



Cornwall
National
Landscape



The Heart of Natural Beauty

Landscape Connections

Young People, Nature & Heritage Connection

Report for Cornwall National Landscape on multiagency cross-sector consultation about Cornwall's young people and their relationship with heritage and the natural environment.



Report of Multiagency Cross-sector Consultation about Cornwall's Young People and their Relationship with the Natural Environment

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Young People, Nature & Heritage Connection

Cornwall National Landscape's [The Heart of Natural Beauty: Landscape Connections](#) project aims to connect people with natural and cultural heritage, to initiate landscape scale, positive change across the 12 Sections of Cornwall National Landscape.

Made possible by [The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and thanks to Lottery players, the first phase of our project (until April 26) is starting to build networks, improve access to local data and create collaborative partnerships for each of our Sections. This phase will inform an application for a further potential 10 years of funding.

Young people in Cornwall face many barriers in connecting to their local natural and cultural heritage and accessing the proven benefits. The next phase of our project will seek to explore and address some of these barriers, by developing projects in our landscapes to support young people's nature connectedness and confidence, climate empowerment, voice in local democracy and opportunities for connected pathways through education into training and employment.

This report by RJ working documents the outcome of the cross-sector **Young People, Nature & Heritage Connection Workshop** held in December 2025. The workshop was convened by Cornwall National Landscape and facilitated by RJ Working. The aim of the workshop was to scope the great work already happening and to explore opportunities for shared learning and future collaborative project development.

Cornwall National Landscape is the new name for the protected landscape in Cornwall, endorsed by Natural England. We are still in law a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Cornwall National Landscape is 12 separate sections making up one third of Cornwall. Our primary purpose is to conserve and enhance Natural Beauty.

<https://cornwall-landscape.org/>

The workshop was facilitated by [RJ Working](#), who specialise in discussions rooted in Restorative Practice. RJ Working relate to children, young people, and communities across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, introducing Restorative Practice as a tool to repair harm to people, identity, climate, and nature.

<https://rjworking.co.uk/>

Context

Cornwall National Landscape commissioned RJ Working to facilitate a cross-sector consultation titled ‘The Heart of Natural Beauty: Landscape Connections’, focused on Young People, Nature and Heritage. The consultation took place in-person on 11th December 2025 at Pool Innovation Centre. The diverse participants spanned:

Cornwall National Landscape (CNL)
RJ Working (RJW)
Public Health -Cornwall Council (CC)
Health Determinants Research Collaboration -Cornwall Council (HDRC)
Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT)
Cornwall Heritage Trust (CHT)
BF Adventure (BF)
Truro College (TC)
Bodmin College –secondary school (BC)
Crofty MAT –representing 18 primary schools (CM)
National Trust (NT)
Young People Cornwall (YPC)

The issues in the foreground, which had been notified to participants in advance, were

- Nature connectedness & confidence
- Climate empowerment
- Health & wellbeing in relation to Nature
- Voice in local democracy
- Pathways through Education → Training & Employment in ‘green’ jobs

Multiagency, cross-sector groups, facilitated by members of the RJ Working team were asked: *What do you already do to support children and young people with these issues?*

What are the barriers to children and young people accessing nature, climate action, heritage, and green skills? What would success look like?

- *For early years (0-5)*
- *For primary age (5-11)*
- *For secondary age (11-16)*
- *For 16+*

What do you already do to support children and young people with these issues?

The room had representatives from organisations both inside and outside the education sector, all with an interest in engaging young people with nature, climate action, heritage, or green skills. Current practices are diverse and wide-ranging:

In Education

Truro College (16+ representative)

Creates pathways to environmental issues through finding interests of college students.

Environmental engagement can improve rates of attendance

Hosting green careers workshops. Transferring values from Swedish heritage (Skogsmulle) to Cornish students to ensure they grasp that values around caring for nature can have a lifelong impact.

Emphasise that many jobs can be understood as a 'climate jobs' (with awareness of 'greenwashing' in some industries eg fossil fuels).

'Student Voice' in local democracy influencing senior leadership through the Report analysis of RJ Working's Climate & Nature survey.

Bodmin College (Secondary School representative)

'Future Steps' – future leaders programme – keen to connect this with climate

'Your Future Story' – supporting disadvantaged students to access further education (part of a National initiative)

D of E outdoor activities & volunteering that enable

Croft MAT (Primary School representative)

Trust Eco-Council & Trust Coastal Crew

Trust Parliament-democracy, sustainability heroes pledges

Green careers in 2025/26 Variation between 18 schools

RJ Working

Youth Climate Action events and conferences

Green Futures enrichment programmes for 16+

Green Careers workshops & Tackling Climate Change Restoratively training

Green Ripple Effect programme for Primary and Secondary ages

Intergenerational community conversations

Climate survey for secondary / FE

Public Health

Healthy Schools framework

Public Health reports on poverty, school meals, after school clubs, babies, evidence-based work tackling inequalities

Out of Education

Young People Cornwall

60% of the Young People he works with are out of education, helps to support pathways to education, back into learning through developing an understanding and cultivating their interests.

BF Adventure

Pathways, Health + Wellbeing, Average 10-14, Seeking to engage with early identifiers (to prevent exclusion)

National Trust

West Cornwall is one of the 18 pilot programmes in the country

Provides free transport to schools and young people from multiple areas of deprivation

Enhancing voices of young people by providing 2 people with work experience/ year. Providing spaces for exhibitions for creative projects

Cornwall Heritage Trust

Apprentice Rangers (all ages) focus on heritage land management

3 areas of engagement with young people: Formal learning, informal learning and training

Climate Action Youth Ranger Programme (14 – 25s) – not specifically aimed but happen to be all neurodivergent young people

Partnership with Carefree Cornwall, with 2 strands of work: Welcome session for young people seeking asylum and sensory sessions with young people in care

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Annual work experience week

Work placements

Career pathways

Volunteering opportunities now open to 16 year olds

Commissioned Cornwall Climate Care to do an audit of all the youth/nature engagement work going on across Cornwall

Ad hoc activities in schools (family events, gardening etc)

Cornwall National Landscape

Providing resources for schools

Work experience opportunities & Apprenticeships

Project work

Projects reheritage, archeology club, apprentices, forest bathing in schools, farms training (farmers to be prepared) eg. % of girls being inspired to enjoy animal husbandry

HDRC

Formal research, Skill and capacity building eg. Infant voice, research culture in Cornwall council, NEETS 1 for work, green jobs, barriers to access, plymouth uni work to health

What are the barriers to children and young people accessing nature, climate action, heritage, and green skills?

The group identified many barriers to access, and these have been sorted into 8 main themes.

1. **Transport** was identified as a key barrier, both the provision in rural areas and cost; a cultural block in accepting support for this
2. **Information** – lack of awareness about the opportunities available, but also knowledge about the benefits of being outside, nature, and climate action
3. **Finances** – the challenges of engaging with volunteering and unpaid work experience opportunities when young people need income
4. **Lack of parental support** - Parents who do not have experience related to nature, climate, and heritage feel unable to support their young people engaging with it
5. **Lack of ownership/confidence** - resulting from socialisation and peer group influence, young people feel disconnected from these themes, lacking a confidence to engage with nature. It isn't necessarily seen as 'cool'
6. **Competing demands on young people's time** – pressures of the curriculum leave little space for exploring these issues. Technology and social media take precedence over direct experience of nature
7. **Basic needs not being met** - the challenges of economic precarity compound the barriers to engagement and accessing opportunities
8. **Organisational barriers** - Challenges relating to short-term funding and low capacity, reaching young people and relating to schools is difficult

Some quotes from the event:

“Connection to nature is not seen as a basic need or right, climate concerns are seen as the remit of the privileged and middle class.”

“For all of our children and young people, we want the removal of influence of corporations e.g. no McDonald's drive through – Sustainable foods bite back!”

“Success would look like everyone having a strong sense of place; you matter to it, and it matters to you”

What would success look like?

Through an 'Active Hope' exercise, participants imagined what success could look like if we all worked together to make the changes that are needed. The result was a broad, rich, overarching, collective vision encompassing the following:

1. A culture of resilience, honesty, welcoming and dealing with challenges
2. Children and young people believe they matter, have a sense of purpose, a sense of connection to place, and are supported to make informed choices
3. Cornwall is hate-free. There is a sense of equity, inclusion and belonging for everyone including young people seeking asylum and LGBTQ young people, and girls and young women feel safe and confident
4. Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience nature and learning outdoors is a cultural norm, free from the pressures of time and rigid frameworks
5. Teenagers feel safe and inspired to leave the house and go outdoors, go to the beach
6. Funded climate & nature work which is collaborative and strategic
7. Communities are more connected and less dependence on technology; there is intergenerational involvement in community justice, and a sense of ownership of nature spaces and taking care of them
8. Outdoor spaces contain an abundance of wildlife, and there are outdoor spaces for young people which are welcoming and cool
9. Transport is accessible and safe, and people are supported to cycle and walk safely
10. Renewed knowledge of where food comes from, and access to good, healthy, high-quality food for everyone, which is grown locally
11. Thriving high streets which are focused on community not consumerism (eg. repair shops and local food)
12. Everyone is financially secure and has an affordable home to live in

Then specifically, For early years (0-5)

- Safe outdoor spaces for children, and building confidence amongst parents to access nature with their children (eg. every child given a 'how to' pack to be a part of the landscape nature so parents have knowledge as their child is growing)
- Access to flexible, outdoor sessions, play – with free transport
- Build on children's natural sense of awe and wonder to explore nature
- Draw on models including forest school and Swedish model of Skogsmule and Rain & Shine for nurseries and preschools. All nurseries to have green space and use forest school principles

And for their parents...

- Support pregnant people & new parents to meet outdoors + experience nourishment of nature
- Parents are engaged in climate justice
- Parents have opportunities to learn about brain development + impact of diversity + outdoor time
- Education for parents around safe use of digital tech around babies/children, an absence of digital tech

For primary age (5-11)

- More freedom in the curriculum for play and learning outdoors, including food gardening which relates to a sustainable whole-food system education and age-appropriate learning about animals to introduce nature-related curiosity and awe
- Awareness of the realities and the world they will inherit, but empower children to know they have choice in their responses
- Programmes engaging young people with outdoors skills, like map-reading and farm work, as well as emotional education supporting children to take responsibility for themselves, each-other, and nature
- Working collaboratively with non-school organisations to build an understanding of collaborative approaches

For secondary age (11-16)

- Developing confidence and ability to access the outdoors year-round, as part of the curriculum, work experience, and as enrichment
- Use of school grounds, including for young people to grow food that is then served in the school canteen
- Role models for nature connection, wellbeing, and green skills
- Careers education that builds from primary school, and work experience related to 'green skills' for all
- Circular 'food waste systems to provide immediate compost understood by all
- Learning about nature and climate shared at home and in the wider community

For 16+

- Enrichment workshops in all colleges to engage young people with the topics
- Careers education with green careers as a focus, and support to find Green jobs
- Young people supported to make choices informed by awareness of how personal interests can contribute and link to environmental and climate justice
- Joined up career pathway initiatives across Cornwall organisations; work experience placements, apprenticeships, volunteering leading to Green careers
- Expand youth ranger teams to feel ownership of their environments – offering training to lead onto employment
- Local youth spaces for young people to build community and have voice heard
- Initiatives which identifying and understand relevant culture to young people
- Spaces where young people feel equal in their communities
- Support with transport (eg. moped scheme)
- Access to the beach

How do we get there together?

The final discussion of the event centred on next steps, and how to encourage collaborative working across sectors to engage young people more effectively with nature, heritage, climate action, and green skills.

1. Opportunities for young people
 - a. Green Jobs: Apprenticeships, Volunteering, Upskilling, Work Experience, and year-round employment
 - b. More varied and inclusive opportunities suitable for young people with a variety of needs
2. Working with institutions
 - a. Tap into what the Government requires of schools; emphasise cross-curriculum, Ofsted, and School Climate Action Plan benefits
 - b. Marry projects up with existing strategies e.g. Cornwall Council Green Spaces plan, NHS 10 year plan
3. Organisational culture
 - a. Promoting partnership working and developing collaborative projects as this creates opportunities
 - b. Talking about climate change and the impacts, not avoiding it, and taking the opportunity to build connection and community

Next steps

Everyone in attendance wanted to be part of a Forum, to continue the conversation and put these actions into practice. To maintain momentum by holding further facilitated events, including the wider community who were invited but unable to attend for various reasons. Collaborations and invitations have already emerged e.g. to participate in college careers fairs. Finding the paths that hold in view: i) the truths about climate change ii) active hope and positive change.

Appendix

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