprenticeship to be over two years with the qualifications delivered in block or day release in a college setting. Having said this, the feedback regarding training, work-based opportunities and the overall support and guidance they received from staff, volunteers and other apprentices as part of the program was good.

The Kickstart initiative was launched by the government in September 2020 as part of a covid recovery package to deliver funding for employers offering new job roles for young people between 16-24 years old who were in receipt of Universal Credit. The programme was specifically aimed at preventing young people who were currently unemployed facing long term unemployment.

Along with apprentices, for the final year of the project OPP employed 5 Kickstart trainees, with two of the trainees gaining employment within MEC at the end of the programme, with all receiving many transferable skills to use in future employment. The success of the OPP apprenticeship and Kickstart programmes is supported by the verbal and written feedback obtained from apprentices/trainees along with quotes from respondents and project officers own field observations.

The work OPP was able to carry over the five years between 2016-2021 has amplified local young people's voices in relation to some of the most pressing issues facing our communities and in society

both locally and nationally. We witnessed a growing appreciation of the importance and value of this way of working with young people as partners, rather than issues, in the process of change. The learning and experience from this approach has been used to integrate and include young people in subsequent related externally funded projects by the OPP partners, including a young people's forum on Climate Action Middlesbrough, a National Lottery Climate Action funded project.

In this report we have endeavoured to showcase the impact OPP has had at a number of different levels: from our Apprentices, trainees, volunteers, Youth Panel and students from the many school and colleges we have worked with as part of the project they have helped to inform the decisions made by organisations; contributing to local and national cultural change within the green sector; they have helped to improve provision and practice, by giving them a seat at the table we have been able to transform the lives of many of the young people themselves.

Young people in Middlesbrough and our wider Tees Valley area still facing many challenges. OPP was only able to impact on a limited number of the young people of Middlesbrough due to the constraints of time, budget and the subsequent Covid-19 Pandemic. There were many uphill struggles in engaging with the target audience with many not just being hard to reach, but declining to engage at all. However, taken as a whole, we feel that the impacts OPP was able to realise can help to create long time changes to the young people we have worked with, in a way which has real power and purpose to their lives and their communities. We will be forever grateful to the 3,000 young people who have been instrumental in leading and engaged in the OPP projects over the five years from 2016-2021. Many often overcoming significant personal challenges and pushing themselves far out of their comfort zones to do so.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to all those involved in the wider Our Bright Future Programme, The National Lottery Community Fund, all formal and informal partners, the communities we have worked alongside and the people of Middlesbrough who supported us making the project possible.