

OUR BRIGHT FUTURE 2016-2021

FINAL EVALUATION



Avon
Wildlife Trust



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership led by The Wildlife Trusts that 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.

Over the last six years Our Bright Future has worked within Avon and Gloucestershire to ensure young people are connected to nature and equipped to protect it into the future.

This work is important to help young people improve their skills and gain experience but also for their mental health and wellbeing. We found that overall young people felt more connected to nature and able to achieve what they wanted to after being involved in this project. We worked to achieve four outcomes:

- Young people value and benefit from an awareness of local wildlife and a connection to nature
- Young people develop skills and experience for employment in a greener economy
- Green spaces are improved for people and wildlife
- Young people act as catalysts for change for the environment and communities

Over the six years a variety of different activities have been employed to achieve these outcomes, all of which contributed to an increased connection to nature with 9564 participants in total. As the project developed, the activities evolved to enhance impact and were largely focused on the first two outcomes. Green spaces were improved as part of these activities but mostly in schools and on nature reserves rather than in the community. We have had some success with supporting young people to act as catalysts for change for the environment and there are positive signs that some young people involved in the project are likely to become activists

A: THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report outlines findings of an external evaluation of the Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) Our Bright Future Project and reflects the perspectives and learnings identified by some of the staff and participants involved in the project. The report is not intended to reproduce detailed lists of outputs already documented elsewhere.

The report has been compiled by the Natural History Consortium, who were contracted by AWT on December 9, 2021. *For further information / references please contact: Savita Willmott, CEO, The Natural History Consortium, savita@bnhc.org.uk*

B: TERMS

Throughout the report, the following abbreviations are used interchangeably with full terms:

AWT – Avon Wildlife Trust

GWT – Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

OBF – Our Bright Future

C: METHODS

The data for this report was gathered through an online evaluation survey (Appendix B) and 13 individual interviews.

AWT and GWT provided the list of proposed interviewees, the majority were successfully contacted and participated. The evaluators gathered insights from six members of staff or former staff from Avon Wildlife Trust,

three members of staff from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, and eight participants or teachers. We broadly group these evaluation participants into three categories:

- *AWT delivery team* - AWT staff or former staff involved with the delivery of the Our Bright Future project at either strategic or delivery level (6 individuals)
- *GWT delivery team* – The current GWT staff delivery team involved in delivery or at a strategic level (3 individuals)
- *Participants* – Young people that have been recently involved in the Our Bright Future programmes, and group leaders or teachers that have recently facilitated the involvement of groups of young people (8 individuals)

Please note that the evaluators did not gather insights from GWT staff that are no longer in post.

A list of the evaluation participants can be found in the appendices (Appendix A).

Part 1: Evaluation survey

The online evaluation survey focused on four qualitative questions chosen as open questions to allow exploration of the project's Theory of Change and outcomes.

1. WHAT WENT WELL? Within the context of your involvement in the project what worked well?
2. WHAT WENT LESS WELL? Within the context of your involvement in the project, what was not delivered or could have been improved? Were there any challenges, barriers or problems?
3. TURNING BACK THE CLOCK. Within the context of your involvement in the project, what would you do differently? What do you wish others involved would have done differently?
4. THE FUTURE. Within the context of your involvement in project, what do you think should be done in the future?

Each of the questions were optional and allowed the respondent to write as little or as much as they chose. The survey included a section for the respondents to identify themselves, so that views could be put into context, however there was a section for anonymous comments and feedback. A copy of the evaluation survey can be found in the appendices (Appendix B).

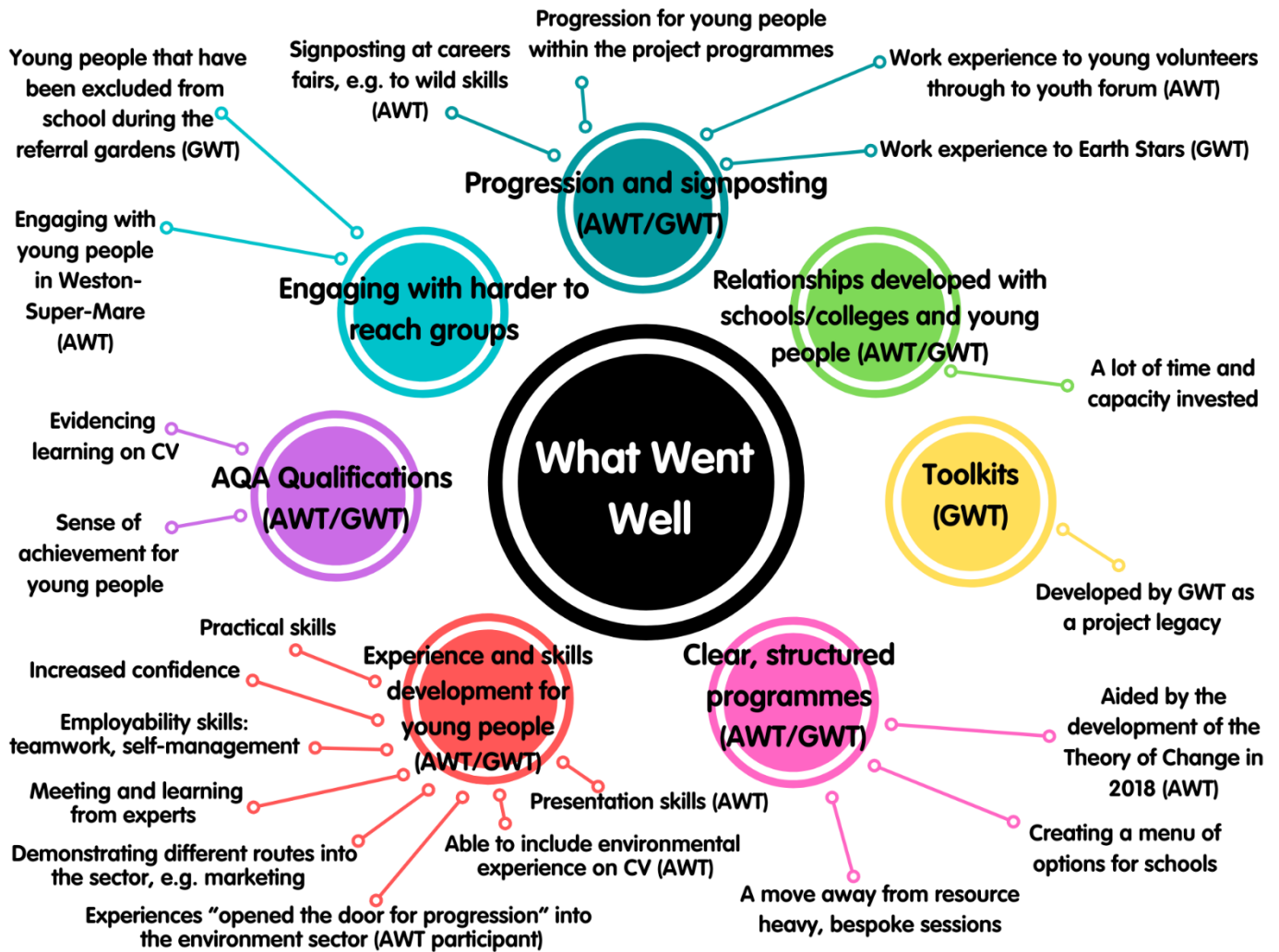
Part 2: Individual interviews

Interviews with individuals were developed alongside the survey responses, which gave context to their involvement in the project. The interviews were able to delve into survey responses and were specifically used to further interrogate views and gather insights into the project Theory of Change.

D: RESULTS: WHAT WENT WELL

What people told us

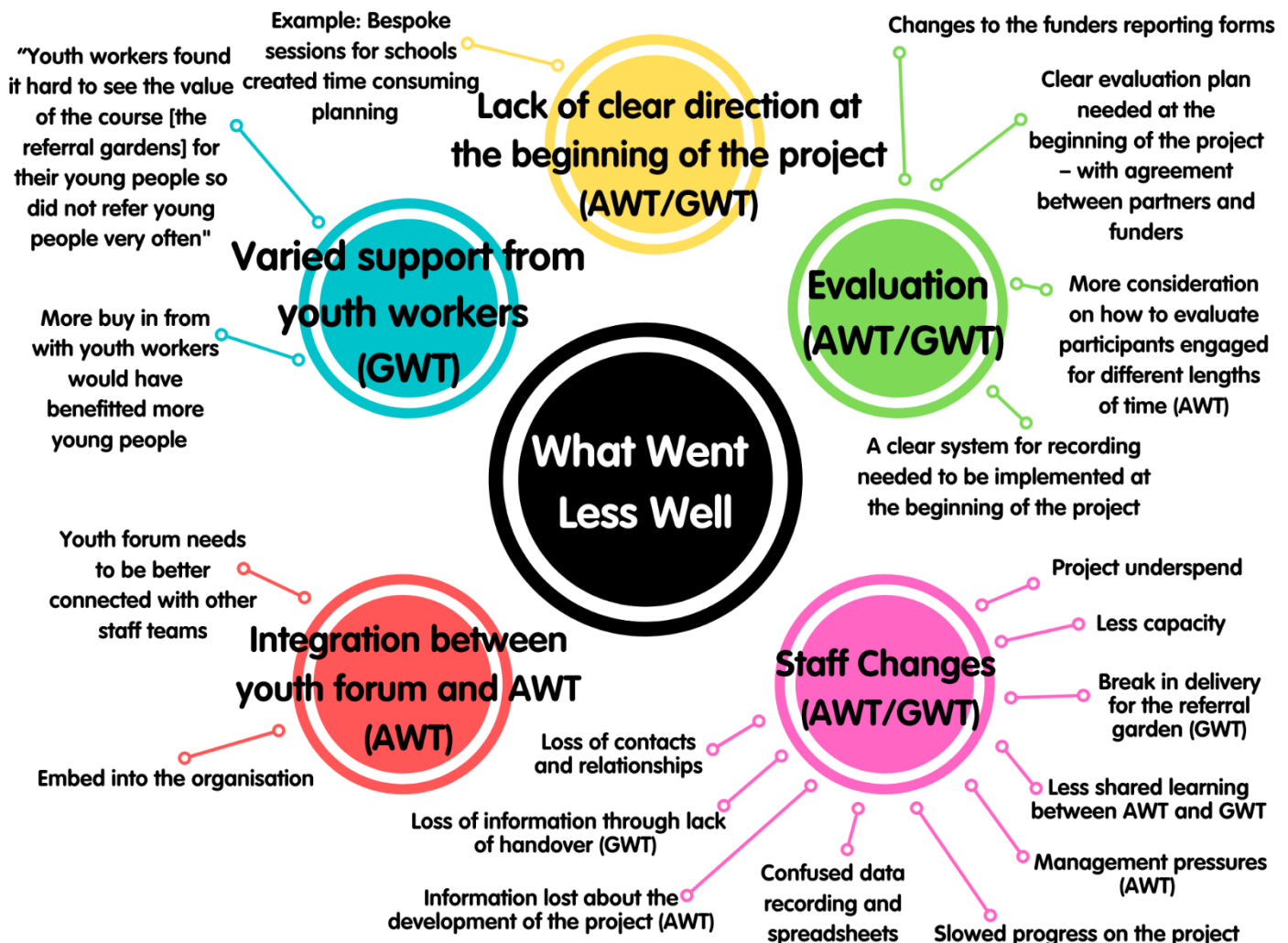
Interviewees and survey respondents listed a number of different aspects of the project that went well. Whilst these lists were highly varied there were a number of strands that were identified regularly and these are shown in the graphic below. This feedback is taken from both the interviews and online surveys.



E: RESULTS: WHAT WENT LESS WELL

What people told us

Interviewees and survey respondents listed a number of different aspects of the project that did not go well. As in section, views were varied but again a number of strong threads emerged as shown in the graphic below. This feedback is taken from both the interviews and online surveys.



F: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The evaluation also touched on a number of unexpected issues based on the timing of the Covid-19 pandemic, including difficulties such as:

- Furloughed staff, less capacity
- High turnover of staff
- The impact of Covid-19 on schools, which affected school engagement
- Social distancing affected the ability to run in person sessions and limited numbers
- Session cancellations (AWT)
- Young people being unable to go out with the reserves team (AWT)
- The Communicate + conference was not realised (AWT)

Evaluation participants also identified positive outcomes including:

- Successful delivery of online sessions
- The Youth forum running a successful communications campaign on the 5 ways to wellbeing (AWT)

G: COMPARING OUR FINDINGS TO THE PROJECT REPORT

- All evaluation participants told us that the outcomes listed in the Theory of Change were achieved during the project, and this was replicated in the final project report supplied to NHC on 22.12.21
- No other discrepancies were found between our findings and the final project report

H: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The following recommendations have been gathered from evaluation participants, and have been grouped for ease of review by AWT and GWT managers, alongside future funders. Example quotes are given below.

1. Improve, expand, embed the Youth Forum

- *The youth forum would have worked better if it was embedded from the beginning*
- *The youth forum needs integrating into other parts of AWT and needs more buy in from the Trust*
- *[The youth forum] needs resources to keep going, if it was stopped it wouldn't get picked back up and would lose trust of young people*
- *A bit more direction from staff running the Youth Forum was needed to provide more guidance to young people*

2. Continue and build on successful project elements

- *We need to develop a legacy to the project which means that when funding stops, delivery/impact doesn't stop.*
- *[We need to] find funding to continue the most successful/effective parts of the project, which is what we are trying to do.*
- *Centrally stored info with learning from all the OBF projects could be available for everyone to share successful parts of the project.*
- *[We should] continue to run projects similar to Earth Stars as it was incredibly successful. [We should] engage more young people between 15-20 years old.*

3. Lock down the project purpose, theory of change, evaluation and data collection methods from the start

- *The Project proposal needed to be more specific*
- *[We should] have a simple means of recording data, and more consistent methods of handing over that data/notes between staff/during project rescope/staff changes.*
- *[We should] have a less complicated reporting system*
- *It would be good to have a timeline of the development of the project so you don't have to look through reports to understand how things have evolved*
- *I found [the Theory of Change] a really useful document to know who's doing what and make sure it's being done*
- *We need targets and [to understand] where they sit within the Theory of Change*
- *We should build in partnership working with an organisation specialising in youth engagement from the start*

4. Improve, expand, embed work with schools

- *There needed to be a longer notice period prior to the start of term with the activities taking place and the dates that they are happening.*

- *[We need to] meet with the teaching staff, not just the senior leader arranging the sessions, prior to the sessions.*
- *[We should] create a menu of seasonal sessions to choose from and adapted each session to meet the needs of the learners.*
- *Due to the inherited nature of delivery, the schools I worked with were predominately specialist schools. In an ideal world, I would have like to work with a wider range of schools and young people including mainstream schools.*
- *[We should] offer wildlife sessions to a wider range of schools*
- *[We should] improve communications to schools about what has been happening in schools and how other schools can get involved.*
- *Running assemblies in schools would create opportunities to speak with years 10 and 11 students, who can be difficult to engage in school clubs.*

5. Continue to work with a wider range of young people

- *[We need] more sessions including social media and use Instagram / TikTok to put out communications to young people.*
- *Spending the time building relationships and contacts was a lot of effort that paid off.*
- *[We should] provide more training for project staff and wider organisation on youth engagement*
- *[We should] develop volunteering for under 18's in line with Duke of Edinburgh award requirements.*
- *A continuation of the key projects within the programme overall - AQA courses, youth volunteering, youth forum and work experience would be beneficial - but with more involvement of the Trust as a whole.*

I: SUMMARY

Insights gathered from evaluation participants have shown that the project was successful in engaging with young people and achieving all four of the expected outcomes that young people will:

1. Value and benefit from an awareness of local wildlife and a connection to nature
2. Develop skills and experience for employment in a greener economy
3. Improve green spaces for people and wildlife
4. Act as catalysts for change for the environment and communities

One of the strongest aspects of the programme, mentioned by all of the evaluation participants, was the experience and skills development for young people. These included comments made by young people that took part in the project:

"I believe the best part about the youth forum was the discussion and learning space, but especially the opportunities it gave me to put environmental work on to my CV, which then opened up other doors for progression."

"I learnt about some great ways I can get involved with wildlife conservation in my own garden/green space and at my workplace."

"Overall I truly am indebted to the project as it not only taught me about but opened doors to environmental work that were previously closed.... I think this aspect is invaluable for young people like myself who might find themselves wondering what to do with their energy."

It is clear from the insights gathered from project staff that the project has been greatly impacted by staff changes. However, some of the challenges and disruption caused by staff changes could have been alleviated by further planning at the beginning of the project.

During the project a great deal of time and resource has been invested into building successful relationships with young people, schools and colleges. There is a desire from both the project delivery team and participants that work with young people should carry on, so that these relationships can continue.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Evaluation Participants

Full list of evaluation participants

Name	Organisation	Involvement in the Project	Evaluation Methods
Annie Stephens-Wood	Bettridge School	Assistant Headteacher, OBF Participant	Online survey
Bethan Smith	N/A	OBF Participant	Interview Online survey
Caroline Maggs	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	OBF Project Officer	Interview Online survey
Catharine Ware	Avon Wildlife Trust	OBF Project Officer	Interview
Claire Garrity	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	Learning Manager	Interview Online survey
Dani Smith	Formally Avon Wildlife Trust	OBF Senior Project Officer	Interview
Fern Elias-Stagg	N/A	OBF Participant	Interview Online survey
George Cook	Avon Wildlife Trust	OBF Project Officer	Interview
Hilary Sipek	Alderman Knight School	Teacher, OBF Participant	Online survey
Jennie Scrivens	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust	Learning Officer (involved in OBF delivery)	Interview Online survey
Kate Downes	Avon Wildlife Trust	OBF Project Officer	Interview Online survey
Lewis Skyers	Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Alternative Provision School	Teacher, OBF Participant	Online survey
Lisa Jones	Avon Wildlife Trust	Head of Communities & Engagement	Online survey
Lucy Hellier	Avon Wildlife Trust	Learning Manager	Interview Online survey
Noah Bunyan Cole	N/A	OBF Participant	Interview Online survey
Olivia Ellis	N/A	OBF Participant	Interview Online survey
Scott Mears	Fairfield High School	Teacher, OBF Participant	Interview Online survey

Our Bright Future Evaluation

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation survey for the Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) Our Bright Future project.

Your answers will be used to gather learning insights and complete the final reporting for the project.

We ask you to identify yourself in this survey to allow us to put your comments into context of your role in the project. Whilst we may use quotes from your submission to illustrate points in the report, we will not attribute anything back to you.

If you would like to provide additional anonymous feedback separately to this form you are very welcome to do so via the link at the end of this form.

The evaluation is being conducted by The Natural History Consortium.

Data Protection

The data you input in this form will be held by the Natural History Consortium for the purposes of this project only. Your information will be held securely in line with GDPR.

Anonymous survey results may be shared with project partners for the purposes of this evaluation.

Cookies, personal data stored by your Web browser, are not used in this survey. If you leave the survey page before submitting, or the survey times out then you may lose the information that you have entered so far.

For further information please email ellie@bnhc.org.uk

1. Name

2. Email *Optional*

Please enter a valid email address.

3. Organisation

4. Role in your organisation

5. What area(s) of the project have you been involved in?

6. How have you been involved in the Our Bright Future project? * *Required*

- ☐ AWT project delivery team
- ☐ AWT staff (not project delivery team)
- ☐ GWT project delivery team
- ☐ GWT staff (not project delivery team)
- ☐ External partner
- ☐ Participant - AWT Our Bright Future
- ☐ Participant - GWT Our Bright Future
- ☐ Volunteer - AWT Our Bright Future
- ☐ Volunteer - GWT Our Bright Future
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I'm not sure

b. Is there anything else you would like to add about how you have been involved?

7. **WHAT WENT WELL?** Within the context of your involvement in the project what worked well?

- 8. WHAT WENT LESS WELL?** Within the context of your involvement in the project, what was not delivered or could have been improved? Were there any challenges, barriers or problems?



- 9. TURNING BACK THE CLOCK.** Within the context of your involvement in the project, what would you do differently? What do you wish others involved would have done differently?



- 10. THE FUTURE.** Within the context of your involvement in project, what do you think should be done in the future?



Final page

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this evaluation.

If you would like to provide additional comments anonymously please [click here](https://bnhc.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/our-bright-futures-evaluation-anonymous-comments) or copy the link below into your browser:

<https://bnhc.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/our-bright-futures-evaluation-anonymous-comments>
