

Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme toolkit

Empowering young people to lead climate action within their communities



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Cover image: New Forest Junior Rangers
All images credit NFNPA unless stated otherwise.

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About the New Forest National Park

The New Forest National Park is a world capital for wildlife – its mosaic of internationally important habitats supports more than 20,000 species, many of which are rare.

It's facing the challenges of a changing climate, biodiversity loss, and pressure from being in a densely populated part of southern England. Meeting these challenges depends not only on protecting the landscape itself, but on strengthening the connections between people and nature.

Responding to a changing climate

Find out how the changing climate is affecting the New Forest's habitats, species and heritage.

Key stats:

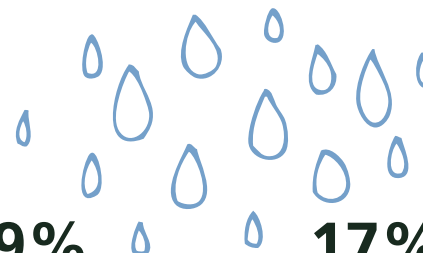
3.5 degrees

summer maximum temperature increase by the end of the century, compared to the end of the last.



37%

of the New Forest National Park is at high or very high risk of habitat loss or damage due to climate change



29%

less rain in summer (although total annual rainfall will be very similar)



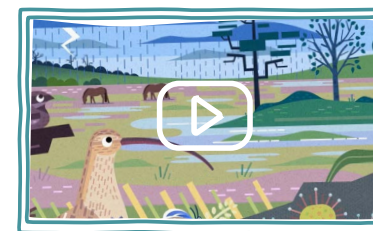
17%

more rain in winter (although total annual rainfall will be very similar)

 See page 28 for more



Read the full report



Watch the animation



2

About YouCAN

Image: New Forest Youth Board member
at New Forest Thrive 2026



Protecting together, shaping tomorrow through the YouCAN scheme

Young people will be the most affected by the climate and nature emergencies. Yet their voices are the least heard and they have fewer opportunities to make a difference.

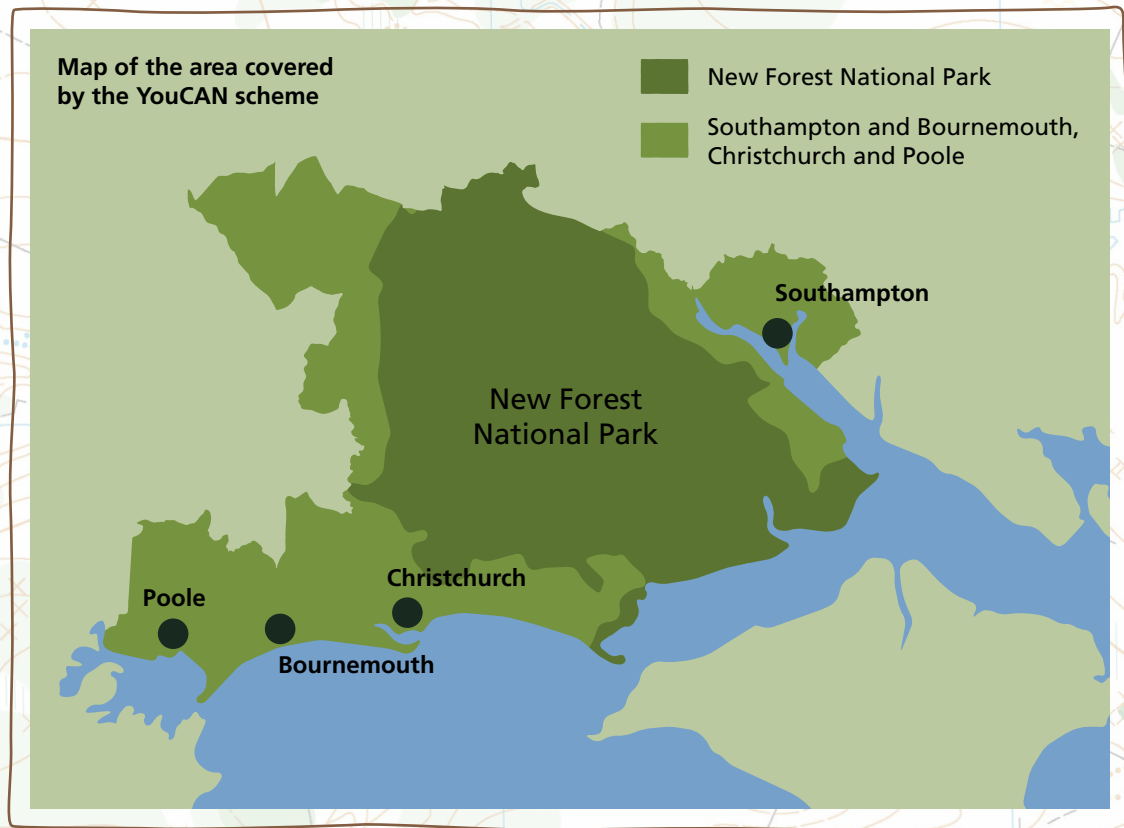
The £1.4m Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme was launched in October 2023 to:

- » **Empower** young people to understand and lead climate action within their communities
- » **Support** green skills and jobs
- » **Provide** an outdoor learning programme for young people from all backgrounds to explore urban, rural, coastal and freshwater areas.

The three-year scheme saw more than

28,000* participants across the
300 square mile area

of the New Forest, Southampton, and Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole – 10,000 of which were young people between the ages of 11 and 25.



The YouCAN scheme was led by the New Forest National Park Authority in partnership with:



YouCAN was also supported by external evaluator Action Hampshire.



Find out more at newforestnpa.gov.uk/YouCAN

Image: Litter pick at Calshot beach.



The project

YouCAN saw 43 innovative and impactful projects brought to life.

Highlights included:

- Establishing a New Forest Youth Board
- A youth-led play exploring air pollution and New Forest folklore
- Ranger programmes
- Festivals
- Internships



Watch the
YouCAN
highlights



It was guided by the following themes:



Inspire

nature connection



Activate

communities and
individuals to lead
climate action



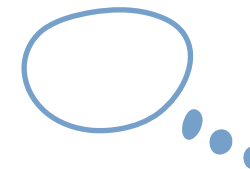
Communicate

the climate and nature
emergencies in clear and
innovative ways



Grow

green skills and
support young
people in green
careers



Reflect

on the legacy the project
leaves, ways of working,
and the partnership's
roles as custodians of
the National Park and
surrounding areas

Theory of Change

What is a Theory of Change?

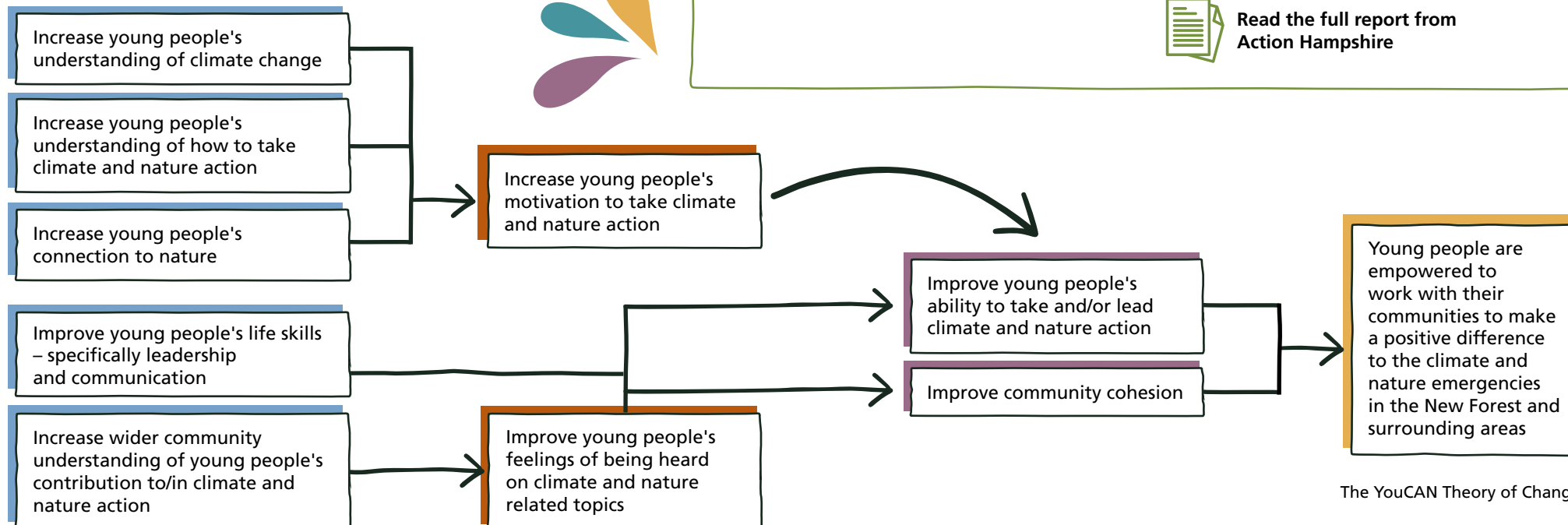
- A methodology for planning, monitoring, and evaluating an initiative
- Provides a description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context.

The YouCAN Theory of Change:

- Created by the partners through workshops and 1-1 sessions
- Led by evaluator Action Hampshire
- Identified the overall long-term change we want to see (impact)
- Determined all the conditions that need to be in place to achieve the overall change (outcomes)
- Pinpointed how the programme activities contribute to the outcomes.



**Read the full report from
Action Hampshire**



The YouCAN Theory of Change

YouCAN in numbers



£1.4m

investment from the National Lottery Community Fund and match funding from partners

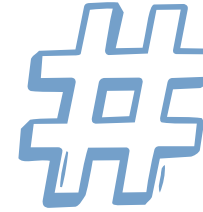
2

new community festivals created



3,000+

volunteer hours given by young people, including New Forest Youth Board members



33,500+

social media engagements



1

youth advisory board created

28,000



participants in YouCAN projects and activities

7



partner organisations brought together

46



young people under the age of 30 employed or undertook paid internships



100

junior and young adult rangers



20 tonnes

of CO₂ or equivalent emissions reduced through climate pledges



43

new projects



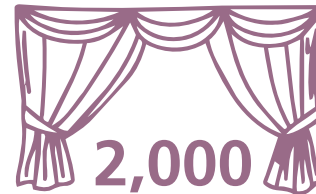
300

square miles covered across the New Forest, Southampton and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole



700

activities encouraging nature connection and climate action



2,000

watched a ground-breaking youth-led theatre show on climate change



75%

agreed participating in YouCAN improved their understanding of the climate and nature emergencies

3

YouCAN programmes

Image: New Forest Youth Board members



Inspire

The YouCAN scheme set out to inspire young people to connect with nature and foster a sense of care for it, whether within the New Forest National Park or urban green spaces.



Image: Volunteers



A Forest of Calm

A beautiful garden 'A Forest of Calm' was designed by Leigh Johnstone (AKA The Beardy Gardener) and created with a group of home-educated young people from across the New Forest and featured at Beaulieu in 2023.

The garden included a native woodland edge, a place of enjoyment and adventure, which opened out onto the iconic heathland landscape that humans and animals share together, including the famous New Forest pony. The garden was transported to Bramshaw Village Hall site after the show.



Read more



Gardeners and kids in 'A Forest of Calm'



Young people from Broadleaf Home Ed Co-op CIC



Leigh Johnstone, 'Beardy Gardener' (left) and designer, Lily Clarke (right) in A Forest of Calm

Providing access to nature

YouCAN enabled the New Forest NPA to provide guided walks and cycle rides for refugee groups supported by Alabare and Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group.

An access grant was also made available to Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group to provide disadvantaged young people with access to opportunities to explore nature and climate-related activities. The grant funded transport, theatre tickets, adaptive equipment, outdoor clothing and wheelchair hire.

Almost 200 refugees connected with nature in the National Park.



Refugees supported by Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group on a guided walk with the NPA in the New Forest





Ranger programmes

The **New Forest Junior Rangers** scheme was set up by the NPA for 11 to 18 year-olds interested in conservation, sustainability and the natural world to make a difference in the National Park.

They developed a range of knowledge and skills about the New Forest, its history and habitats, as well as the balance of conservation, recreation and climate within a protected landscape. They worked towards completing a gold, silver or bronze Junior Ranger Award to celebrate their knowledge, skills and development.

Sessions included practical conservation tasks, hedge planting, bench building, **New Forest code** campaigns, road safety awareness, and learning about coastal and freshwater habitats.

In total Junior Rangers collectively completed

338 activity days

across 32 sessions



36

Junior Rangers achieved bronze, silver or gold awards

Young people collectively completed

725 session days

across 84 bespoke Junior Ranger programmes for organised groups, including young carers, young people outside of full-time mainstream education, or home educated

Targeted programmes

The NPA provided bespoke Junior Ranger programmes for young people from underserved backgrounds.

They worked with group leaders to design five session-long programmes which fitted the needs of individual young people. These sessions provided a mixture of practical and learning-based tasks and allowed for flexibility on the day.

Meeting young people repeatedly over a series of sessions was crucial to building relationships and helping them connect with nature.



New Forest Junior Rangers discovering coastal species with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust



Lessons learnt

- Adapting group sizes to meet individual needs was very important.
- Pathways were established for young people to follow after the programme ends, for example, bespoke Junior Ranger sessions leading into the main programme.
- Flexibility in approach and expectations on the day maximised benefits for the participants.



Read more



Watch more



Ranger programmes



The Parks Foundation's **Young Adult Ranger Work Experience** programme gave young people aged 16 to 25 in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area a chance to try out an environmental career, and build nature connections, confidence and crucial experience for their CV. Skills the programme helped develop included species conservation, habitat creation, wildlife surveys, landscaping and park maintenance.



Parks Foundation young adult rangers

81

rangers gained valuable life and career skills from the programme

1,600+

hours given by young people to improve local community parks and greenspaces.



Read more



Watch more

Lessons learnt

The Parks Foundation's Young Adult Ranger Work Experience sessions were often first found by parents or through word of mouth. It would likely have benefited the programme to have a young person, perhaps a local university student, involved in the session planning and marketing early on, who was able to give advice and guidance on the best ways to reach and engage with other young people.

It became apparent later into the programme that having sessions at the same time of day and week meant The Parks Foundation saw more regular attendance from young rangers. Often their schedules were limited

by education or work commitments, so more consultation around best times to hold sessions may have meant events had higher attendances.

The sessions require young people to be able to work independently, due to the nature of the work and number of delivery staff at each event. Many enquiries received, however, suggested there is also a need for a similar programme for young people who may require more one-on-one support, such as those with special education needs or who require a support worker present.

Charlie's story

After finishing sixth form and deciding university was not for him, Charlie followed his love of the outdoors into volunteering. This led him to The Parks Foundation's Young Adult Ranger Work Experience programme, where he gained practical skills and learned from Programme Lead Will Bowskill. He then secured a paid internship at YouCAN partner the Countryside Education Trust (CET).

During the internship, Charlie gained hands-on experience in coppicing, quality control and brokering deals with garden centres and individual buyers. Charlie said: 'Working outdoors I just feel alive. I love being outdoors – it's my favourite place to be.'

'Projects like this are important for young people to build green skills. There's not been a barrier of "you need a degree or a qualification, so you can't come in". I've been able to just work as hard as I want and get to where I want because YouCAN's provided that funding and those projects. They've taken a barrier down, the way I see it, so it's enabled me to get into volunteering, to get a passion for it and also, now that I'm here, there's paid experience in conservation on my CV which is a massive help for the future.'

Following the internships, Charlie was employed part-time at the CET as a centre assistant and volunteer coordinator.



Read more

Watch
Charlie's
story



CET intern and Young Adult Ranger Charlie

Activate

YouCAN brought local communities together and created more opportunities for individuals, community groups and organisations to learn about and respond to climate change.



Image: Urban Wild on the Common



Festivals

Two new festivals were created, Urban Wild and New Forest Thrive – deeply rooted in and shaped by their local communities.

Both festivals were launched in 2025 and run again in 2026, attracting an estimated 3,000 attendees and involving 80 local organisations and community groups, including: PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling, RSPB, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, African Activities, Bird Aware Solent, and Hampshire Community Police Officers.



A plastic bottle nightjar activity at Urban Wild 2026

Urban Wild

Urban Wild was Southampton's first city-wide nature-focused festival. The week-long festival encouraged families and people of all ages to connect with nature on their doorsteps, through creative, intergenerational, and sustainable attractions. Most events were family-friendly, accessible and low or at no cost, including art and photography-based events, guided walks, pond-dipping, conservation activities, and a supper club including low carbon and locally sourced food.

Highlight: Giving nature a voice – Interspecies Democracy event

People dressed as plants and animals held a council meeting at Southampton City Council chamber, 'giving voice' to the city's diverse wildlife and highlighting the issues they face. It received widespread media coverage, was mentioned in Parliament, and even featured on BBC's Have I Got News for You!



Community group at Urban Wild on the Common 2026.



Highlight: Urban wild on the Common

The main event celebration involved a free mini festival on Southampton Common featuring green and conservation groups, local music acts, and small businesses.

Southampton National Park City (SNPC) chair, Christelle Blunden said: 'Urban Wild was incredibly important for bringing together many organisations that are working to make Southampton a greener, healthier place to live, and showing how unified we are in our mission to achieve full National Park City status.'

Urban Wild was led by SNPC, with support from the NPA.



Interspecies Democracy in Southampton City Council chamber 2025

Music at Urban Wild 2026. © Jacob Lakeland

Festivals

New Forest Thrive

The one-day event took place in Ringwood, on the edge of the New Forest National Park, celebrating both community and nature and how we can work together to help the New Forest thrive for future generations. The festival had stalls, performances and activities based on sustainability, conservation and active travel.

Thrive was organised by the NPA's education and youth team and featured The Parks Foundation, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Theatre for Life, and local green groups.

NPA member and chair of the YouCAN partnership board, James Wylor-Owen said: 'Both New Forest Thrive and Urban Wild showcased the importance of local community in responding to the climate and nature emergencies and how we can start by connecting with and making space for the nature on our doorsteps.'



Watch highlights of
New Forest Thrive 2025



New Forest Thrive 2026. Top left, Bee Circus and Youth Riders. Top right, PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling. Bottom left, The NPA stand. Bottom right, African Activities performing 'A story in a suitcase'.

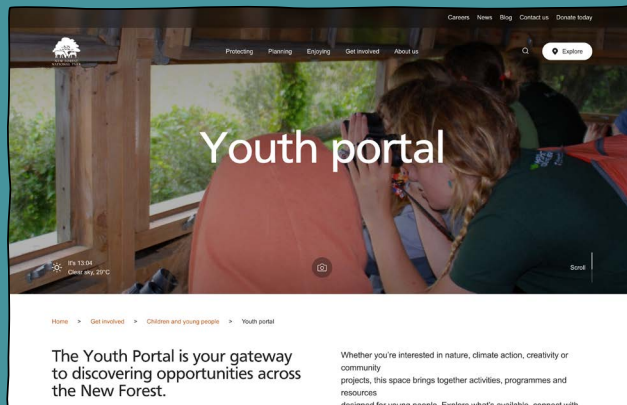
Youth Portal

Finding volunteering, clubs, online resources and training opportunities for 11 to 30 year-olds within the YouCAN region could be difficult.

An online youth portal was created where opportunities can be filtered by age and interest, including arts, heritage, conservation, as well as whether it's suitable for Duke of Edinburgh scheme participants, or people with access and public transport needs.



Find opportunities.



The Youth Portal on the NPA website



A bug hunt organised by RACE

Community champions



Green groups

The NPA supports a wide network of green groups across the wider New Forest through an online community platform as well as funding and training opportunities. Through YouCAN, a few of these green groups were spotlighted in a blog and photo series. **Read more.**

Ringwood Actions for Climate Emergency (RACE) chair of trustees, Mary DeBoos said: 'Will we solve all the issues of climate change? No, we won't. Will we be able to say we did our little bit locally? Yes, we will.'

Brockenhurst Repair Café volunteer, Joshua Morgan said: 'It's a really nice way of giving back to the local community and if me coming along and repairing some stuff means people don't go online and buy something new then that's a positive thing to do.'

Ringwood Repair Cafe chair, Rae Frederick said: 'I'm passionate about getting youth involved because they're the future. We've had children bring their toys in for repairs, but the next step will be trying to upskill young people too. If they came to a repair café they might learn about a trade and think that's something I could do for a job.'



Ringwood Repair Cafe



Volunteer Joshua Morgan mending a broken zip at Brockenhurst Repair Cafe



Young Placemakers Girls in Parks Picnic. © SNPC

Young Placemakers

Young Placemakers was launched by Southampton National Park City in November 2024 and provided a platform, funding and mentorship for four young people under the age of 25 to shape their local community.

Successful outcomes have included creating more equitable access to public green spaces for women and girls. One Young Placemaker, Fiza, planned a series of outdoor activities for young girls from her community in the St Mary's area of Southampton – which has a high representation of Asian girls from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds. Many of these girls have restricted access on visiting and using green space due to family and community worries for their safety. By facilitating these activities, the Young Placemakers intended to reduce barriers to accessing Southampton's green spaces. These sessions were delivered with the support of youth charity **The Agency**.

Megan's story

Megan campaigned for safer and more accessible green spaces in Southampton, particularly for women.

Using her funding, she made and put up posters at Southampton Common highlighting lit routes, the nearest police station and other safety information on where to seek help when experiencing harassment or risk of assault. Megan's mentor and SNPC introduced her to decision makers in Southampton City Council to make this project a reality. Her campaign also led to Southampton Park Rangers receiving training on how best to intervene and challenge inappropriate and harmful behaviour.

Megan said: 'With Young Placemakers, I wanted to make green spaces accessible for everybody – from my perspective as a young woman who commuted through a lot of the green spaces in the city every day, it was important for me to feel that people could actually use them.'

'I really hope it means young people will feel a bit more empowered to get out there and use the public spaces'.



Young Placemaker Megan

Lessons learnt

While four young people signed up to become Young Placemakers, two delivered projects directly improving their local community. Feedback highlighted that some young people struggled with the independent nature of the projects and step by step design process. SNPC and the project mentors agreed on improving flexibility within project timelines.



New Forest Youth Board



The New Forest Youth Board was established in September 2024 as a platform for empowering young people aged 18 to 30 living in and around the National Park to lead long-term, positive climate action, influence policy and decision-making, and represent other young people and communities.

The Youth Board has:

- Had 21 total members on a rolling basis with a maximum capacity of 15 members.
- Contributed more than 1200 hours of volunteer time supporting wildlife and communities in the New Forest and surrounding areas.
- Joined North York Moors Youth Board members in advising the newly-formed Exmoor Youth Board.
- Represented young people's views at 11 boards and committees, including the New Forest Consultative Panel, Southern Wiltshire Area Board, the New Forest Association and the New Forest Youth Forum, as well as YouCAN board and project meetings.

- Contributed to three consultations, including on the National Park Local Plan suite of planning policies and the Wiltshire Local Transport consultation.
- Attended eight events, including opening the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair. One member also spoke at the Climate Action Fund Conference 2025 on the 'Young people leading change' panel.

New Forest Youth Board member, Eva Wilcock said: 'Being part of the New Forest Youth Board has

been one of the most rewarding experiences. I've enjoyed connecting with other young people and building a community dedicated to making change in the New Forest area.

'I feel more knowledgeable and employable, and also more positive we can make the National Park a better place for future generations, thanks to being on the Youth Board.'

'It's been rewarding to advocate for young people in decision-making spaces seeing our opinions and views taken seriously by those in power.'



Image: The New Forest Youth Board, NPA and partner organisations

Lessons learnt



One challenge in setting up the New Forest Youth Board was ensuring young people had an input on its development before any Board members were recruited. A draft Terms of Reference was created with young NPA staff members – of the same target age as the Youth Board – which was then reviewed and amended by the first Board members.

We worked with the New Forest Youth Board to establish best working practices, such as:

- Being flexible on time requirements and deadlines to accommodate the availability of members around other commitments.
- Creating working groups within the Youth Board focussing on key topics members are passionate about, for example event planning and social media.
- Holding regular membership reviews with inactive members to ensure a good balance of active members, new additions, and opportunities for all members.

The NPA was able to learn from other national parks with already established youth boards and has been able to advise others in starting their own, including Exmoor National Park Authority.



Read more



Watch the launch weekend

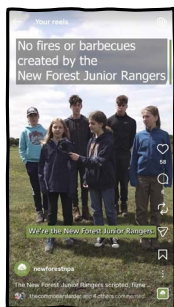
Communicate

YouCAN chose to tell climate and nature stories in a local, hopeful, and people-centred way that increases understanding about the issues and inspires people to take action through seeing others like them already making an impact.

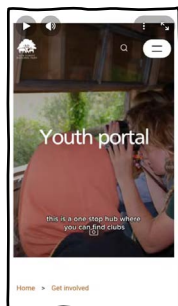


Supporting young creatives

We supported or commissioned young people to capture YouCAN projects. Watch below:



Junior Rangers:
Preventing wildfires



Rhys Leighton:
Promoting the NPA's Youth Portal



Joseph Jennings:
Junior Rangers

Three young photographers supported by Hampshire-based charity **In Focus Education and Development** also captured Urban Wild on the Common in 2026.



In Focus photographers at Urban Wild 2026

New Forest Young Content Creators

The New Forest Young Content Creators scheme supported budding local creatives who are passionate about climate and nature to create the content they believe is missing from their social feeds.

Young content creators aged 16 to 30 and based in the New Forest, Southampton and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas applied for funds of up to £150 towards travel, software and camera kit to support them in producing climate and nature-focused content on topics that they are passionate about and how this affects their local communities.

The original concept was created to address issues young creatives face in building a portfolio of paid work, especially those from underserved communities.



Agáta Zimová

This kind of content is also more likely to engage and be relatable to the YouCAN target audience than high-end, polished commissions.

Several also made use of the NPA's networks, supporting collaborations with Wild New Forest and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, as well as a large social media presence of around 160,000 followers to share the finished content.



20

New Forest young content creators took part

Their content reached more than

135,000

social media impressions and

5,000

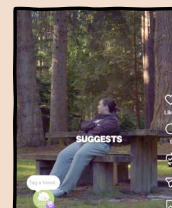
engagements



Watch now



Rhys
Why is the New Forest home to so many endangered wildflowers



Lois
This is your sign to touch some grass



Omkar
The hidden calm of the New Forest



Willow
Secret lives of badgers



Omkar's story

Southampton-based creative Omkar Dherange applied for the New Forest Young Content Creators scheme in the second recruitment window. He used the funding towards travel and software. This enabled him to produce a social media reel capturing the beauty and tranquillity of the National Park, along with messages on visiting responsibly.

Omkar said: 'Seeing my work shared by the New Forest National Park Authority and knowing it reached a wider audience was incredibly rewarding and motivating.

'For international postgraduates and early-career creatives like me, schemes like this can be genuinely career-shaping. They help build confidence, professional portfolios, and credibility while encouraging responsible, values-led content creation.

'When young creators are supported and guided, we become advocates, using our platforms to raise awareness, influence behaviour, and inspire others to engage positively with nature and climate action.'



New Forest Young Content Craetor Omkar Dherange



Read more

Lessons learnt

There was no model in which to base the New Forest Young Content Creators project. Large companies like YouTube and TikTok seem to support individuals to become influencers through large grants and audition processes, but to our knowledge nothing on this localised scale seems to exist.

The amount of money (£50-150) was designed to reflect a freelance shift at a media organisation. The project was developed as a funding offer to enable age restrictions specific to the YouCAN target audience.

The trade-off between funding offer over commission meant that the ownership still lies with the creator and the decision to allow the NPA to

share the finished content is theirs. This ensured adherence to the funder's policy against onward granting.

The flexibility of the scheme posed a reputational risk to the organisations involved and the National Park communities. To mitigate this, a stringent set of terms and conditions about what content the NPA would be happy to share was agreed by the creator. Any content against this would not benefit from being shared with the NPA's large following. The terms also covered quality and accessibility requirements.

Guidance for working in the Forest and lone working was given and support in gaining appropriate landowner filming and photography permissions.

Understanding the climate and nature emergencies

Understanding the potential local impacts was the focus of a climate change risks and opportunities assessment for the New Forest National Park.

The report, brought together by scientists and local experts had a focus on the natural environment and the special qualities that distinguish the New Forest from other parts of lowland England.

This baseline assessment will help to empower landowners, land managers, residents, and visitors to make choices and take action to mitigate the risks of climate change.

The report also shows that much can be done, at all scales, to increase the resilience of this unique landscape, its exceptional biodiversity, and cultural heritage for the long term.

The challenge, however, was to make the report easy to understand and for people to still remain hopeful in face of stark evidence of the challenges we face. We tackled this by reframing the report in different mediums, such as an animation (**page 3**), with different levels of detail appealing to different audiences.



Image: A heath fire in the New Forest National Park.
© Mac Hall



Carbon Literacy Training



More than 40 environmental and community leaders, including the YouCAN partners, were accredited by The Carbon Literacy Project. NPA staff also received the same training funded through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Carbon Literacy Training has provided a rounded understanding of the environment and changing climate, and how this impacts the New Forest specifically. This baseline understanding across partners supports effective collaborative climate action.

Participants also make their own pledges to reduce their own carbon emissions as part of the course.

63

YouCAN partners, environmental and community leaders and NPA staff received the training

Pledges could save more than

20 tonnes

of CO₂ or CO₂ equivalent emissions per year



This equates to:

1.6 people's

annual emissions or somebody driving around the world twice – approximately

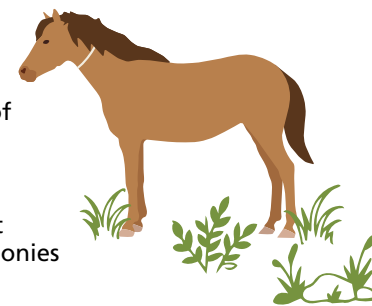
50,000 miles



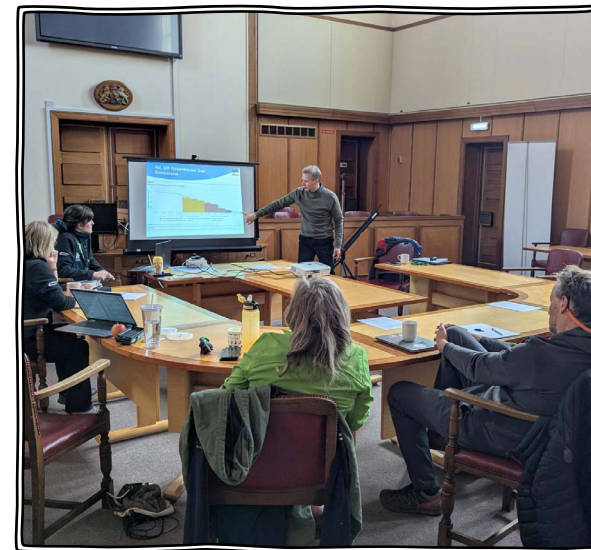
The weight of

58

healthy adult New Forest ponies



Carbon Literacy Training



Theatre

'Bringing the Outside In' was a ground-breaking youth-led theatre show about climate change. The play debuted at Mast Mayflower Southampton in summer 2025 and toured Hampshire in early 2026.

Drawing on New Forest folklore and the nearby urban landscapes of Southampton, Bringing the Outside In explored issues of air pollution and climate anxiety.

The production by Theatre for Life was shaped by young people throughout.

150

young people involved in developing the play

2,000

people saw the performance



A youth consultancy session for the play

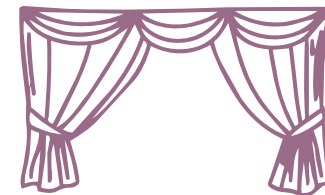


Bringing the Outside In. © Theatre for Life

Five creatives aged

18 to 25

took part in the production, including actors, the lighting designer, and stage manager



269

free tickets were also available for young people from underserved communities who may otherwise not be able to go to a theatre, including, young carer groups, home-educated young people, and Breakout Youth, a LGBTQ+ charity

Bringing the Outside In writer, Kit Miles said: 'Theatre requires a community. You have to enter a room full of people and watch something together. In order to have climate action, you have to have a community action.'



Watch the full performance



Grow

Supporting green careers

Through the YouCAN scheme, dozens of young people were employed, given opportunities to start or further their green careers through internships, or able to develop green skills through training and volunteering.



Young adult Rangers, pond dipping



Internships

Time and affordability of volunteering is often found to be a barrier for access into a green or blue career. The Countryside Education Trust (CET) at Beaulieu created options for young people aged 16 to 25 and career changers to gain paid work experience in the environment sector to help them make the jump from volunteering into employment.

All the interns have since either secured paid roles in a related field or have continued their connection with the environment sector through further education or volunteering.

This was achieved through two routes:

Extended internships – a part-time

1 project spread over several months.

2 **Short-term internships** – condensed, highly focused projects run on a full-time basis over one week.

The extended internships ranged from two to six months, with interns working one or two set days each. These were designed to fit around other commitments, such as work, education and family, as well as the staff capacity at the CET. Each intern was allocated a project supervisor who advised and worked with them on their project throughout their internship. The mentor was chosen based on individual specialisms and interests.

The roles these interns undertook included: livestock checker, social media and admin, event support, children's 'Owls club' assistant, creating an audio trail, coppicing, managing a vegetable garden, running a pop-up shop and renovating a herb bed.

27 short-term interns were brought on in groups for a week at a time, with residential options to stay on site. Some of the projects undertaken by the interns included: creating a nature awareness code of conduct for visitors to the farm site, production of a 2025 calendar, and a practical project in the heritage orchard.

The NPA provided a six-month full-time paid internship to support the education and youth team with YouCAN programmes. The position was highly sought-after, receiving 180 applications from young people with a variety of backgrounds. This immersive role provided experience in a range of engagement practices, as well as discovering the work of the wider NPA and external training. The intern also completed an individual project and had the opportunity to lead on areas of work. After the internship they moved directly into a role with a local partner organisation.

CET operations manager Anna Barnard demonstrating coppicing



CET sustainable farming assistant Kristian



Casey's story

Casey Spry produced an audio trail during her internship at the CET and now works at Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust on the Solent Seascape project. In June 2026, she led a coastal discovery session for the New Forest Junior Rangers (pictured).

She said: 'Getting paid while learning on the job helped support me whilst I looked for full time work and helped me build valuable skills for my CV. Ultimately, working at the CET gave me a kickstart into the industry.'

'The experience I gained helped me secure my first full-time role as a Marine Engagement Officer working on the Solent Seascape Project. I've loved engaging local communities in the amazing marine life we find in the Solent and raising awareness of the marine restoration work happening.'



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Lessons learnt

All the young people who applied for an internship with the CET wanted to gain practical conservation experience. Many expressed confidence in academic knowledge, technical skills, communication and interpretation of environmental and climate related issues, but not the practical skills to back this up in a work setting and saw this as a barrier to getting into the environment sector.

Many are also unable to commit time to unpaid work such as volunteering or work experience to help them get into a green career.

Following successful long-term internships and trialling the short-term version, the CET changed the structure of the

second residential internship week and had a fully practical programme, including livestock handling, habitat creation for nightjars, and an introduction to tractors. This provided hands-on experience across many elements of conservation and work on the farm site. Professional references were also offered for future job applications.

The short-term nature of the programme meant that those working or in education were able to arrange enough time off more easily. Non-residential stays were also offered for those aged 16 to 18 and a part-week option for those who needed to attend college or work on some of the days.

Green Careers Network

The NPA's education and youth team coordinates the Green Careers Network, facilitating free training and networking opportunities in and around the New Forest area. Sessions are often led by local experts and partner organisations, including Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Fresh Air Training, and Freshwater Habitats Trust.

The Green Careers Network supported 111 members who work, volunteer or study in the environmental sector.



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FHT programme manager Gemma Stride leading a water testing exercise for the Youth Board

Volunteering



New Forest young adult volunteers

The NPA education and youth team provided practical volunteering opportunities for 18 to 30 year-olds designed to fit around their work and education, i.e. on weekends or outside of office hours.

The YouCAN partnership and connections with other organisations were key to providing volunteering opportunities across the Forest and surrounds.



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Young adult volunteers put in

**1,080
volunteer hours**

including invasive species removal, heathland restoration, making paths more accessible, litter picking, and native hedgerow planting.



Georgia's story

Georgia attended the NPA-run New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair in 2023, seeking out local volunteering opportunities.

There she made contacts with RSPB Franchises Lodge nature reserve and secured a mentorship with Wild New Forest. She was also an active member of the New Forest Green Careers Network. This experience led to her YouCAN-funded role as an engagement officer at Freshwater Habitats Trust. In 2025 she returned to the same Volunteer Fair running the Freshwater Habitats Trust stand.

Georgia said: 'It's been a huge opportunity for personal growth and development and deepened my understanding of conservation within the Forest. I now have so much more confidence in skills like botanical identification and a deeper understanding of freshwater ecology and conservation.'

'I've developed some really important relationships and built a network of early career conservationists and experts who have been in the field for a long time, which is really valuable when I'm looking for advice.'

Georgia at New Forest Thrive 2025.



Georgia at the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair 2025



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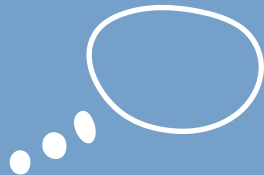
Georgia demonstrating water testing with The Parks Foundation's Young Adult Rangers.



Georgia leading a litter pick at Calshot beach.



Reflect



The YouCAN scheme was designed to inspire and empower young people to lead climate action in their local communities.

'Investment from the National Lottery Community Fund made it possible to try new things and bring the partnership together, so we have all the players of the National Lottery to thank for this project.

'The New Forest National Park is such an incredibly special and species-rich place, surrounded on all sides by urban communities. It was really important for YouCAN to show, and for these communities to recognise, that no matter where you live, if you are inspired by nature, you can do something to protect it.

'YouCAN matters because it's a platform for change and it puts young people at the heart of decision making in this beautiful place and allows them to have a say on the future they are going to inherit.

'We hope YouCAN is just the start and that the people who have been inspired by this scheme,

that have taken part in its projects, that have learnt new green skills, and entered or furthered their green careers, will be able to go forward into their communities and inspire more climate action.

'We hope the partnerships and the community connections that have been built by this scheme will continue to grow and thrive and that new projects will come from this.'

New Forest National Park Authority member and chair of the YouCAN partnership board, James Wylor-Owen.



Image: Bug hunt with Ringwood Actions for Climate Emergency (RACE)

4

Acknowledgements

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Find out more at
newforestnpa.gov.uk/YouCAN

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