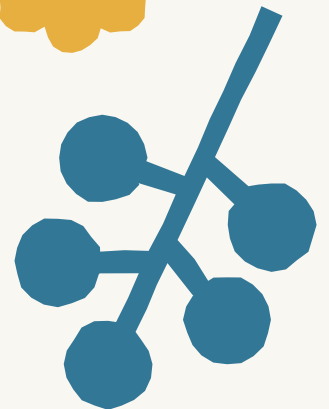
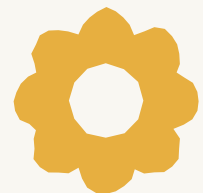
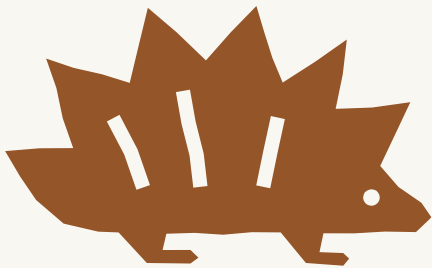
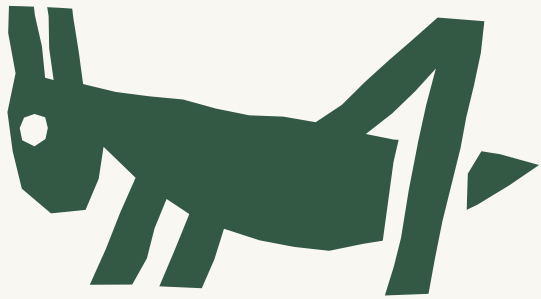


# Annual Report 2024/2025



National  
Education  
Nature Park



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National  
Education  
Nature Park

Led by



Natural  
History  
Museum

With



RHS

Working with



Commissioned by



Department  
for Education

Partners



Learning  
through  
Landscapes



Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University



NBN Trust  
Making data work for nature



Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG  
Advancing geography  
and geographical learning



UK Centre for  
Ecology & Hydrology

THE  
ROYAL  
SOCIETY

# About the National Education Nature Park

The National Education Nature Park is a free education programme in England that puts climate and nature at the heart of education.

It's all about empowering the next generation to understand, care for, and improve the natural world while making their school, nursery or college site a better place for both people and wildlife.

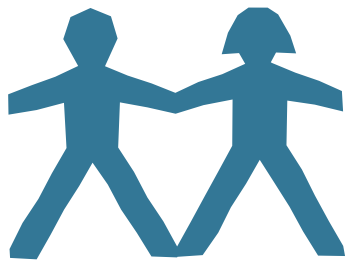
Through a five-step process supported by curriculum-linked resources and activities, the programme connects young people with nature as they transform their sites from 'grey to green'. They are developing nature-rich spaces in previously concrete and nature-depleted areas, through creating new habitats such as ponds, living walls and wildflower meadows. Together, children and young people are harnessing the education estate – an area roughly twice the size of Birmingham – to help nature recover and collecting data that contributes to global biodiversity research.

Quality-assured, curriculum-linked resources help educators to bring climate and nature across subjects and key stages, nurturing a range of green and digital skills that prepare children and young people for a rapidly changing world.

The programme has been commissioned by the Department for Education and developed and delivered by a partnership led by the Natural History Museum working with the Royal Horticultural Society and additional partners, with geospatial expertise provided by Esri UK. It launched in October 2023 and so far has seen more than 7,500 schools, colleges and nurseries get involved so far.



# Nature Park in numbers



More than  
**7,500**  
schools, nurseries and  
colleges registered



**Four times**  
more nurseries are now taking part  
compared to this time last year



More than  
**1 in 4**  
primary and secondary  
schools registered



More than  
**13 million**  
square metres of  
habitat mapped



Over  
**£12 million**  
in grants awarded to over  
1,250 schools and nurseries



More than  
**1,100**  
schools, nurseries and  
colleges working on their  
habitat maps

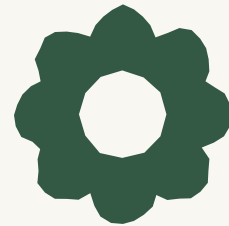
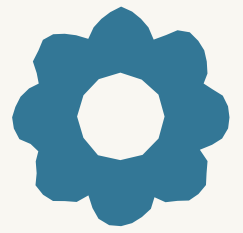
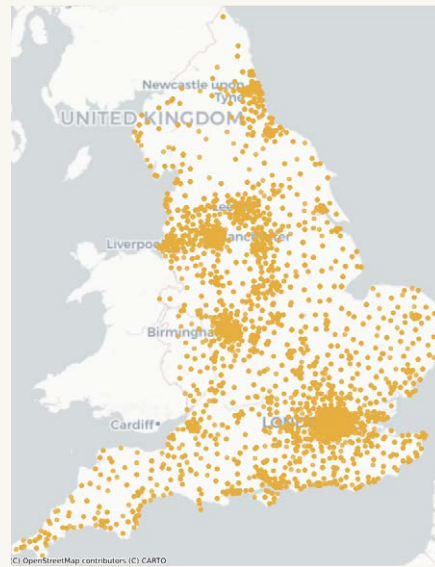
Numbers accurate as of September 2025

## Education setting registrations

2023/24

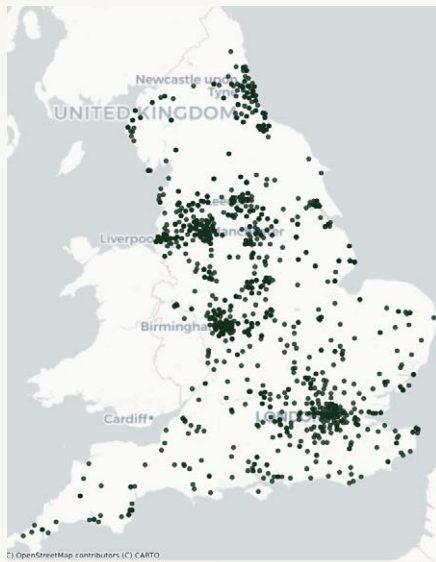


2024/25

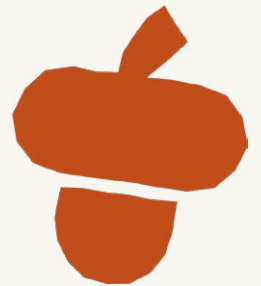
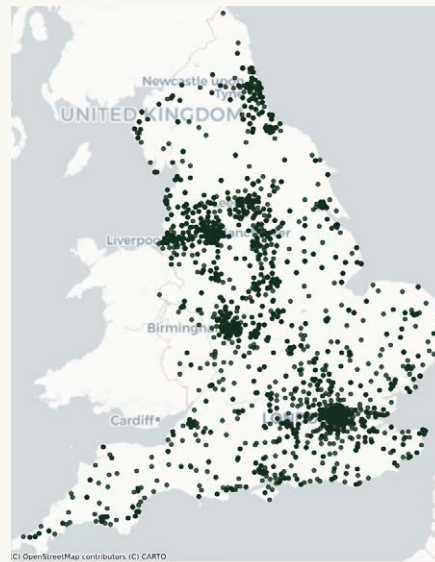


## Site boundaries

2023/24



2024/25

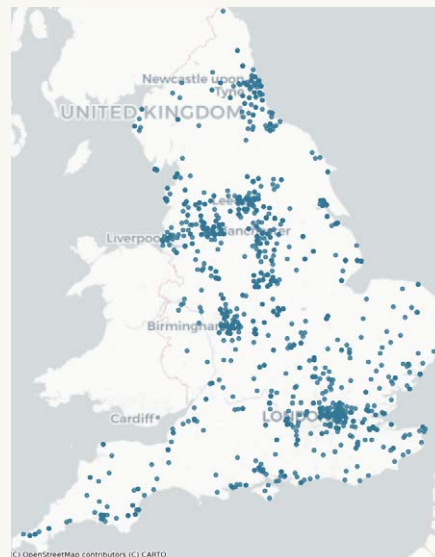


## Habitat mapping

2023/24



2024/25



# Foreword from students at Harris Academy Chobham

Harris Academy Chobham is a school that took part in the Nature Park Schools Forum this year.

We should protect nature because it is at the core of life. It makes up most of the Earth and without it we would not be here.

Throughout the year, we connect with nature during lessons, nature nurture sessions and our outdoor classroom days. We are lucky to have access to a wildlife pond during break times where we can relax, explore and look after the flora and fauna. Over the past few years, we have been developing and transforming our urban school environment by planting a mini forest in our Nature Nook, to create our own Forest School site and improve biodiversity in our grounds. Parents have also helped us to develop a rooftop garden and plant an orchard. We enjoy helping to grow fruit and vegetables in our kitchen garden, where we learn about the origins of food and this links with food technology lessons where we learn to cook and prep food.

Being part of the National Education Nature Park School Forum allowed us to socialise with others who are passionate about the environment and delve deeper into how important nature is for our health and happiness. It allowed our voices and opinions to be valued and heard by others, making us feel part of the solution rather than the problem.

As a pupil group at the Nature Park Schools Forum, we developed three main principles:

- Lifelong principle: Nature Park should help children and young people connect with nature throughout their school life, from the youngest to the oldest years
- Wellbeing principle: Nature Park should help each young person involved understand nature is always there for you no matter how you are feeling
- Active learning principle: Nature Park activities should help young people learn through active experiences of observing, exploring and investigating nature themselves, teaching topics that inspire awe and wonder of nature

In the future, we hope that the principles become embedded in the education of young people to ensure the sustainability and protection of nature, far into future generations. We feel it is important to experience nature because we shouldn't just be glued to our screens, we should go outside and take a walk — it helps people clear their minds and feel good!

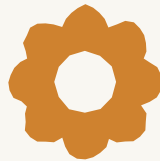
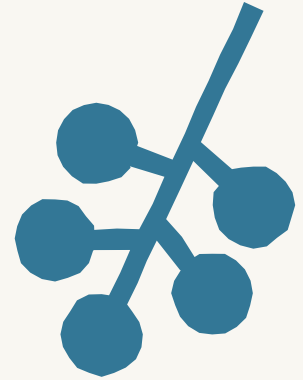


We would encourage other schools to take part in the Nature Park because it helps children experience nature in a new way and deepens their understanding and respect for their local environment. The resources have helped to make lessons about nature more enjoyable and supported us to connect with nature in a focused and positive manner.

We feel very proud to be part of something so important and relevant. We hope the scientific research into biodiversity created through the Nature Park programme has a real impact across the country.

We would also like to see the National Education Nature Park expand to a global audience, so that even more people understand the importance of the relationship between nature and ourselves.

*With thanks to staff and students at Harris Academy Chobham for writing this foreword and their continued support of the Nature Park*





Of course, we aren't doing this alone. This year has seen us collaborate with our 'sister projects', which are other DfE-funded or supported programmes including Climate Ambassadors, Sustainability Support for Education digital platform and Let's Go Zero Climate Action Advisors. In addition, we've been piloting collaborations with affiliate organisations such as CAPE (Climate Adapted Pathways for Education), The Tree Council and Earthwatch. The programme has also been championed by Stephen Morgan, former Minister for Early Education with responsibility for sustainability, who has highlighted its impact both on visits to schools and from the benches of Parliament.

This report is split into sections that reflect the programme's aims: embedding climate and nature in the curriculum; developing green and digital skills; ensuring involvement of all children and young people; fostering wellbeing and connection with nature; and achieving biodiversity gain across the education estate. It also includes an introduction to our sister projects, and highlights from our regional teams.

We hope you enjoy reading about the progress so far and the direction ahead. As always, we welcome feedback, stories and ideas from your school, college or nursery – please contact us at [hello@educationnaturepark.org.uk](mailto:hello@educationnaturepark.org.uk). We're committed to listening to, learning from, and creating with you, so that together we can make a positive difference to the future of both people and the planet.

*From all of us across the National Education Nature Park partnership*



# Programme aims

The overarching goal of the Nature Park is to empower every child and young person in England, through their place of learning, to take action to make a positive difference to both their own and nature's future by:

- developing a connection to nature
- understanding the threats facing it
- feeling able to act for nature

The drivers and evidence base have resulted in five aims to inform the design and goals of the programme with several co-benefits.

## Putting climate and nature at the heart of the curriculum

By establishing best practice for climate teaching and working with expert partners, the programme provides free curriculum plans and quality-assured resources across all subject areas and key stages. These support educators to embed climate and nature across the curriculum. The Nature Park five-step process provides a flexible way for educators to enable youth-led improvement of their sites through data collection, decision making and habitat creation.

## Developing green and digital skills

Participation in the programme supports the development of six key green skills across all subject areas. These include identification and ecology, recording data, interpreting data, creative thinking and decision making, environmental stewardship and horticulture and communication.

## Involving all children and young people

The programme is flexible and adaptable. It can be implemented for every young person in a formal education setting in England, from early years up to further education, no matter what the starting point or the amount or type of space available. All learners can contribute to, and recognise their role in the programme, no matter what their interests, skills or future aspirations.

## Fostering a connection to nature and improving wellbeing

The programme's suite of activities develops young people's connection with and confidence in nature in their local environments. Plus, it channels their eco-anxiety into action and allows them to see the collective difference they are making for nature through hundreds of small actions.

## Biodiversity gain across the education estate

England's primary and secondary schools cover an area roughly twice the size of Birmingham, in addition to the space covered by thousands of nurseries and colleges throughout the country. We're supporting young people not only to implement nature recovery actions on their sites, but to study the resulting biodiversity gains to evidence and celebrate their impact.

# Putting climate and nature at the heart of the curriculum

By establishing best practice in climate teaching and working with expert partners, the Nature Park provides free curriculum plans and quality-assured resources across all subject areas and key stages. These resources support educators to embed climate and nature across the curriculum.

This academic year has seen the publication of the [Nature Park climate education framework](#), which offers guidance on how to implement comprehensive climate education at a school, classroom or scheme of work level. It helps guide deliberate, incremental changes to current practice, leading to lasting impact. The framework incorporates evidence-informed climate pedagogy, research on effective teaching and learning, and climate and nature systems processes, making it a practical and supportive tool for educators.

Alongside this, we worked with Nature Park 24/25 pilot Professional Development affiliate organisation [Climate Adapted Pathways for Education \(CAPE\)](#), to support schools in meaningfully incorporating the Nature Park into their curriculum in a rigorous and meaningful way.

## The National Education Nature Park Climate Education Framework an overarching framework for best practice and progress



## Embedding co-creation with teachers and learners

Co-creation has been further embedded within Nature Park curriculum design. A co-creation workshop in Exeter with primary and secondary Computing teachers, supported by Nature Park staff, generated ideas for new Computing resources to engage learners and address challenging areas of the curriculum. Teachers will remain involved in testing and refining these resources. Findings from teacher focus groups in June 2025 are also being incorporated into resource development to bring climate and nature into more classrooms.

Alongside teacher input, learners have been directly involved in resource development. Year 5 pupils and teachers at West Lodge Primary School in Harrow worked with researchers from the University College London (UCL) Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Education to design outdoor Maths workshops. The children were guided by the third principle of the 24/25 Nature Park Schools Forum:

Nature Park activities should help young people learn through active experiences of observing and investigating nature themselves, teaching topics that inspire awe and wonder of nature

The children developed Maths resources that capture the awe and wonder of the natural world, and these ideas are now being brought to life in collaboration with the children. For more on the Schools Forum, see page 19.

## Resource development

We've collaborated with specialists to identify curriculum areas where resources would be most beneficial. Highlights published this year include:

- [Citizenship resources](#) created with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – enabling learners to explore and exercise their right to access environmental information.
- [Physics in the Nature Park](#) – an outdoor lesson that uses school grounds to make future Physics topics more relevant and meaningful.
- Teach KS3 and KS4 with the Nature Park – simple guides summarise a range of Nature Park resources ideal for incorporating into Geography lessons



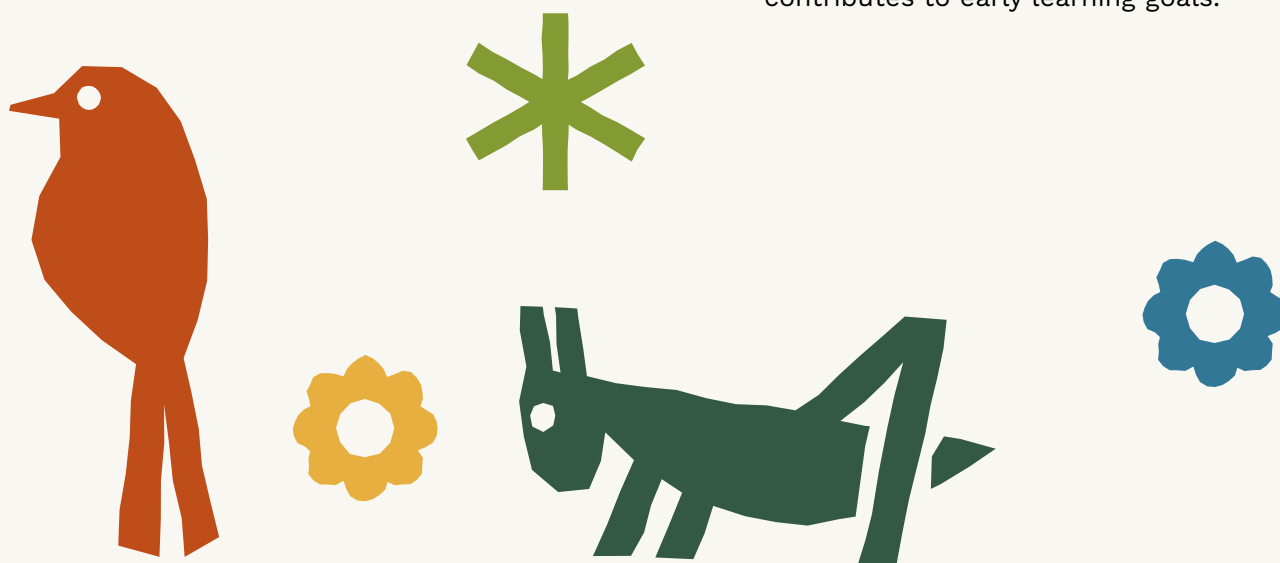
**“This has been one of my happiest years in our school, wellbeing of staff has improved and the mindfulness of students and interest in climate change and how plants thrive has been brilliant to watch”**

– Teacher, North East

### **Developing our EYFS offer**

This year involved a programme-wide review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) offer. New resources were developed, existing ones improved, and communications adapted to ensure younger learners and EYFS practitioners can engage in ways that suit their needs.

The development process began with user research and creation of practitioner personas. It included an audit of existing activities and design of new ones, such as resources to help assess risks and address parental safety concerns. We also adjusted outcomes and expectations of the Nature Park cycle for EYFS to ensure the experience is accessible, meaningful and contributes to early learning goals.



## Case study: School grounds as a classroom for curriculum learning at Lady Manners School, Derbyshire

Lady Manners School has around 1,500 students from Years 7-13. Teachers have been using its grounds to support curriculum learning to bring a range of subjects to life and collect real data on-site, providing powerful learning experiences while nurturing care for the local environment.

Anne, a Maths teacher, explained how Year 8 students learned about grouped frequency tables by measuring trees in the new wetland area:

**“I took the students to measure the heights of trees planted around our new wetland area. These saplings had been planted by pupils in two batches about two years apart, so the plan was to compare the heights of the older ones with the newer ones. The older ones were supposed to have plastic protectors, so the idea was that we could use these to distinguish them from the newer ones. Of course, in practice it wasn’t as easy as that — some tubes had gone missing. But this led to useful discussions later about outliers in the data and possible causes.”**

In the following lesson, pupils collated results into grouped frequency tables and drew graphs using consistent scales. Fewer small trees were recorded, possibly hidden in the long grass, but the graphs showed the modal group of the older trees was taller, providing clear evidence of growth. Using real-world, relatable data collected from the school site offered a far more powerful experience than using a fabricated dataset. Teachers could point to visible examples where the data reflected changes to the site. The Nature Park programme provides a platform for this kind of learning, with all collected data publicly available for future study.

Lady Manners has further plans to embed climate and nature across the curriculum. The Science department intends to introduce annual outdoor projects for each year group, adding to datasets created by previous cohorts. Staff are also keen to collaborate across subjects, for example, linking Geography and Science teaching on greenhouse gases, to reinforce concepts through shared language and themes.



# Developing green and digital skills

Participation in the programme supports the development of six key green skills across all subjects: identification and ecology, recording data, interpreting data, creative thinking and decision making, environmental stewardship and horticulture, and communication. Over the past year, particular focus been given to foundational skills for younger learners, and to green careers and Geography.

## Building foundational green skills in younger learners

As part of our EYFS engagement offer, we've focused on developing foundational green skills that prepare younger learners for future education and experiences. Following an audit of programme content, gaps in the EYFS experience were identified and addressed, embedding nature-based play and exploration into their Nature Park journey. New resources developed with Learning Through Landscapes Early Years specialists now support two steps of the five-step Nature Park cycle:

- **Making change happen (step four):** hands-on activities for improving and caring for their environments, such as exploring soil, sowing seeds, watering plants and creating signage for the outdoor spaces.
- **Recording change (step five):** new activities that encourage younger learners to observe, discuss and record positive change, provide a scaffold for more complex data collection later. Activities include counting living things, and expressing their feelings about natural features. A new Create a Nature Park corner continuous provision encourages children to document and display their learning across the journey. Alongside this, the five-step Nature Park cycle was reviewed through the lens of EYFS practitioners and learners' developmental needs. Adjustments were made to align with the seven Early Learning Goals while emphasising exploration, empathy and foundational skills. This ensures younger learners build a meaningful connection with nature and grow into advocates for the environment as they progress to Key Stage 1.

## Green careers and Geography with the Nature Park

This year also saw the development of a suite of KS3 and KS4 Geography resources to help learners explore the wide range of green careers available, from apprenticeships to degree pathways. Videos and posters highlight how the green skills developed through the Nature Park can lead to exciting and rewarding future opportunities.



# Involving all children and young people

A core goal of the Nature Park is ensuring that all children and young people can take part and develop a meaningful connection with nature. As well as being flexible and adaptable for all key stages and subjects, the programme is supported by the Nature Park grants scheme and our regional staff working across all nine English regions.

## Nature Park grants programme

In its first two years, the programme awarded more than £12 million in DfE grant funding to over 1,250 schools, nurseries and colleges. A further £3 million has now been announced to support another 1,000 eligible education settings. Funding can be used for gardening and fieldwork equipment, and for specialist support with installation and consultation. Those eligible for these grants have been selected by the DfE based on being in areas with higher levels of deprivation and lower access to green space.



From grey to green at Lea Forest Academy, Birmingham

**“The playground is quieter - you can’t hear the cars as much”**

– Parent, North West

## What have grants been used for?

### SEND engagement at Hexham Priory School, West Northumberland

Hexham Priory, a special school for children and young people aged from 2 to 19 years with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities, transformed its outdoor space using a Nature Park grant. Over two years, pupils surveyed the grounds, voted on improvements, and implemented them. They purchased an outdoor greenhouse and built two allotment areas, enabling seed propagation and observation of growth. They also developed a meadow area and planted fruit trees, collaborating with Corbridge Middle School. Climate and nature are now embedded weekly into lessons.

### Connecting with the community at Shenley Fields Nursery School, Birmingham

Shenley Fields created a community allotment producing 21 different types of fruit and vegetables. The space supports pupils to eat healthily and helps families with the cost of fresh produce. Pupils tend the allotment daily, while families also volunteer. Pollinator plants, bird boxes and baths provide habitats for wildlife.

### Inspiring the next generation at Stockwood Park Academy, Luton

Staff and students have been working year-round to improve their grounds, with some returning in the summer holidays to continue projects. The work has developed green skills and inspired several students to pursue horticulture.

**“The impact on our young people has been transformational, and self-sustaining. It has supported staff and student wellbeing and is a project that will last for years and years.”**

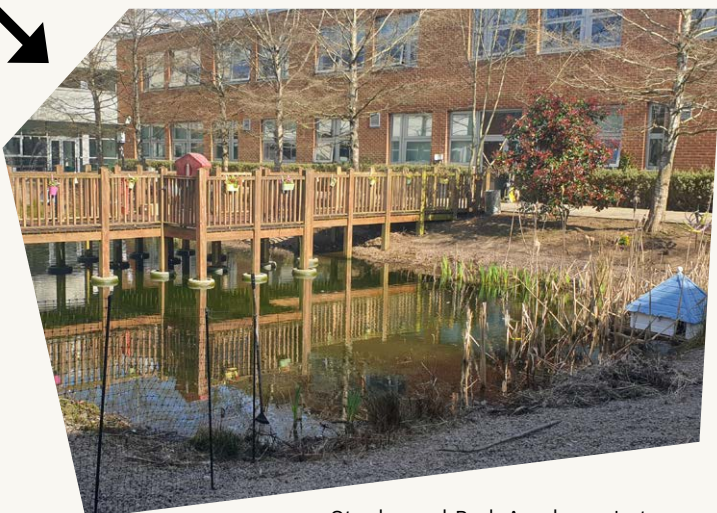
Teacher, Stockwood Park Academy

### Addressing nature deprivation at Lea Forest Academy, Birmingham

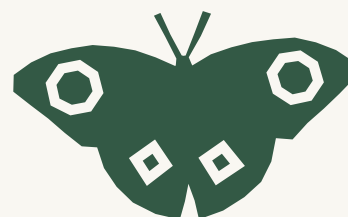
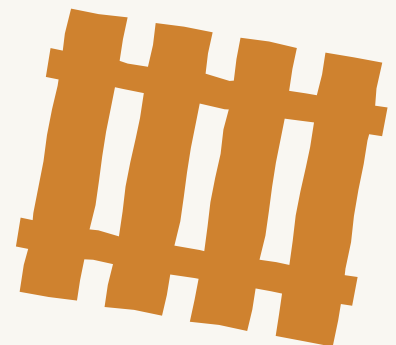
Lea Forest Academy enriched its outdoor space to provide lasting opportunities for students from deprived backgrounds. The Nature Park enabled connections between classroom learning and real-world sustainability. Students surveyed their site, investigated energy use and explored renewable options. Teachers reported increased engagement and agency, as pupils identified practical actions to improve their grounds. Outdoor spaces now support food growing, and a thriving beehive provides entrepreneurial opportunities through a honey production and marketing unit.



Lea Forest Academy, Birmingham



Stockwood Park Academy, Luton



## Caring for new habitats

To ensure interventions are maintained, settings awarded grants last year could apply for an additional £2,000 this year. More than two thirds (68%) applied successfully.

**“The top up grant has enabled us to further embed the changes already made e.g. through enabling the purchase of more waterproof suits to support free access to outdoors in all weather. Funding was also used to fund the installation of a wildlife pond which further enhances the biodiversity of our site and supports the enhancement of our outdoor curriculum.”**

Teacher, Somerville Nursery School

**“It has helped us demonstrate the importance of nature, no matter how small and many children who struggle in the classroom have benefitted greatly from learning about the wider world and encouraged aspirations for nature-based jobs in their futures.”**

Teacher, Dale Community Primary School



**“The Nature Park top-up grant has enabled us to continue the work we started, bringing much needed nature into our very dull outdoor learning space. This year we have been able to add an allotment space and have added many more plants and trees exposing our children to different sights, textures and smells. Everyone who visits our nursery comments on how we have used plants to create an exciting space for the children to learn and play.”**

Teacher, Harrington Nursery School



**“Getting outside and using Nature Park activities has improved attendance for some of our most disengaged pupils.”**

– Teacher, Yorkshire

## Nature Park Schools Forum

The Schools Forum brought together students and staff from seven representative schools — primary, middle and secondary — from across the country. Meeting in person and online over four months, they helped ensure young people’s views remain central to the programme.

The group met with Nature Park staff, scientists, curriculum specialists and the DfE’s Youth Focal Points (now known as Youth Sustainability Champions) to give their perspectives on nature, youth voice and the Nature Park programme. By the end of the four months, the group had drafted, voted on and refined three principles to help guide programme development:

1. The Nature Park should help children and young people connect with nature throughout their school life, from the youngest to the oldest year groups
2. The Nature Park should help each young person involved to understand nature is always there for you no matter how you’re feeling, while learning about and exploring nature
3. Nature Park activities should help young people learn through active experiences of observing and investigating nature themselves, teaching topics that inspire awe and wonder of nature



## How have we implemented these principles?

- Connecting with nature throughout school life: *Pollinator Count* resources were reworked for younger key stages so all learners from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5 can contribute to real-world research. The online resource library was reorganised for easier navigation, and EYFS-specific resources will launch from autumn 2025.
- Nature being there for you no matter how you’re feeling: researchers are developing measures of the programme’s wellbeing impact, including potential links to attendance and attainment. Case studies continue to show that the Nature Park is for all young people.
- Learning through active experiences: Year 5 students co-created Maths resources for outdoor learning. *Pollinator Count* activities were tested nationwide and quality-assured so that student observations can contribute to scientific datasets.

We look forward to continuing engagement with the Schools Forum to ensure young people remain at the heart of the programme development.



# Fostering a connection with nature and improving wellbeing

From the moment a setting signs up to the Nature Park programme, developing a connection with nature is at the forefront. All activities are designed to enhance the bond between nature and young people. A deeper connection with nature benefits both people and planet: it's proven to have both mental and physical wellbeing benefits, alongside developing care for nature and the environment (known as 'pro-environmental behaviours').

Our approach draws on research from Professor Miles Richardson and the Nature Connectedness Research Group at the University of Derby, particularly the 'pathways to nature connection' methodology. At the 2025 Derby Nature Connections conference, Dr Jess Tipton (Head of the National Education Nature Park) gave a keynote speech which highlighted how these concepts resonate strongly with the programme.

**“I love being in this garden, Miss. Since my grandad died, I’ve not really wanted to do anything.”**

– Pupil, North East

## Noticing nature

Simply noticing nature is proven to improve wellbeing — even viewing a flower can reduce stress. By paying close attention to our surroundings, we shift focus to the quality of our interactions rather than duration. That's why many Nature Park activities involve slowing down and noticing small details: flowers growing in concrete, insects landing on plants, and other patterns in nature that you wouldn't otherwise see.

Noticing nature is at the core of many Nature Park activities, such as:

[Hidden Nature Challenge](#)

[Observing changing states](#)

[Habitat Heroes](#)

[Sound mapping](#)

[Colour collecting](#)

[Garden detectives](#)

[Pollinator Count](#)

[Looking for leaf shapes](#)

The Hidden Nature Challenge, for example, invites learners to photograph signs of nature (or absence of it) and reflect on prompts such as “How did this make you feel?” and “Did this pattern remind you of something?” These reflections deepen both awareness and emotional connection.



Photographs recorded by young people taking part in the Nature Park across England using the Hidden Nature Challenge are on display at the Natural History Museum in London.

## Creativity

Creativity also supports nature connection, through storytelling, poetry and art. Many Nature Park activities are designed with this in mind and encourage creativity, both outdoors and indoors:

[Making zines for nature](#)

[Storytelling to empathise with nature](#)

[The power of books](#)

[Poet-trees](#)

[Shades of green](#)

[Design a plant](#)

[Creative responses to a place](#)

In *Shades of green*, learners may begin by thinking there is only one shade of green. By seeking out and photographing different tones, they discover variation and biodiversity. This shows how art and creativity can open our eyes to the richness of the natural world.

## Taking action

A key aim of the Nature Park is to give young people confidence to act for nature, turning concern or anxiety into meaningful action. Over the past year, learners have written vision statements, improved their sites using Nature Park guidance, and contributed to the Nature Park Schools Forum:

**“Our Nature Park will be a place where people feel welcome and invited to express their thoughts and feelings. Animals are safe and are able to live peacefully. We want this to be an inclusive space, where both plants and animals can grow and live with no worries and people will enjoy themselves.”**

A vision statement by Year 7 student, Salford City Academy

This year, the Nature Park resource library also published activities with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), where young people explored their right to access environmental information. These activities connect learners with their communities and show how to make positive change.



## Technology

Although sometimes viewed as a barrier, technology can also be a gateway to connection. Many Nature Park activities use digital tools — from GIS, iPads and tablets — to support exploration. Mapping tools help learners see their sites as part of a wider landscape, reinforcing a sense of community and belonging.



## Our moods

Nature can play a key role in regulating emotions. We've loved hearing feedback from teachers and learners of how the Nature Park has contributed to this over the last year.



**“When working with a group of Looked After Children through our work with the Derby Virtual School, one boy was very keen to show off the mouse habitat he had built, dragging me around by the hand and telling me about all the wonderful features of his creation like a pushy estate agent. Afterwards, his Learning Support Assistant pulled me aside and said, ‘he never speaks in class.’”**

Nature Park regional officer for the East Midlands

**“Staff at Manchester Co-op Academy said they love walking past the green wall on their way into school through what was previously a totally grey area.”**

Nature Park regional officer for the North West

**“We heard yesterday that one teacher’s involvement in Nature Park has renewed their love of teaching.”**

Nature Park regional officer for the East Midlands



# Biodiversity gain across the education estate

When a school, nursery or college takes part in the Nature Park, they're joining a research team of thousands and contributing to trailblazing global biodiversity research. As well as being an education programme, the Nature Park is a major community science project investigating what's living and growing on learning sites and how we can best improve them for nature. Community science brings people from all walks of life together with scientists to conduct real research and drive discovery, exactly what the Nature Park is doing.

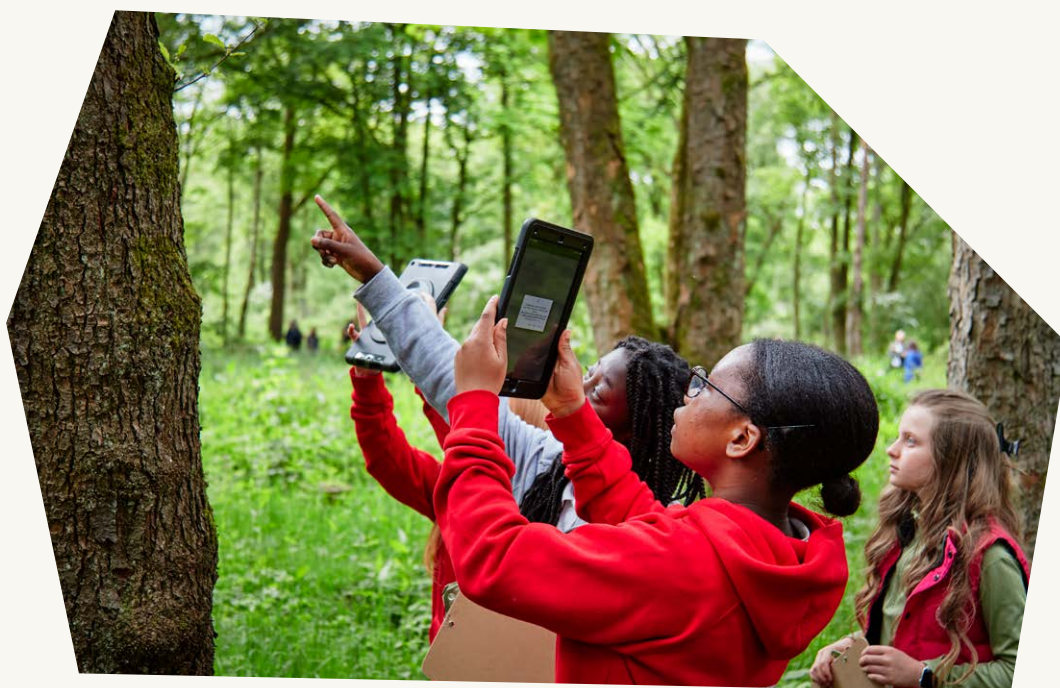
Over the past year, the Nature Park community science research team has grown into a thousand-strong collective of young people, their educators, professional researchers at the Natural History Museum and academic partners. Every young person who has mapped habitats, counted pollinators or enhanced their space for nature has generated research data to advance our shared understanding of biodiversity change, particularly on urban or heavily used sites like schools, colleges and nurseries.

Together, we form an expanding research network with over 3,100 sites outlined on the Nature Park map as locations for biodiversity study and nature recovery. Everyone taking part is a valued contributor, so a huge thank you to everyone for their efforts so far!

## Understanding our starting point

Step one in the Nature Park five-step cycle is *Getting to know your space*. In scientific terms, this means gathering baseline data to represent your starting point, from which you can measure the changes and gains you achieve for nature as you enhance your site. At the Natural History Museum, we've been thrilled to see more than 1,100 settings recording the habitats on their site. In the past academic year, we redesigned the Habitat Mapper tool to reduce the challenges with app downloads and Wi-Fi access. The new browser-based tool is easier to use, and can be delivered online or paper, depending on each setting's needs.

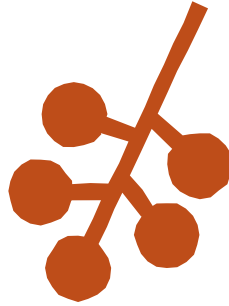
We often don't know what habitats are on education sites, so this brand-new habitat information helps researchers quantify what the education estate currently offers for nature. Such detail cannot be captured reliably from satellite imagery alone, so young people are a vital part of this community science effort.



So far, Nature Park settings have mapped:



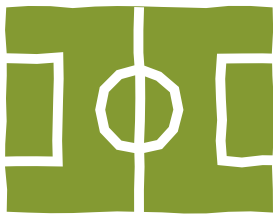
**5.6km<sup>2</sup>**  
of playing fields and lawns



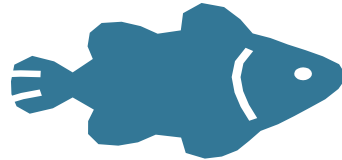
**309,660m<sup>2</sup>**  
of meadow



**1km<sup>2</sup>**  
of woodland



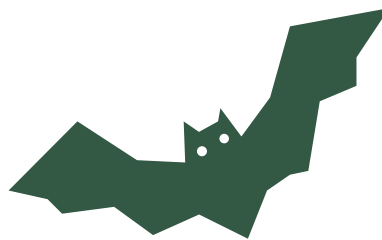
**2.2km<sup>2</sup>**  
of playgrounds



**14,700m<sup>2</sup>**  
of wildlife ponds



**865**  
bird boxes



**78**  
bat boxes



**75km**  
of hedge and  
wildlife hedge

An impressive 5,000 photos of more than 1,100 species (or species groups) have been shared by Nature Park settings using the [iNaturalist app or website](#), documenting the wildlife found on education sites. It's remarkable to see how many species the education estate is supporting — and there are many more yet to be recorded, so continuing observations remains vital! Alongside this, the [Pollinator Count](#) was developed further this year with new resources and a simplified method for Key Stages 2-3, and an updated approach for Key Stages 4-5. This survey is building a picture of pollinator diversity and abundance on education sites. When a setting conducts the [Pollinator Count](#) in contrasting habitats- for example, short playing fields versus long grass, we can study how those habitat enhancements translate into biodiversity gains.

## Enhancing sites for nature

Of course, the key to achieving biodiversity gains across the education estate is taking action to enhance areas or habitats to give nature a boost. So far, we've seen more than 1,262 habitat enhancements that turn grey spaces to greener ones, from creating new ponds or managing grassland for wildlife (for example, by letting grass grow long to transform a lawn or a playing field into a species-rich area).



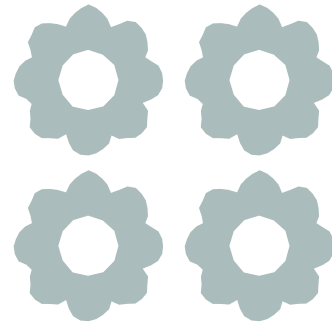
Over  
**200**  
new ponds or bog gardens



Over  
**100**  
wildflower patches planted



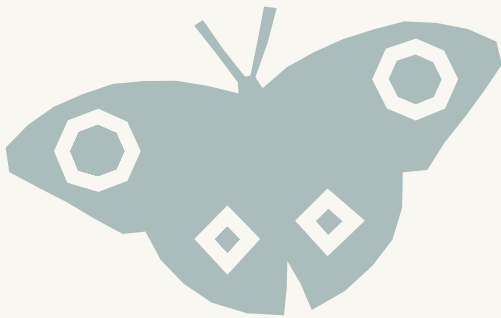
Over  
**200**  
water butts installed



**2**  
wheelchair-accessible  
raised planters



Marking the type and extent of these enhancements onto the Nature Park map using the [Tracking Change](#) tool means we can predict the likely biodiversity boost using datasets from past research. For example, adding flowers in towns has been shown to deliver an average 104% increase in pollinator abundance (total numbers) and a 46% increase in the pollinator species richness (number of different species). These gains vary by context: increases in bee species richness are often greater when flowers are planted in urban areas compared to rural ones, and where nearby semi-natural habitat is more abundant. These insights help guide the habitat enhancements we create together in the Nature Park and inform the benefits we can expect.



A number of Masters and PhD students joined the research team this year, analysing the impacts of different habitat enhancements, and exploring data accuracy within the [Pollinator Count](#) survey. All datasets, including professionally collected data, have some error — we're all human and we all make mistakes! Understanding where errors occur helps us improve resources and account for them in analyses. We've been observing a small sample of young people as they take part and using data from an online quiz and in-person events to quantify the identification accuracy for different insect groups.

As we move into the third academic year of the programme, we look forward to analysing the site boundary, habitat and species data as more settings join the community science research and submit their findings. We'll publish the research outcomes in scientific publications and share updates via webinars and the Nature Park website. New wildlife surveys and exciting new tools are in development to help young people visualise and analyse their own data and compare it with data from other settings.



Pond area at Grimes Dyke Primary School in Leeds

## Case study: Mapping habitats within the outdoor curriculum at Larkholme Primary School, Lancashire

Larkholme Primary School has built a strong outdoor curriculum over the last five years, weaving Nature Park resources and activities, including habitat mapping, into their outdoor lessons.

During the pandemic, with more learning taking place outside, staff saw the opportunities within their grounds and worked with pupils to plan better use of their outdoor spaces. Since then, the outdoor curriculum has become more established, particularly in response to rising mental health and wellbeing needs.

All children have an outdoor session every fortnight throughout the year. The curriculum is progressive, with each half term focusing on themes that are revisited annually so pupils build skills and knowledge over time. Topics include wellbeing and first aid, map skills, bushcraft and storytelling and outdoor learning, so by the time that children reach Year 6, they have an in-depth understanding of these areas.

Rebecca, the Outdoor Learning Coordinator, registered for the Nature Park and has threaded Nature Park activities across the outdoor curriculum, particularly the habitat mapping resources. “The mapping your site resources fit really well with our map skills topic, and the children really enjoy doing it because it’s so pertinent to them, it’s our grounds,” said Rebecca. “We can ask questions like what have we got, what would we like more of, and what can we see? They also love the fact they are part of a big research project!”

After creating their site boundary, Rebecca picked a couple of Nature Park resources to complement units such as [3D maps](#) and poetry, refreshing lesson plans before moving into habitat mapping. Because the focus is on exploring and getting to know their grounds, the approach aligns naturally with the outdoor curriculum and inspires further action.

At the time of writing, Larkholme have mapped three habitat types. With three classes in Year 5 and 6, each class took one habitat. Teachers facilitated whole-class discussion before pupils mapped independently.

Rebecca explains how they did it:

“The first class started with mapping grass and wildflower habitats. They loved it – they thought grass was just the short green grass we have on mown playing fields, but the flowcharts taught them about the different types and we now have islands of grass that we leave to grow long so they can see that it’s different and gets seedheads.

“Then the second group mapped our tree habitats; the class did tree surveys to look at the different types of trees they had. Some found it easier than others, but they really got the idea of what they could see, and tallying up the different types of trees they found. For some pupils it was the first time they’d done bark rubbing which they thought was amazing.

“The third group mapped our microhabitats. I gave them a copy of an aerial view of our site map, and then they went round with the microhabitats worksheets and ticked off what they found, before marking on the map where it was. They were really pleased to see that we had quite a lot, and then we had a conversation around what isn’t on there and is it something we’d like to consider having there in the future. We’re looking into putting some bee hotels in next!”

With three habitats mapped, the plan is to work through the remaining types and upload the findings to the Nature Park website using the [Habitat Mapping tool](#). Pupils will review the map together to check, understand and explore the results in follow-up sessions.

“We involve children in the whole process, from planting and growing to watering and grounds maintenance. They care for their grounds with different groups doing different things, and they get up to all sorts! We have keen litter pickers, a group that have built a dead hedge, groups that add woodchip to muddy areas, and talk to them throughout the processes so they can understand how and why we do these things for both wildlife and the school community.”

# Highlights from our regional teams

Across the country, children and young people are transforming urban school sites into nature havens. They are mapping, digging, planting, planning, learning and sharing. These student-led improvements have boosted wellbeing, enriched outdoor learning, encouraged pupil responsibility and provided real-life context for curriculum subjects. In this section, our regional teams highlight key examples from their areas.

## Registered setting by region

Region name	Registered settings		Registered settings as % of total eligible	
	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25
London	279	786	3.2%	9%
South West	210	673	3.7%	13%
South East	387	1162	3.9%	12%
East of England	268	831	4.3%	14%
East Midlands	281	753	6.1%	17%
Yorkshire and the Humber	372	827	7.7%	18%
West Midlands	414	881	7.7%	17%
North West	582	1198	8.2%	18%
North East	227	416	10.7%	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,020</b>	<b>7,527</b>	<b>5.5% (average)</b>	<b>14% (average)</b>

Shaded regions had a regional team in post during academic year 23/24 as well as 24/25. All regions now have a regional team.

**“I didn’t know we could actually make space for nature in school – now I want to do this at home too. I feel proud because I’m helping to build something that will still be here when I’ve left school.”**

– Pupil, East of England

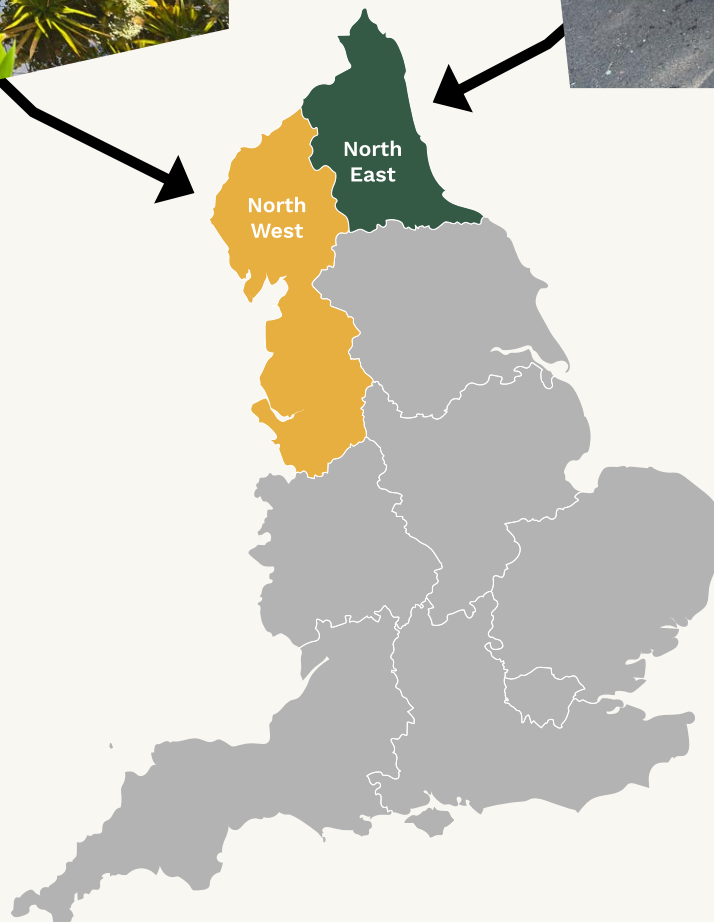


## North West

- St Peter's RC High School in Manchester have begun embedding the Nature Park into the Computer Science curriculum, starting with biodiversity data collected by their Eco Committee using iNaturalist. This data is now used in the Year 7 spreadsheet unit, with further curriculum links planned.
- St Philip's CofE Primary School in Atherton installed a pond that now serves as a safe place where students can manage their emotions - a clear example of how connecting with nature can support behaviour management and wellbeing.
- The North West regional team hosted one of the Great Science Share for Schools tenth anniversary celebrations at RHS Bridgewater. Five local primary schools shared their science investigations before taking part in biodiversity activities.

## North East

- "Grey to green" transformations are underway across the region. Ponds have been installed at Tudhoe Moor Nursery School and Bowburn Primary School in County Durham. St Joseph's RC Primary School in Sunderland created a wellbeing and prayer garden to support mental health.
- At Corbridge Middle School in Hexham, Year 6 Computing and Geography classes collaborated on habitat mapping, while Sandhill View Secondary School in Sunderland integrated habitat mapping into Key Stage 3 Geography.
- The North East regional team is also active in partnerships, representing the Nature Park at local authority climate events and celebrating successes from Climate Friendly Schools programme.



## Yorkshire and the Humber

- Herringthorpe Infant School in Rotherham involved all pupils in the Nature Park and boosted biodiversity by installing plants for pollinators and bug hotels. Rainbow Primary Leadership Academy in Bradford installed a green wall system and embedded the Nature Park across the school.
- Sheffield-based Kids Plant Trees worked with seven schools to plant green walls, create wildlife meadows, build bug hotels and design rainwater terraces.
- The team also engaged pupils at the Schools' Climate Education South Yorkshire conference, where children created zines for nature. They supported school sessions at RHS Harlow Carr, collaborated at the Northern Star Academy Trust conference, and distributed leftover plants from the Wentworth Woodhouse flower show to local schools.

## West Midlands

- At Kings Rise Academy in Birmingham, a once derelict bit of playground is now a thriving wildflower meadow. Students showcased their work at a 'Kings Rise in Bloom' event and shared plans for a community hub. During a two-hour visit, the West Midlands team observed four butterfly species.
- Environmental Science A-Level students at Newcastle and Stafford College used the Pollinator Count to monitor insects on their site.
- The West Midlands team also supported EYFS development of the Nature Park, maintaining contact with pilot nurseries that have been shaping the programme since 2023.



## East Midlands

- Dale Community Primary School in Derby added a vegetable and sensory garden to their playground and embedded the Nature Park across the whole school. Every pupil has taken part in mapping habitats, deciding on improvements and planting.
- King Edward VI Academy in Spilsby also demonstrated how a secondary school can benefit, with an after-school gardening club and vegetable growing projects enhancing both the site and the wider school community.



## East of England

- The regional team has collaborated with partners to support schools, such as at Drake Primary School in Norfolk.
- At Westfield Primary School in Bedford, Year 6 pupils planted a garden as part of their 'Dig for Victory' topic in History, turning a concrete playground into a greener space.
- The team has also engaged local stakeholders, including an MP at a climate action event in Waveney Valley. They inspired a multi-academy trust to host a Nature Park INSET teacher training day at Grafham Water and joined the Essex Healthy Schools festival to celebrate pupils' wellbeing initiatives



## South West

- At Keyham Barton Catholic Primary School in Plymouth, a neglected tarmac corner became a calm, plant-rich space through collaboration with the Tree Council. Ten student council pupils led the design, supported by the whole school. Year 4 and 5 pupils grew vegetables through the Young Marketeers project and sold them at Plymouth Market.
- Ellacombe Church of England Academy in Torquay transformed their “concrete jungle” playground with planters and made the space accessible to younger pupils with new gardening tools. “Our playground was all grey and concrete and now we are going to be able to make it more colourful. Hopefully some butterflies might start to come soon,” said a pupil from Ellacombe.
- At Chilton Trinity School in Bridgwater, Year 8 pupils mapped site habitats to create a baseline and plan enhancements.



## London

- Central Park Primary School in Newham has exemplified the five-step Nature Park process. After mapping their habitats and planting trees, two pupils were inspired to fundraise for a new rooftop wildlife garden.
- Cherry Garden SEND school used Habitat Heroes and the Hidden Nature Challenge to support multi-sensory exploration of their site.
- Secondary school students also became Young Reporters at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, interviewing exhibitors and producing creative responses while learning about STEM, green skills and horticultural careers.



## South East

- In collaboration with Kent County Council, pupils at Stocks Green Primary School in Tonbridge, celebrated Outdoor Classroom Day by completing activities such as Habitat Heroes, the Hidden Nature Challenge and habitat mapping.
- Downs Infant School in Brighton transformed a neglected area into a thriving pond habitat, embedding nature into their curriculum: “In a very nature-deprived school, it’s given us a space to teach a love of the natural world. It’s now a haven for both wildlife and children,” said one teacher.
- The regional team has also collaborated with Nature Park 24/25 pilot delivery affiliate organisations on activities including an Earthwatch creativity day, where pupils designed a garden at Rose Street Primary School in Sheerness, and The Tree Council’s Force for Nature event at RHS Wisley, where students created imaginative climate-adapted trees.



# Our sister projects

We work closely with other programmes commissioned or supported as part of the [Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#). These are known as our 'sister projects'. Together we help schools, nurseries and colleges on their sustainability journeys, including the creation and implementation of Climate Action Plans (CAPs). Our shared aim is to provide coordinated support, ensuring that no matter which programme educators first engage with, they're signposted to the most relevant resources.

- [Sustainability Support for Education](#): a digital platform of resources, services and tools to help schools, nurseries and colleges identify appropriate actions to create or develop their Climate Action Plans.
- [Climate Ambassadors](#) and [Let's Go Zero Climate Action Advisors](#): provide expert knowledge and practical support to develop and deliver Climate Action Plans.

The National Education Nature Park programme supports all four pillars of [Climate Action Plans](#): adaptation and resilience; biodiversity; climate education and green careers; and decarbonisation.

**Regional teams from across the sister projects are working together to provide support, including:**



## Case study: creating a Climate Action Plan at Drake Primary School in Norfolk

Drake Primary School has been working with regional staff from the DfE-funded and supported programmes after hearing about them at a sister project event at the University of East Anglia. They combined advice from the National Education Nature Park, Climate Ambassadors and Let's Go Zero Climate Action Advisors to write a Climate Action Plan structured around the four pillars.

Drake began by working with their local Let's Go Zero Climate Action Advisor, Luciana de Almeida, to address the decarbonisation pillar. Using the Eco-Schools Count Your Carbon tool, they calculated the school's carbon footprint, identified areas for improvement and planned next steps with pupils actively involved.

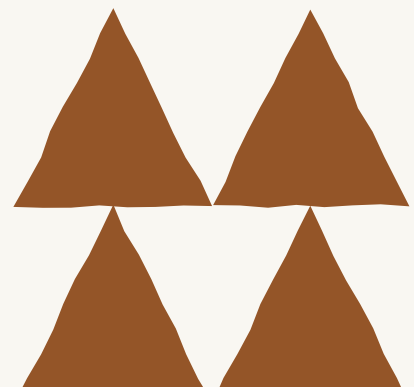
Another recommendation from Let's Go Zero was to analyse out-of-school hours energy usage. After noticing significant evening electricity consumption particularly from iPad charging banks and printers, timers were installed. Pupils then investigated how much energy each item of school equipment used.

Kit Marie Rackley, Climate Ambassadors Regional Coordinator for the East of England, worked with Drake on the **adaptation and resilience** pillar. Kit Marie supported the school in linking their plan to statutory requirements by auditing safeguarding policies in relation to climate change impacts such as flooding, overheating and cold weather.

"Support from school leadership is key to achieving sustainability goals. From the outset, Drake Primary School leaders prioritised sustainability, ensuring staff had the capacity and resources to work on their Climate Action Plan with Let's Go Zero,"

- Luciana de Almeida, Let's Go Zero Climate Action Advisor in East of England

"Sustainability leads therefore had the support to attend training and implement some of our recommendations right away. One key action was appointing a sustainability governor and making sustainability a regular agenda item in staff meetings, has already led to impressive progress in all areas of their Climate Action Plan."



“Drake decided that the next step would be to evaluate their current safeguarding policies with the aim to make them more ‘climate literate’,

“We looked at different safeguarding categories such as ‘Mental Health & Wellbeing’ and ‘Community Engagement’ and assessed against statements such as ‘We ensure that mental health support is available for students who have experienced climate-related disasters.’”

“As well as inspiring confidence in what a climate-literacy safeguarding policy looks like, this process has helped Drake to prioritise their next steps, one of them being to make small changes to their safeguarding policies such as referencing climate emergency plans in the ‘Adaptation & Resilience’ section of their Climate Action Plan.”

- Kit Marie Rackley, Climate Ambassadors Coordinator for the East of England.

The National Education Nature Park has been helping support Drake with the **biodiversity** and **climate education** pillars. Teachers carried out the Hidden Nature Challenge with their Year 3 classes and have taken part in the Mapping your site activity with support from Regional Officers Jenna Gilmour and Louis Langenberg. These activities provided a baseline of what was living and growing on the site, and highlighted opportunities for improvement.

“The support we have received from the programmes has been amazing and has helped us create our Climate Action Plan,” says Sara Farish, Sustainability Lead at Drake Primary. “Having worked with these programmes it has helped us to prioritise actions that need to be taken but also helped to keep us grounded and not feel overwhelmed by the workload and challenges we face ahead.”

- Sara Farish, Sustainability Lead at Drake Primary



# What's next?

We've got an action-packed year ahead! Here are some of the areas we are most excited about.

- **A whole-school approach:** the Nature Park is designed to involve everyone within a school, nursery or college community. This year, we will support settings to embed a culture of putting nature at the heart of all school life.
- **Supporting Climate Action Plans (CAPs):** we'll work closely with our sister programmes to support the creation, development and implementation of CAPs.
- **Research into nature and wellbeing:** building on evidence that nature connection supports wellbeing, we will begin our own research into how the Nature Park is impacting students and staff.
- **Expanding the Nature Park for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):** we've adapted the programme for the youngest learners so everyone can get involved from the start of their educational journey.

- **Development work for Specialist educational needs and disabilities (SEND):** we'll continue to consult with specialists in SEND settings to ensure the programme meets their needs.
- **Further digital tool improvements:** habitat mapping tool refinements will continue to deepen understanding of habitat biodiversity; we'll launch a grassland survey and launch the [Nature Park Map](#) to make it easier for educators to access site data for lessons.
- **More curriculum-linked resources coming online:** upcoming resources include Maths, Computer Science and arts-based subjects, aligned with the outcomes of the government's curriculum review.
- **Continued collaboration:** we'll keep working with Climate Adapted Pathways for Education (CAPE), our Professional Development affiliate, to equip school and subject leaders with the knowledge and hands-on skills to integrate the Nature Park into teaching and learning, ensuring school grounds improve for biodiversity, young people strengthen their connection to nature, and pupils understand climate impacts in their local environment.

**“Teaching climate topics across subjects has given me more confidence to discuss environmental issues with my class”**

– Teacher, North West



# Glossary

- **Biodiversity:** The variety of living organisms, such as animals and plants, in an ecosystem. Ecosystems are dependent on biodiversity to persist and to work properly, and we are dependent on ecosystems to function. The word biodiversity is a contraction of biological diversity.
- **Climate Action Plans:** a detailed plan to enable education settings to progress or commence sustainability initiatives. It is structured around four pillars: adaptation and resilience, biodiversity, climate education and green careers and decarbonisation.
- **Community science:** Scientific work undertaken by members of the public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of scientists and scientific institutions. It is sometimes called citizen science.
- **Continuous provision:** Refers to the resources and areas laid out in a classroom to encourage learning through play and exploration.
- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):** Teaching for children under five years old.
- **Education estate:** The buildings and grounds of education settings.
- **GIS:** Geographic Information Systems. GIS connects data to a map, integrating location data (where things are) with all types of descriptive information (what things are like there).
- **Green jobs and careers:** jobs or careers that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment.
- **Habitat mapping:** habitat mapping is the process of defining habitat areas and wildlife features on school, nursery and college sites as part of the Nature Park programme, by recording data on our digital maps. This is done by children and young people observing what's there while an adult enters it onto the map with an easy-to-use digital tool.
- **ICO:** Information Commissioner's Office.
- **INSET day:** short for in-service training day, when students do not attend school while staff undertake training.
- **Multi-academy trust (MAT):** a trust responsible for a number of academies. It consists of members akin to company shareholders, and trustees responsible for governance.
- **Nursery:** For the purposes of Nature Park, a 'nursery' could be a childminder on a non-domestic premises, private or Local Authority nursery or children's centre.
- **Pro-environmental behaviours:** acting with the environment in mind and behaving in ways that benefit the environment.
- **SEND:** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- **Sustainability lead:** the role of a sustainability lead is to drive forward both action and awareness of sustainability for their education setting.
- **Whole-school approach:** an approach to that gives everyone the opportunity to be involved and meaning the responsibilities and benefits are shared, lasting and embedded across the whole school, nursery or college.

Definitions from a variety of sources, including the Natural History Museum, Esri UK, Oxford Languages and the Department for Education.



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