

Young people involved in Middlesbrough Environment City's Green Shoots project

How funding for nature in urban areas is helping unemployed young people and refugees find a fresh start.

Since December 2020, we've been supporting three amazing organisations which are providing nature-based training and activities for local people – and bringing the wild into the centre of cities.

These are just three of the many projects supported by the government's £80million Green Recovery Challenge Fund and delivered by The Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.

Beyond Housing



Volunteers with the Beyond Housing project

Beyond Housing is working in partnership with Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Loftus Town Council, and a number of local groups and organisations in Redcar, North Yorkshire. The project will turn an unused allotment in Loftus into an accessible woodland and wetland.

The project aims to create new habitats, tackle invasive species and boost pollinators. Volunteers will help look after veteran trees, and plant new ones to ensure a lush woodland for years to come.

Plans also include natural play areas with wood tents, bug houses and trunks for children to climb on.

In an area with high unemployment, particularly among younger people, the project is also creating employment opportunities for 12 youngsters.

The first of these trainees, Jamie Richardson and Jack Beaumont, are now nearing the end of their six-month placements where they have learned about woodland maintenance, learned to use a range of tools, and gained valuable insight into working with communities and minority groups.

Green Shoots



Enjoying the wild spaces around Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough Environment City's Green Shoots project is bringing together under-served and disadvantaged groups with nature, including diverse ethnic communities, refugees and asylum seekers. They are also offering 10 traineeships for local young people to look after and improve four becks that run through some of Middlesbrough's most deprived areas.

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>
> *Green Shoots project officer Casper Scallen*

Refugee Omar, who originally came from Turkey, has been volunteering with Green Shoots since April and describes the project as "a lifeline which has given me the chance to be outside and meet people, as well as protect nature".

Green Shoots project officer Casper Scallen says the mental impact on participants, especially on asylum seekers or refugees like Omar, is one of the most positive outcomes of the programme. “Many of the people we work with have had little interaction with the local wildlife sites and nature reserves in Middlesbrough," he said. "So it is lovely to see people from different backgrounds work together as a team and for the different personalities to emerge, hear the laughter and see the friendships form.”

Sheffield Environment Movement



Taking part in a walk

The Sheffield Environment Movement (SEM) also helps diverse ethnic communities enjoy green spaces for their health and wellbeing. SEM founder Maxwell Apaladaga Ayamba recently won a National Lottery Award.

The funding from Defra is supporting SEM's work with six community groups to enable people from minority ethnic backgrounds to become mentors, champions and ambassadors for the environment.

"Transport is a big problem so access to green spaces is limited," explains Maxwell. "Some of the groups we work with also have English as their second language.

"Through our activities and courses we aim to get them to understand and become engaged in their local environment, everything from foraging for herbal remedies, to conserving moss and peat which captures carbon."

Funding for your project

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