

HEALTH & NATURE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

July 2025

Natural England West Midlands



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WELCOME TO THE JULY NEWSLETTER

In July, tiny froglets might be spotted leaving the water for the first time to explore the wider world. These young Common Frogs, no bigger than a thumbnail, can be spotted hopping through damp grass, shady flowerbeds, or the edges of ponds across the West Midlands. Keep a look out!

Please consider joining the **NEW Green Social Prescribing community network** which includes:

- A searchable Resource Hub
- A membership area (space for national and regional conversations relevant to GSP)
- Networking and events

Given the heat we've been having these last few weeks, I have included some guidance from the Wildlife Trusts to help look after nature.

As always, I have compiled an external funding opportunities PDF suitable for wellbeing & nature projects.

YOUR NATURAL ENGLAND CONTACT

ABOUT ME

Hi, I'm Amber Marquand, the Health and Environment Lead in the West Midlands, focussing on Walsall and Birmingham.

Amber.Marquand@naturalengland.org.uk



WHAT I DO AND WHY

Nature plays a critical role in our physical and mental wellbeing, so Natural England want to ensure more people can access the healing properties of spending time in natural spaces. For example, via conservation volunteering, community gardening, tree planting, nature walks, green crafting etc.

Our Health and Environment roles across the country support and create connections between any Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, health practitioners, Community Wellbeing Roles, or local authorities interested in increasing the offer of Green / Blue Social Prescribing. We want to increase the offer of nature-based activities within communities to improve health and wellbeing and pro-environment behaviours, especially in areas with poorer health outcomes and lower access to nature.

I have created this newsletter as a way of providing support and information around nature for health and wellbeing in the West Midlands. For projects taking place in Walsall or Birmingham, I am able to provide tailored support so please get in touch.

SPOTLIGHTS

A snapshot of the amazing work being done in the West Midlands connecting people and nature.

Please let me know if you would like to feature in a spotlight in a future newsletter!

TURNER'S WOOD OPEN & VOLUNTEERING DAY – RECONNECTING COMMUNITY WITH A HIDDEN GEM

Despite a soggy start, the Open Day at Turner's Wood, on Pelsall Common in Walsall welcomed around 20 curious locals, volunteers and community members, keen to explore a woodland usually closed to the public. As the sun came out, footfall increased. Many visitors—some of whom had lived next to the site for decades—were discovering it for the first time.

The event became more of a relaxed drop-in than a structured activity day, but still generated real enthusiasm. Members of the Friends Of Pelsall Common Group, families, dog walkers and a local wildlife photographer all took an interest in the site's future, with several expressing a desire to volunteer –albeit flexibly.

"We've lived nearby for over 30 years and never been in—it was lovely. I'm really glad we came over."



**Birmingham &
Black Country**
Wildlife Trust



Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust staff (Jack, Sarah, Natalie and Jake), shared plans to gradually train volunteers for light conservation tasks and take ownership of looking after the woodland. Work will focus on thinning dense canopy, removing non-native holly, and diversifying the ground flora with native bluebells and wild garlic.

Turner's Wood is one of the community greenspaces supported by the Purple Horizons project—Natural England's partnership project working to connect people with nature across Walsall, North Birmingham and South Staffs.

As one visitor put it: *"It's a small space, but it's brilliant—we'll see the results of our work quickly."*

If you are interested in finding out more, or volunteering, please contact **Natalie Burdett**.

Healing with Nature

a blog written by Ellen Devine for NHS Forest

After sixteen hospital admissions over a long winter, Ellen, who works for Forestry England, discovered that nature became one of her greatest comforts. From foxgloves in pavement cracks to quiet moments in hospital gardens, she found strength and stillness in the natural world—reminding her to slow down, feel what she needed to feel, and trust in the seasons of healing. Her beautifully honest blog is a powerful reflection on how green spaces can support recovery in even the most clinical environments.

Read it on the NHS Forest website: [Lessons from Healing in Nature – A Patient's View](#)



MORE SPOTLIGHTS

Please let me know if you would like to feature in a spotlight in a future newsletter!

Access to Nature Learning Programme film - by Barnwood Trust in collaboration with the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership



Barnwood Trust have created an inspiring film through the 'Access to Nature Change Programme' which is about rethinking how outdoor spaces can welcome everyone.

In collaboration with the Cotswolds National Landscape Network, Wilde Earth Journeys, Forestry England and more, the film captures learning from the Programme and talks of the importance of helping everyone access nature. It gives inclusive examples from across the county where organisations are helping make nature more accessible; such as live streaming wellbeing walks for those unable to get outdoors, sensory bags for taking on walks to help people engage with surrounding nature. And some useful tips on where organisations should start:

"Ask questions... ask visitors, ask groups. Find people who aren't coming and ask them. Finding out why people are here, but also why people aren't here."

"Starting by making a list. There will be some big things on the list, but there will also be some small things on the list, some small very achievable things that can get done very quickly. Such as social stories, or creating better pre-visit information."



County by County - where to find out about your local nature-based activities and providers

Country-wide **Social Farms & Gardens**

Their map showcases hundreds of organisations that are doing inspiring work connecting people with nature; from city and care farms, to community gardens

Birmingham

- [BCC's 'Improving your Health with Nature' Website](#)
- [Birmingham Open Spaces Forum](#)
- [Route2Wellbeing Directory Map](#)
- [Sport Birmingham's Local Outdoor Activity Finder](#)
- [Connect to Support](#): search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking', 'conservation'
- [The Waiting Room](#): search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking', 'conservation'

Walsall

- [Walsall Healthy Spaces | Facebook | Linktree](#)
- [Healthy spaces team Facebook](#)
- [Walsall Wellbeing Directory](#); search 'nature' or 'garden' or 'walking'

Sandwell

- [Route2Wellbeing Directory](#)

Dudley

- [Community Information Directory](#); search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking', 'conservation'
- [Dudley Outdoor Active Facebook Page](#)
- [Healthy Dudley – Move More](#)
- [Dudley Nature Reserves Facebook page](#)
- [Dudley Parks Facebook page](#)

Worcestershire

- [Community Services Directory](#); search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking' or 'conservation'
- Worcs Wildlife Trust map of community groups taking action for nature:
<https://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action>

Herefordshire

- [Talk Community Directory](#); search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking' or 'conservation'

Telford & Wrekin

- [Live Well Community Directory](#); search 'nature', 'gardening', 'walking' or 'conservation'
- [Healthy Telford](#); blogs, events and info on looking after physical and mental wellbeing. Includes the [Green Spaces are Go project](#).
- [Mossy Life Green Directory](#)

Shropshire

- [Shropshire's Great Outdoors Directory](#): interactive maps, access information, activities on offer across the county.
- [Mossy Life Green Directory](#)

Any suggestions of directories for nature-based activities, especially in other West Mids counties please let me know!

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

Calling greenspaces / nature locations in Leek and Moorlands area, STAFFORDSHIRE!

Caudwell Children's Charity has secured funding to provide **two free communication boards in greenspaces to improve access for all children and adults**, especially those with communication difficulties. They have been generously funded by the amazing team at Cottage Delight. They kindly fundraised to support this initiative, and Caudwell Children's Charity are excited to see it take shape.

These boards are designed to help all children and adults feel included, especially those with communication difficulties. Imagine visiting a beautiful place but being unable to express something as simple as needing the toilet or wanting to go to a café – these boards give people a voice in those moments we often take for granted. Everybody deserves access to the benefits nature and greenspace have to offer.

Boards installed across Staffordshire so far have had a truly positive impact, and Cottage Delight would love to see a couple placed close to their headquarters in Leek. It would mean a lot to their staff to see firsthand the difference their fundraising has made.

Please get in touch with Clare Wherton asap if you think you, or any of your contacts may be able to help with locations!



Board installed in Longton Park



Can you help Martineau Gardens, BIRMINGHAM?



The wonderful Martineau Gardens have launched a Small Seeds, Big Dreams appeal to raise £1.3 million for a new building – creating year-round, low-cost, accessible space for community groups and their core programmes. They've kicked things off with a Crowdfunder aiming to raise £50,000 for the next stage.

They're also giving away 1 million wildflower seeds – enough to cover the whole gardens! If you'd like some, or know places to share them or spread the word, please get in touch.

They're not asking for donations (though they wouldn't say no!) – just **help sharing the appeal with your networks, online or off.**

And if you fancy a stroll, a chat, or a moment in the woods, the gardens are open and always welcoming.

Contact Jenni Fryer for more information.

WHAT'S ON FOR NATURE #1



Sport England has teamed up with a range of organisations including Forestry England, the National Trust, the Ramblers and the Ordnance Survey to encourage outdoor participation by women. **Let's Get Out There | This girl can.** Research shows women face greater barriers accessing and enjoying the outdoors, in particular those on lower incomes from underrepresented groups including black women, Asian Muslim women, pregnant women, new mothers and older women.

Join the Green Social Prescribing Innovation Community



A national network for anyone working to connect people with nature to support their health and wellbeing.

Whether you're from healthcare, local government, the environment or voluntary sector, this is a space to share ideas, access resources, hear from others doing similar work, and collaborate on solutions.

By joining, you'll be part of a growing movement helping to make GSP more inclusive, accessible and effective—so that more people can benefit from the power of nature. [Find out more](#)



NEW NATURE HEALTH SCHEME AIMS TO BOOST WELL-BEING

Nature prescriptions are going from strength to strength, with more people being supported to connect with nature for their health and wellbeing. If you're interested in getting involved or learning more, contact [Alexis Johnson](#).

Heath Week 2025

Wed 30 July

- 10:30–13:00 – Chasewater Heathland Walk (£5, booking required)
- 14:00–15:30 – Children's Heathland Crafts (free drop-in)

Thu 31 July

- 10:00–12:00 – Heathland Corridor Walk (free, booking essential)

Fri 1 August

- 11:00–15:00 – Heathland Activities Drop-in Day (free)

Sat 2 August

- 10:30–12:00 – Hednesford Hills Wildlife Walk (free)
- 11:00–15:00 – Children's Activity Table & Story Walk

Sun 3 August

- 09:00–11:00 – Heathland Walk (£5, booking required)

Full details and booking info:
cannockchase.org.uk/heathweek



✱ **Chloe Hardman from Natural England will be attending to talk about the [Purple Horizons Project](#)**

WHAT'S ON FOR NATURE #2



'Nature for Health Resource Hub' for integrating Nature Into Healthcare Sites

Launched 5th June by Natural England (NE) and the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH).

The hub shares essential, free tools and guidance for developing green spaces on healthcare sites. And makes it easier for healthcare staff to develop nature-positive environments that benefit patients, staff and wildlife. It also includes recommendations for to embed nature into NHS training and policy.

RESOURCES Page on NHS Forest can be filtered into Clinical, Estates and Facilities, Sustainability...

Includes Training, webinars, evidence etc...



National Nature Reserve EVENTS across the West Midlands - Natural England

From birds to butterflies, dragonflies to dark Skies and bug hunting there is something for everyone on our NNR events. See [Eventbrite](#) for details and to book on any of our 26 activities (including Motte Meadows, Chartley Moss, Aqualate Mere, Wymbunbury Moss and Wheaton Aston NNRs)

E.g. [Aqualate Mere Family Wildlife Event](#) - Staffs. **Thursday 31st July**. Bird watching, pond dipping and bug hunting. Bring a picnic and a rug and make a day of it. **From £6**.

All event details on [Eventbrite](#), or please get in touch with [Amber](#).



A special celebration of our **Dudley's Path to Nature Recovery project** with a choice of 4 guided walks across the borough! Each route will take you through some of Dudley's beautiful green spaces, offering a chance to enjoy nature and connect with others. All walks will end in a buffet lunch and a relaxed creative collage activity near Dudley High Street, where you can share experiences and help shape a visual story.

Places are FREE but limited, so book yours now and join us to explore the beautiful surroundings of Saltwells National Nature Reserve, Peggy's Meadow, the Rowley Hills, Sedgley Beacon and more.

[Find out More](#)



Keep an eye out for continuing and brand new [Park Yoga](#) venues for 2025 season (4th May - Sept)

FREE yoga in the park every Sunday from 09:30 - 10:30.

- [Sandwell](#)
- [Leominster](#)
- [Sutton Coldfield](#)
- [Dudley](#)
- [Telford](#)
- [Kidderminster](#)
- [Worcester City](#)
- [Wolverhampton](#)

LOOKING AFTER NATURE IN HOT WEATHER

Wildlife in the Hot weather



Provide enough water

Provide a shallow dish of water for thirsty birds, mammals and even insects. Placing a small stone in the centre will help any insects that may fall in!



Top up the bird bath

Birds need water to bathe to keep their feathers in good condition, so top up the bird bath regularly with fresh, clean water



Top up your bird feeders

Keep bird feeders topped up and scatter some food, like soaked raisins* and apple chunks, on the floor for thrushes and other animals



Provide enough cover from the sun

Provide logs, stone slabs, rockeries and tall grass, which provide cover for frogs, toads and newts seeking shelter from the sun



Top up your pond

Ponds that are low can be topped up. If your rain barrel is empty, use tap water – but add little and often



Stay messy

Wilder areas in the garden will provide shelter for a wide range of wildlife, so don't be too tidy

* Raisins can be harmful to dogs and cats, so don't put them out where pets may eat them

REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS

GROWING TOGETHER - HOW COMMUNITY-LED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERS HEALTH AND CLIMATE BENEFITS



Natural England's article shows how community-led green spaces deliver big health and climate benefits—slashing GP visits by 28% and offering up to £2.1 billion in annual NHS savings. In the West Midlands, it spotlights *Doorstep to Landscape in Birmingham*—our project working with local organisations to empower residents to help design nearby green areas, breaking down social and cultural barriers to nature.

HOW CAN NATURE CONNECTEDNESS AND BEHAVIOURS FOR LEARNING BE DELIBERATELY DEVELOPED IN CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS? A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

This systematic review highlights growing evidence that nature-based activities can enhance key behaviours for learning (BFL)—including self-regulation, self-esteem, attention, and resilience—in children, adolescents, and young adults. Interventions such as forest schools, sensory nature walks, creative outdoor tasks, and reflective time in nature show benefits, even when nature connectedness itself does not significantly increase.

For clinicians and educators, this offers a practical toolkit of nature-based approaches to support emotional and cognitive development. However, most studies are moderate-to-low quality and rarely school-based, underlining the need for stronger, school-centred research to guide implementation.

DEFRA Collection - Access to Nature Statistics

This series contains official statistics and research on access to nature throughout England. Natural spaces can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits. These indicators set a baseline for current levels of access to blue and green space from every household in England, helping us to track progress against the Environmental Improvement Plan commitments relating to access. This includes work to better represent different types of blue and green space to enable further mapping and analysis.



According to the official statistic report Access to Blue Space in England 86% of households are within a 15-minute walk of any blue space, but only 28% have access to larger, more substantial water bodies. Access is generally higher in rural areas, though urban areas have better access to substantial blue spaces. These statistics build upon previous work to determine the percentage of households that have access to green space in England within a 15 minute walk. We continue to develop this work with the aim of producing combined access to green and blue space statistics in future.

USEFUL NATURE CONNECTION RESOURCES

NATURE CONNECTION HANDBOOK

Developed with the Uni of Derby and Natural England.
The importance of connecting with nature: including case studies on nature on prescription and social prescribing.



NATURE CONNECTION PRACTICES

Set of 5 nature connection practices to help activate the 5 pathways to nature connectedness. Each one takes just a few minutes a day alongside ordinary daily activities. E.g. watching videos of nature for 10 minutes every day can increase nature connection and reduce feelings of stress.



NATURE BUDDIES TOOLKIT

The Toolkit includes information on:

- How to design a Nature Buddies programme to build on interests of volunteers and the people you work with
- How to enhance your offer and recruit new volunteers, and support existing volunteers.
- How to empower people to feel better, improving their mental health, other health outcomes and build social connections
- How to build people's connection to outdoor spaces / nature near them
- How to measure success and impact
- Evidence from pilot of impacts of Nature Buddies on wellbeing & nature connection
- Case studies and testimonials

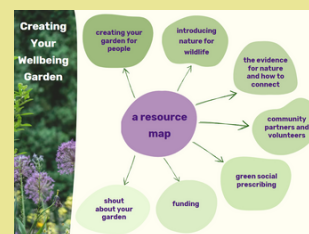


Green Social Prescribing e-learning Module for Health Professionals

Natural England have been working in collaboration with Dr William Bird at Intelligent Health, NHS partners, NASP and online training education provider, Red Whale, to create two GSP **e-learning modules**. Includes a 30-minute video explaining evidence and health benefits of connecting patients to nature. And 15-minute consultation video with simple, practical steps for how to integrate nature into everyday practice.

THINKING ABOUT CREATING A COMMUNITY GARDEN/GREENSPACE FOR WELLBEING?

Health Leads, Amber Marquand and Mandy Preece, have created a Resource Map - a compilation of useful websites and resources - for anyone interested in creating garden spaces to improve peoples' health and wellbeing, but also to benefit nature and wildlife.
We hope it's helpful - please share around!



WHY NATURE WORKS: THE EVIDENCE

- Links between natural environments and mental health - EIN065 (naturalengland.org.uk)
- Links between natural environments and physical health - EIN066 (naturalengland.org.uk)
- How the Natural Environment can support Children and Young People - EIN067 (naturalengland.org.uk)
- Connection to Nature - EIN068 (naturalengland.org.uk)



INSPIRATION

A video of an Occupational Therapy garden: <https://vimeo.com/411401512>

Follow Natural England on Social Media:

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Although I hope that this newsletter will contain something useful for everyone, I completely understand if you feel it is not relevant for you. Please email me (Amber) if you would like to opt out of receiving my newsletter at any time. Thank you.