

HEALTH & NATURE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

June 2025

Natural England West Midlands



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WELCOME TO THE JUNE NEWSLETTER

Bell Heather (pictured above) is starting to flower on heathlands in June. So keep a lookout for the patches of purple starting to form, especially nearby to Walsall and South Staffs where Natural England are trying to increase heathland through work with partners in the [Purple Horizons project](#).

I've been made aware of several fascinating publications this month about the role of nature in mental health support spaces and services:

- [Why Nature Matters in Mental Health Design](#)
- [Designing Spaces for Better Mental Health - Through Sound](#)
- [The Use of Talking Therapy Outdoors](#)
- [Accelerating Green Social Prescribing](#)

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!

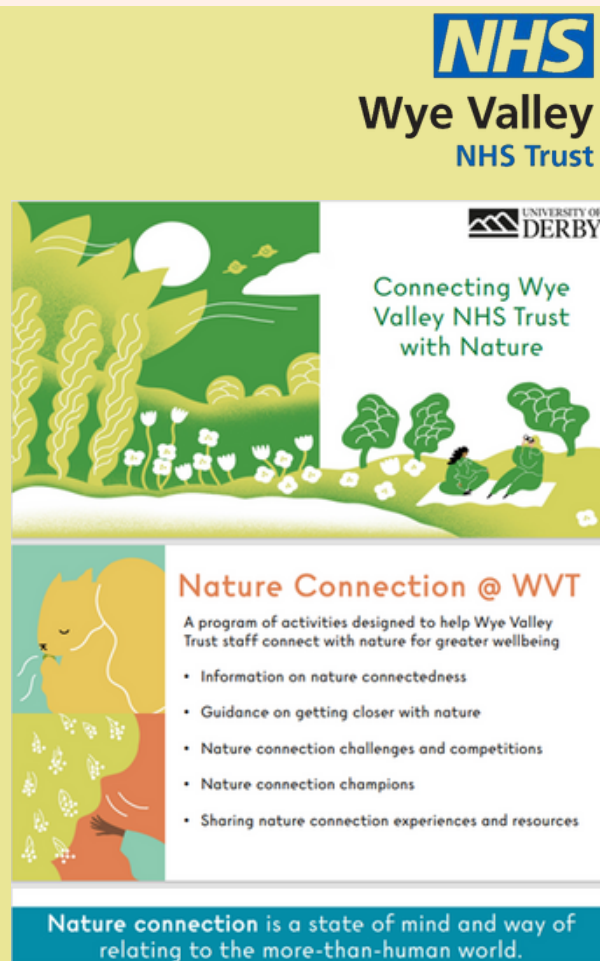
Connecting Wye Valley NHS Trust Staff with Nature

*By Geoffrey Etule, Chief People Officer,
Wye Valley NHS Trust*

After working with Natural England and the Uni of Derby to explore how nature supports health and wellbeing, we launched our **Connecting Wye Valley NHS Trust with Nature programme**—now central to our Health & Wellbeing Strategy for staff, with the strapline Helping You to Help Yourself. This growing programme puts nature at the heart of staff wellbeing.

Since launching, we've introduced a range of simple, effective ways to help staff connect with nature:

- **Annual Big Garden Birdwatch** promotions, encouraging staff to share photos
- **"Connecting Staff with Nature"** intranet page
- **Green Champions** in departments promoting plant care
- **More benches** across sites for outdoor breaks
- **Annual sunflower competition**, led by the pharmacy team
- A Wye Valley **outdoor walking group**
- **Annual Fun Day** at a green leisure centre with cycle track
- **Health & Wellbeing Week** every October, focusing on the benefits of nature
- Partnership with **Sodexo** to maintain grounds and gardens
- Encouraging staff to **socialise outdoors** through games and walks
- Promoting **national campaigns** that support nature connection



The programme continues to evolve with staff engagement and feedback.

By making space for nature, we're helping our people feel better, connect with others, and thrive at work.

We're always open to new ideas, tips and inspiration - and we're happy to share our approach with other Trusts exploring something similar—just drop us a line at geoffrey.etule@wvt.nhs.uk

MORE 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!

Woodland Roots – Reconnecting with Nature for Skills, Confidence and Wellbeing

Woodland Roots is a bushcraft and outdoor learning provider based on the **Shropshire border near Oswestry**. Founded by experienced instructor Tom Wright, Woodland Roots delivers immersive, hands-on woodland sessions that help people reconnect with nature, develop new skills and support personal and group wellbeing.

With a strong focus on nature connection and practical learning, sessions include fire lighting, shelter building, woodcraft, knife skills, and cooking over an open fire. Whether a group of teenagers learning how to carve safely and cook on an open fire, or a team of adults doing woodland challenges to build trust and communication, every course is grounded in nature and designed to be both memorable and restorative.

They offer bespoke half-day and full-day outdoor sessions for young people (6+), schools, community organisations and teams. Each session is designed around the group's needs and held in peaceful woodland, providing space to slow down, connect and grow in confidence.



One parent shared:

"My son had a great time doing a half-day activity with Tom and the team. The woodland setting is beautiful. He learnt fire lighting, woodcarving and shelter building, and has been really inspired to continue using those skills at home – which is brilliant!"

Another participant said:

"I went into the course hoping to learn and take something away – and I most definitely did. From knots and tarp set-ups to building fires and gutting fish, it was a brilliant hands-on experience."

Whether supporting young people, adult learners or staff wellbeing, Woodland Roots offers an authentic way to reconnect with the natural world.

Find out more at www.woodlandroots.co.uk

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](#)

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](#); 'nature' or 'gardening' or 'walking' or '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' or 'gardening' or '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' or 'gardening' or 'walking' or 'conservation'

Telford & Wrekin

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

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

WHAT'S ON FOR NATURE #1

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

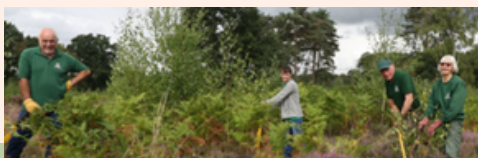
Sun 3 August

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



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

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



Want to learn new skills & spend time outdoors?

Volunteer with **Worcestershire Wildlife Trust** on their heathlands! Help care for beautiful sites like Dropping Well Farm & Devil's Spittleful. [Blog](#) for more info. Meet new people, get active, and boost your wellbeing.

Next work parties: Fri 27 Jun & **Fri 25 Jul**, 10:30 – 3.

Email to book onto work parties, or for more info.



National Nature Reserve EVENTS across the West Midlands - Natural England

From birds to butterflies, dragonflies to dark Skies and bug hunting to bog clearing there is something for everyone on our NNR events. Go to our [Eventbrite page](#) for all the details and to book your place on any of our 26 activities (including Motte Meadows, Chartley Moss, Aqualate Mere, Wynbunbury Moss and Wheaton Aston NNRs)

E.g. [Aqualate Mere Family Wildlife Event](#) - Staffs. **Thursday 31st July**. Bird watching, pond dipping and bug hunting - interactive activities for all ages. 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.

WHAT'S ON FOR NATURE #2

Call for volunteers - Get Involved in Moseley's Most Blooming Lovely Day!

On **Sunday 29th June, 11am-5pm**, lots of stunning gardens across Moseley will be open to the public—and we're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help us make this beloved event a success! Whether you've volunteered before or this will be your first time getting involved.

You might fancy:

- 🌸 Welcoming guests at one of the gardens
- 🍰 Serving tea and cake to happy visitors
- 🎟 Selling tickets
- 🍰 Baking one of the delicious cakes we're famous for
- 📌 Helping out beforehand with posters and prep
- 🧹 Giving a hand afterwards with the tidy-up



As a thank-you, all volunteers receive a complimentary ticket to enjoy the gardens during your time off. It's a great way to connect with the community, soak up the atmosphere, and be part of something beautiful.

Just drop a quick email to volunteers@moseleyinbloom.org.uk and let us know how you'd like to help:

- Volunteer on the day (shifts are 2-2.5 hours long)
- Help before or after the event
- Bake a cake



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.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| • <u>Sandwell</u> | • <u>Telford</u> |
| • <u>Leominster</u> | • <u>Kidderminster</u> |
| • <u>Sutton Coldfield</u> | • <u>Worcester City</u> |



GoodGym is a charity combining fitness and physical activity with doing good; litter picking, gardening and more. Helping various community organisations, including Canal & River Trust and local Nature Reserves. Get involved in **BIRMINGHAM** or **SUTTON COLDFIELD**:

- Community Missions
- Group Runs/Walks
- Sutton Coldfield Community Missions

CALL OUT: Look after a greenspace, or run a nature-based project in Birmingham/Sutton Coldfield? Require extra help with outdoor/gardening work? GoodGym are always on the lookout for organisations/projects to help. Get in touch with jonny@goodgym.org.

WHAT'S ON FOR NATURE #3

WEBINARS & ONLINE



'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.

Followed by a **WEBINAR on 25th June 12 - 12:45** with speakers from NE, CSH and the NHS. [Book tickets.](#)

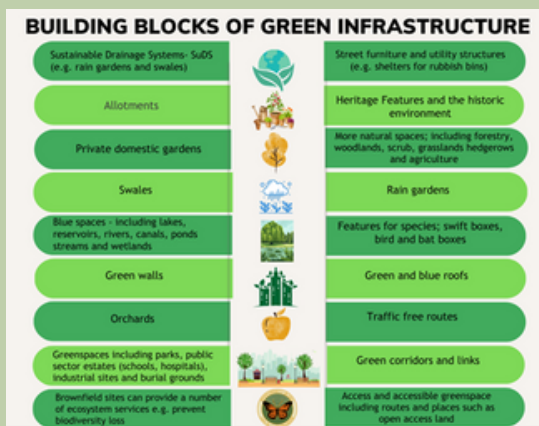


Helping out just got easier in Birmingham!

Volunteer Brum is a new online platform connecting locals to volunteering—from food banks to community gardens, nature walks & more. Find your perfect way to give back, or seek volunteers, in just a few clicks.

Explore Natural England's redesigned Green Infrastructure website

A wealth of feedback has helped us improve the site, including a new quick start guide. All resources are now really easy to use, with clear pathways customised to help you find exactly what matters to you. Let us know how you find the new GI website, we are particularly interested to hear if it can be improved further.



NATURAL
ENGLAND



'Nature Connection for NHS Staff Wellbeing' **26th June 3:30 - 5**



NATURAL
ENGLAND

The Nature Connectedness Network is open to everyone and provides the opportunity to explore when spending time in, and connecting with nature, can play a role in different areas of work. Consider becoming a member!

Thursday 26th June 3:30 - 5pm online launch of the network's 'Nature Connection for NHS Staff Wellbeing' node. A community of practice exploring the different ways to support NHS staff through nature connectedness. Ellen Devine from Forestry England, and Sarah Walker from RSPB will be joining to talk about their Nature Prescription collaboration. Please register [here](#).

- ☐ Health and Wellbeing
- ☐ Education/Children and Young People
- ☐ Arts and Culture
- ☐ Law and Policy
- ☐ Business and Organisations
- ☐ Environment and Sustainability
- ☐ Food and Farming
- ☐ Campaigns
- ☐ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- ☐ Postgraduate

TRAINING ON OFFER

Training course: An Introduction to Urban Nature



Want to bring more nature into your neighbourhood, NHS site, or community garden? This **free online training** course from the Natural History Museum offers a **brilliant introduction to urban ecology** to discover how nature thrives in urban areas, and how to protect and enhance it?

As part of the Urban Nature Project, the Natural History Museum are offering a free online training course: 'An Introduction to Urban Ecology'. The course is **aimed at beginners** with an interest in ecology in cities, how it can differ to that of the countryside and how we can monitor and work to improve biodiversity in urban areas.

The course contains six pre-recorded lectures plus some additional short film clips, which range from about **10 minutes to 30 minutes** long. These can be accessed at any time during the course, meaning you can work through them at your own pace to fit your schedule.



ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

OCTOBER 2025 - JULY 2026

An investment in YOU,
and in a greener future.

18-25, West Mids
based and
passionate about
environmental
change?

Join us on our
FREE programme!

- Take part in online and in person events, delivered by our friendly team
- Connect with nature and like-minded people in a fun and challenging way
- Develop skills for your CV
- Run your own campaign in a supportive environment



Delivered by: Shropshire Wildlife Trust The Wildlife Centre Supported by: COMMUNITY FUND

Scan HERE to apply!



Find out more: elp2.uk
Follow us: [@elp2uk](https://twitter.com/elp2uk)

Applications for Environmental Leadership Programme open!

Are you **18-25, based in the Midlands**, and passionate about the environment or just curious to learn more?

No experience needed. No background too big or small. Just bring your voice, your passion, and your energy.

The Environmental Leadership Programme 2 (ELP2) is **free and here to help you connect with nature, build leadership skills, and make a real impact on climate and your community.**

Powered by [@wildlifetrusts](https://twitter.com/wildlifetrusts) & [@shropshirewildlifetrust](https://twitter.com/shropshirewildlifetrust)
Funded by [@tnlcommunityfund](https://twitter.com/tnlcommunityfund)

REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS



The Nature Issue – Why Nature Matters in Mental Health Design

This short, practical report is for anyone involved in designing or managing mental health inpatient settings—NHS teams, architects, estates staff, and advocates. It shows how access to nature, natural light, and green space can reduce stress, support recovery, and create more humane environments. Packed with research and real-world examples, it **makes the case for putting nature at the heart of mental health care.**



The Sound Issue – Designing for Better Mental Health Through Sound

This practical report is for NHS teams, designers, and anyone shaping mental health inpatient spaces. It explores how sound impacts wellbeing, recovery, and dignity—and why getting it right matters. While research is still emerging, **natural sounds like birdsong and flowing water are often perceived positively and may help reduce stress and anxiety.** The report offers evidence, case studies, and clear guidance for creating calmer, more therapeutic environments by managing noise and embracing restorative soundscapes.



Accelerating Green Social Prescribing

The NatureMind report sets out a bold vision for scaling up green social prescribing across the UK. It calls for better outcome measurement, improved training, and meaningful investment to expand what works. The report champions a shift towards preventative mental health care, stronger community-nature connections, and integrated support through outdoor hubs – all to ease pressure on the NHS.



The Use of Talking Therapy Outdoors

This paper offers practical guidance on delivering talking therapy outdoors, drawing on practitioner insights and existing literature. It outlines the psychological benefits of natural settings and key considerations like confidentiality, consent, and client suitability.

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:

- [Natural England on Twitter](#)
- [Natural England on Instagram](#)
- [Natural England on YouTube](#)
- [Natural England on LinkedIn](#)

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.