



yn rhoi  
cartref i  
fyd natur

giving  
nature  
a home

Cymru



Mewn Partneriaeth â  
**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
In Partnership with  
**Welsh Government**

2021

# A National Nature Service for Wales: what good looks like

WHAT CAN RSPB CYMRU PUT IN PLACE TO PROVIDE TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AS PART OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL NATURE SERVICE?

JO MCGREAL AND JACKY COX CONSULTANCY

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Part I: Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose of report .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background &amp; context .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The current economic and employment situation in Wales for young people .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A role for RSPB Cymru? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Approach &amp; methodology .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part II: Key learnings for NNS and the eNGO sector .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What Matters to Young People? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Next Steps: .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Part III: RSPB Cymru as Case Study .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>INTERNAL RESEARCH FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Benefits of engaging with an NNS .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Entry level roles in practice .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Access to the sector .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>What young people want from a NNS and/or nature-based organisation .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Better awareness of the sector .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Access and clear pathways with opportunities to learn and progress .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Wider sector offer .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Volunteering .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Access to information .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Young People’s Expectations of Organisations .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Other Barriers .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>General comment .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>REVIEW OF THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Develop pathways .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Redesign of recruitment practices .....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Suggestions from Young People on recruitment .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Additional Resource .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Relationships and external presence .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix - acknowledgements and references .....</b>	<b>23</b>

## Executive Summary

RSPB Cymru is a well-respected organisation and attracts highly qualified and experienced people who are passionate about playing their part to save nature. From a management point of view this is ideal. However, and as a consequence, it means the organisation has not been required to work to engage more widely and lacks diversity within the workforce. This report identifies a number of current practices and organisational ways of working which are blocking access to the organisation and opportunities to engage in the work to benefit nature. This, coupled with some of the other challenges faced by many young people means the organisation is not only inaccessible but is largely unseen by a more diverse audience.

While there is a need to create more jobs (both entry level and for those with experience and qualifications), without a package of access routes, support to get involved and a presence in the places where diverse young people can be found, little will change. There is a fundamental difference between delivering a scheme like the National Nature Service solely with nature benefits in mind and the need to deliver for nature with and alongside people so that more people are invited and able to contribute and participate. There is an active and willing workforce in young people who, once aware of the opportunity are keen to engage. However, for them to do so requires an investment in routes and pathways they can access as well as taking the organisation out to them, to their communities and places in a way which shares with them what is possible.

Crucially, the inaccessibility of the sector is wider than RSPB Cymru. However, the practices and approach of RSPB Cymru play a role in perpetuating that inaccessibility. To change this requires commitment, investment and a strategic approach to both organisational and wider sector change.

We recommend a detailed and longer-term strategy for RSPB Cymru which invests in people and programmes to reach out and provide access routes and a system of connectivity to the organisation and wider sector as a whole. There is a need to fund and create jobs and opportunities which range from entry level to those requiring more experience; without both any opportunities created will naturally be taken by those with the social and economic capital to take advantage. Ring-fenced pathways which are openly promoted and role modelled in settings where more diverse audiences can be found are required.

We recognise the need to deliver a crisis response for nature. However, an opportunity to build a wider, more sustainable approach to green recovery is lost unless the systemic barriers which are currently blocking a vibrant and passionate workforce from engaging are addressed.

# Part I: Introduction

## Purpose of report

This report responds to the proposition of a National Nature Service (NNS) in Wales as a means to a green recovery through training and employment in the environmental sector. It discusses the role RSPB Cymru can play within a wider NNS framework and aims to provide insight on the following:

- Potential activities and employment opportunities that RSPB Cymru could offer which meet the needs and expectations of potential audiences (in particular young/unemployed people)
- Capabilities and capacity required by RSPB to ensure this employment is safe and supported
- How the RSPB can make the most of this proposal to become a more inclusive employer

While the report focuses on RSPB Cymru many of the challenges identified are relevant to the wider sector as whole.

## Background & context

This work was commissioned by RSPB Cymru in May 2021. Funded by Welsh Government's Green Recovery Capacity Building Scheme, with a deadline of end of July 2021, it provides a snapshot of the organisation in relation to the NNS proposal and raises a number of additional questions.

**The RSPB:** Established in 1889 the RSPB was founded to fight a fashion for feathers and exotic plumes that were driving birds including little egrets, great crested grebes and birds of paradise towards extinction. Today the organisation brings people together to understand the threats facing our natural world, find sustainable solutions, and act to:

- save threatened wild birds and other wildlife
- protect, restore and create wild places
- inspire people to take action for nature

**The National Nature Service:** In April 2019 the Welsh government declared a climate emergency in Wales with the acknowledgement that: *'the challenge of climate change ... threatens our health, economy, infrastructure and our natural environment'*. Around the same time the Food, Farming & Countryside Commission (FFCC) published a report proposing the creation of a UK wide National Nature Service which would offer a short to mid-term response to green recovery through youth training and employment in the environmental sector. RSPB Cymru is now part of a country-wide coalition for action, convened by the FFCC, working towards the establishment of a National Nature Service (NNS) in Wales. The ambition is to work cross-organisationally to co-design a longer-

term, more inclusive service which is deeply integrated into the fabric of Welsh national life and which will contribute to delivery of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act goals.

At the time of writing the proposed purpose of a NNS in Wales is to:

*‘Rapidly establish new and future focussed opportunities around skills, jobs and the restoration of Wales’ natural environment, whilst also better aligning the existing mechanisms in place.... to respond to the nature and climate emergencies and help address the economic and social (justice) fallout of the pandemic. It will do this by upskilling and expanding the workforce with good quality livelihoods in a sector shown to have significant job creation potential as part of a green and just recovery’.*

*‘Green sectors are shown to have significant job creation potential for a green recovery, and are likely capable of supporting a workforce much larger than today. Analysis shows there’s a need for an expanded workforce and a very significant increase in jobs in environmental management.... Analysis shows there is a skills gap in green industries, across all the sectors’.*<sup>1</sup>

### **The current economic and employment situation in Wales for young people**

Research conducted by the Senedd into the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on youth unemployment states:

*‘The COVID-19 pandemic has severely dented the career prospects of young people and threatens to have a prolonged negative economic impact on them as a result. Sharp contractions in shut-down sectors will make it harder for young people to take their first step onto the career ladder, while reduced job opportunities will make it harder for them to move into higher-paying occupations’*

The NNS recognises that there is a synergy between green recovery and economic recovery - that by supporting people, in particular young people, to develop relevant skills and to access jobs within the sector we develop a broader, more inclusive workforce, better able to meet the long term challenges posed by the climate emergency.

### **A role for RSPB Cymru?**

Recognising the value and potential of a NNS in Wales, RSPB Cymru wants to better understand the role it can offer in support of a NNS whilst also continuing to meet its purpose to save, protect and restore nature. As such, and in line with the commission ask, this report aims to provide insight on the following:

- Potential activities and employment opportunities that RSPB Cymru could offer which meets the needs and expectations of potential audiences (in particular young/ unemployed people)

---

<sup>1</sup> Quotes taken from The National Nature Service proposal to the new Government in Wales (May 2021)



- Capabilities and capacity required by RSPB to ensure this employment is safe and supported
- How the RSPB can make the most of this proposal to become a more inclusive employer<sup>2</sup>

## Approach & methodology

This report summarises a short-term piece of work conducted between May and July 2021. It provides a snapshot of the working environment at that time and starts to lay out some of the opportunities and next steps.

### Internal Participants:

8 focus groups with a total of 44 participants  
7 one to one conversations

### External Participants

5 focus groups with a total of 31 participants  
9 one to one conversations

Figure 2

As consultants we adopted an action learning research approach and worked closely with the RSPB Cymru project team to develop and refine the research framework throughout the lifetime of the project.

The research took the form of desktop research (see figure 1), google jam boards<sup>3</sup>, internal focus groups, external focus groups and in-depth conversations with young people and, internal and external one-to-one interviews (see figure 2).

According to Pearson<sup>4</sup>:

*‘For those who do not choose the academic route, the vocational learning journey presents a much more complex path which lacks the ‘certainty’ and clarity of its academic counterpart. For those whose learning is disrupted or who experience personal challenges or disadvantages along the way things are even tougher’.*

We therefore targeted those organisations supporting young people outside of the academic route.

Owing to the timing of the research the majority of the interviews and focus groups were virtually

Research has been informed by:

### External reports including:

Our Bright Future; Future Generations Skills Report; NNS Draft proposal to Welsh government; Our Future in the Land, FFCC; Senedd research into youth unemployment through Covid; Princes Trust report on Covid & youth unemployment

**Internal Reports** including: RSPB Youth Plan, April 2021; RSPB Youth Strategy 2019; RSPB Strategy to 2030; Focus on Young People, 2019 - 2020; Saving Nature Through People Engagement Strategy, 2019 - 2022; RSPB Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Project, Full Colour, 2021; Developing a Green workforce in Wales 2020

**On-line websites/ pages** including: Careers Wales; Business Wales; Working Wales; RSPB; Countryside Jobs; NNS Hub

A full list of references and links can be found in the appendix

Figure 1

<sup>2</sup> As summarised from the Commissioning Ask and agreed with the project team

<sup>3</sup> <https://edu.google.com/products/jamboard/>

<sup>4</sup> Pearson, 2016

facilitated. All the young people who engaged with the project were invited through external organisations, details of which can be found in an appendix at the end of this report. It was possible to conduct a number of the external focus groups and conversations with young people face to face in compliance with the safeguarding and COVID secure practices and requirements of the external organisations.

All focus group participants were guaranteed anonymity and, owing to time frames and different organisational policies on demographic data, we did not collect individual details of the young people with whom we spoke. Adult consent was provided for all young people under 18.

## Part II: Key learnings for NNS and the eNGO sector

### What Matters to Young People?

This section summarises key themes drawn out through focus groups with young people that we feel are relevant not only to RSPB but also the ongoing development of NNS.

- They want to work and be recognised as having value;
- There is limited awareness among young people of both RSPB and the nature sector in general and they would like to know more;
- This lack of awareness means the sector and the range of opportunities are not within their sphere of consideration;
- This lack of awareness is also apparent in their support network which means it is not even an aspiration;
- The reliance on young people to approach organisations is a blocker especially for those with limited confidence, without support to navigate the access routes and lacking awareness;
- Those engaged in the research started with limited interest in the sector, once engaged interest rose significantly. In general, they would like to be supported to access the opportunities the sector can provide;
- They are interested in pathways and recognise the value in gaining experience and qualifications;
- They want to be supported to engage not challenged to engage;
- They would be interested in a combined sector offer which provides access to a range of opportunities and simplifies the relevant access points and routes;
- They would be willing to volunteer in theory but recognise the challenges to that in practice e.g. dependants, financial impact, transport.

## Next Steps<sup>5</sup>:

<p>Role of Government</p>	<p>Work with the NNS and other relevant organisations to develop a combined sector offer;</p> <p>Support the integration of NNS with current &amp; future employment pathways (e.g. kickstart &amp; apprenticeships) in Wales;</p> <p>Provide a skills analysis of nature related roles - this can be used as a basis to build jobs which meet both entry level and experience requirements;</p>
<p>Role of Government &amp; NNS</p>	<p>Invest in community-based roles to work in and alongside communities to improve and create green spaces;</p>
<p>Role of an NNS &amp; Sector</p>	<p>Provision of clear and accessible training and development pathways for those accessing schemes like NNS within environmental organisations that will address skills development, create new roles and enable to transfer skills across the sector and beyond;</p> <p>Consider creative responses to practical issues for young people accessing jobs in nature such as transport (e.g. the provision of electric bikes)</p> <p>Develop an NNS which invests in external relationships, takes the sector out to communities across Wales to raise awareness, role models opportunities and generally opens up the sector and the work;</p> <p>Acknowledge there are a range of youth-focused organisations to partner with and invest in the work is required to build these relationships - it takes time and investment to build relationships and create a supportive and person-centred development environment;</p> <p>Ensure that young people are supported to contribute and shape the development of NNS;</p> <p>Recruit support role(s) to develop pathways and build relationships across Wales;</p> <p>Address the need to invest in people to deliver a sustainable and long-term impact for nature;</p> <p>Introduce active interventions that build a supportive and nurturing environment for those entering NNS;</p>
<p>Role of individual organisations</p>	<p>Amend recruitment practices so they are more accessible and supportive</p> <p>Agree an organisational definition of entry level roles and build jobs which meet both entry level and experience requirements</p>

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed list of recommendations, please see the accompanying 'Toolkit for Implementation'.



Develop internal processes and practices which recognise and reward interpersonal skills, relationship management and supports people to develop

Ring fence entry level roles for those who fit that criteria

## Part III: RSPB Cymru as Case Study

### INTERNAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Benefits of engaging with an NNS

We used the internal focus groups to question the wider RSPB Cymru organisational appetite for engaging with a National Nature Service. To have assumed internal acceptance of an NNS could well have led to a false baseline and understanding of organisational culture.

The response to the proposed NNS was positive and the mutual benefits for both organisations from a constructive working partnership were widely articulated. A summary of these benefits can be found below.

Table 1

BENEFITS FOR RSPB CYMRU OF BEING INVOLVED IN NNS	BENEFITS FOR NNS OF RSPB CYMRU BEING INVOLVED IN NNS
Increase diversity of involvement - by reaching more people, offering more opportunities across the sector	Reputation/ experience/ expertise - we are a well-known, well-respected leading conservation organisation bringing gravitas and quality. We can join the links between nature and economics & help with solutions
Improve relevance, engagement & community connections - helping us to connect with communities, people having a voice, being aware of RSPB & aware of employment opportunities	Breadth of work/ opportunities - the scale of what we do brings lots of opportunities for involvement.
Increase skills/ employment opportunities/ capacity/ impact/ potential - a better alignment of the skills, training, jobs & resources needed. A wider cohort to connect with, meaning more can get done, attracting more resource	Impact - The more people, the more work gets done and the more the word spreads into other sectors
Sharing ideas, experience, knowledge/ influencing - a chance to share what we know & to shape the future	Connections/ sharing

### Entry level roles in practice

The following questions were asked via a google jam board ensuring anonymity:

1. Thinking about entry level roles (for those with no specific qualifications/experience) what are the existing routes into employment with RSPB?
2. What does RSPB Cymru do well in attracting, recruiting & retaining staff who have no specific qualifications?
3. What do you think isn't working well in attracting, recruiting and retaining entry level staff?

From the responses to these questions and feedback from the focus groups, it is clear the following are considered entry level routes into RSPB Cymru:

- Volunteering (conservation)
- Internships (unpaid)
- Apprenticeships
- Kickstart
- Seasonal work
- Commercial and catering opportunities

It is apparent that throughout the wider organisation there are areas of good practice. For example, the Tech department, now in partnership with 'Firebrand Apprenticeships', utilises [apprenticeships](#) to benefit both the work of the department and the development of the individuals involved. Likewise, there are some [Kickstart](#) opportunities - in Wales at the time of writing these are within the Communication team and the Volunteering team with two further posts pending recruitment.

Centrally RSPB has developed a kickstart partnership with *Race for Nature* to widen access to the opportunities on offer and potentially to attract more diverse applicants. The new Training Scheme Development Manager has responsibility for supporting/ further developing these opportunities.

However, while these routes might be considered to be entry level, further discussion suggests they are out-of-reach for those without experience or qualification. Here are a snapshot of staff responses to the question of what RSPB Cymru does well in recruiting entry level roles:

*'I don't think we are very good at this at all.'*

*'Does RSPB attract staff with no specific qualifications or experience?'*

*'We should be doing a lot more to attract staff from different backgrounds. Although things have improved slowly in the past couple of months there's a lot more we could do.'*

*'Line managers can be very supportive, patient and good at coaching young people in learning skills. The culture is very supportive and caring.'*

*'Once 'in the system' people are usually valued and staff / leaders / line managers look at personal development and support to grow.'*

Staff shared several areas that they felt were not working so well and needed attention:

*'We don't always have the staff resource needed to support and train staff up which can be labour intensive.'*

*'Jobs are competitive and we always have candidates with lots of experience that will always score higher than those with no experience.'*

*'Funding for work is often last minute, short-term or capital focussed, it doesn't lend itself to thinking about committing to developing people in roles.'*

*'Our process is too rigid - we can't think outside of the box on recruitment and flex with the situation.'*

This is backed up by the example of one of the new Kickstart recruits who holds a Masters in Marine Conservation joining the organisation in a Communications Assistant role as, in a competitive environment, this provides an access point to the organisation.

Whilst apprenticeships and Kickstart placements may be first steps into the organisation, these opportunities are unlikely to be filled by those without good qualifications. One former apprentice told us that he came to the RSPB a year or so after finishing his A Levels having left school with the equivalent of 13 GCSE's, Maths and Biology A levels, and a BTEC in ICT. It is worth comparing this level of qualification with the Careers Wales definition of entry level being GCSE grade G.

### Access to the sector

*'RSPB is an exclusive bunch'*

Conservation is a competitive field and, as RSPB is well respected within the sector, it stands to reason it can be highly selective when recruiting people to the team.

*'Mostly, young people who come to work for RSPB Cymru are degree educated, have volunteered, have a historic connection with the organisation and/or live nearby'.*

While not the intention, the urgency of the work, the push to deliver and an acceptance of current workforce experience and wider sector practice has led to prior experience and the subjective aptitudes of commitment, self-reliance and determination being valued by the organisation.

*'As a conservation officer I spent 5-10 years getting experience, did a range of placements building up to the role I have now'*

*‘Even volunteers, we choose the ones with the best qualifications and all internships and residential volunteering are highly competitive’*

*‘When I volunteered I had to live on the dole, lots of us were on the breadline but we had determination. It can be an attitude issue’.*

*‘People have to take their own responsibility for their learning sometimes and have to help themselves - it’s not for us to spoon feed them. It shows a level of character if someone can pull themselves through and get what they need’*

*‘Why would we employ someone with no qualification or experience when we can get people with experience?’*

These expectations are mirrored to some extent in volunteering:

*‘Mostly opportunities to volunteer go to people who are already on that train - already have knowledge of/ an interest in conservation. It’s hard to convince sites to involve the unlikely candidates’*

Volunteering, as a way of gaining invaluable experience of and access to the sector, is not accessible to all:

*‘There is a sense of privilege. You do it because you have the time, you can afford it’*

This level of expectation is a barrier not only to those starting out in their working life but also to those from a non-typical background or who may have additional responsibilities in their non-working life.

Yet when opportunities are created, e.g. via Kickstart, with 20 places available across the whole organisation through the Race for Nature’s Recovery partnership, the take up has not been what the organisation imagined. The reasons for this are unclear - we are told that potentially it may be the geography of the partner organisations, a lack of organisational relevance and/or RSPB branding.

While the Kickstart programme in RSPB has yet to be evaluated, conversations with external providers e.g. We Mind the Gap (see section on Young People), indicate that providing the placements is not enough. Organisations need to establish strong relationships with the signposting agencies, regularly refresh messaging and actively support young people to apply.

## FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

*‘You have to wake up and say ‘today I’m going to save the planet’’*

The research sought to understand how young people would respond to the idea of an NNS and the possible roles it might offer. Our focus was on young people aged 16-25 years.

While RSPB Cymru supports a youth council with four country representation and runs a number of programmes predominantly in primary schools, it currently has few direct relationships with organisations serving young people. For this research this meant reaching out to organisations where there is no existing, or only a very limited established relationship.

In total thirty-one young people were engaged. Conversations took the form of semi-structured focus groups and were rich in insight and honest in reflections on experience of both education and opportunities available.

It is worth recognising the differences in perception and experience even within the age range and small group of young people engaged. Those in the 16-18 bracket were unsurprisingly reliant on the provision provided by school or, in some cases the alternative to school provision. We would suggest there is a bigger piece of work required to evaluate the provision and success of the traditional school route versus alternatives educational environments. While this is out of scope for this work it is without doubt related, and we want to acknowledge the impact of a supportive and more flexible way of learning.

*‘I’ve learned more here than in my 5 years of high school. At school I would forget what I’d learned’*

*‘We’re all doing an environmental protection course. I don’t mind doing the writing when I’ve actually done something practical’*

While these quotes are in support of the environment provided by [Cynon Valley Organic Adventures](#), the sentiment was supported by the other young people with whom we spoke.

*‘The education system doesn’t cater to different learning types. You’re told you’re less intelligent if you can’t sit down and write’*

*‘School is just about doing exams then forced to go to college and university. I was never taught I could just be myself and find what I want to do’*

In addition, a number of those in the older age bracket had experience of being funnelled into something that was not suitable or in tune with their interests.

*‘I went to college after leaving school and did a course I didn’t like... it was health and social care. It was a 1-year course but I didn’t like it and I didn’t know what jobs I could do at the end of it’.*

### What young people want from a NNS and/or nature-based organisation

The requirements identified by young people can be summarised as follows;

- Better awareness of the sector
- Better awareness the of jobs available
- Awareness and clear pathways with opportunities to learn and progress

- Wider sector offer
- Volunteering
- Access to information
- Support to overcome additional barriers

### Better awareness of the sector

*‘It would have been good to learn about this in schools, to hear about and learn about what’s possible earlier. No offense but if I had I wouldn’t be sat here’.*

At the start of all of the focus groups almost all the young people engaged had no knowledge of RSPB or nature-based organisations in general. And, aside from those currently engaged within a nature setting, they had little knowledge or interest in the wider nature related sector and work force opportunities.

While interest at the start of the session was limited, by the end approximately 70% of the participants indicated a desire to know more about a whole range of opportunities and how to access them. This tallies with the National Trust Green Academies Evaluation<sup>6</sup> report which indicates only 35% joined the programme because they were interested environment/conservation. This rose to 74% at completion of the programme.

Access to information and opportunities is also determined by the understanding and awareness of the gatekeepers, navigators and wider social network within which the young people operate. Not being visible within that wider context will naturally limit young people’s access and understanding. To steal a phrase from the diversity and inclusion arena, *‘if you can’t see it you can’t be it’*. The relevance of this for the nature sector and under-served communities is pertinent.

*‘Lots of organisations support young people from diverse backgrounds. Share the information with them’*

*‘It was a really interesting discussion and has made me think more about the opportunities, the work placements we offer and what we could possibility offer’*

By having more of a presence in a range of places and among local communities RSPB Cymru will not just widen access but also demonstrate and role model what is possible.

The young people involved in this research were generally open to the whole range of roles available on RSPB and other organisational sector websites. While approximately 30% of those spoken to would not want to work outdoors they were all generally surprised at the number and range of job functions and roles available. There was some debate about roles not naturally perceived as benefiting nature and there was interest in the wider support functions of the work, e.g. fundraising & marketing.

---

<sup>6</sup> Green Academies Project: Evaluating the National Trust’s Green Academies Project 2018 - 19



Only 15% of those engaged indicated the range of roles on offer held no interest for them, e.g. young people more interested in performing arts, law or social care.

Ultimately the majority were interested in having the opportunity to learn and develop skills which may either lead to related career opportunities or, would at least enable them to transfer skills to other settings. The entry role job was seen as a platform or means to gain skills and experience. In many cases it was less the job per se, as they had limited experience of what the different roles would in reality be, it was more the ethos, sense of value and impact that being part of an organisation could provide.

*'It's the impact they're having on the world - I would like to help'*

*'Depends on how they help people, how it affects the world and everything. It needs to make a difference, that's what's important'*

Overall they were open to learning about and trying both typical and non-typical green jobs.

The only area where there was resistance was that of hospitality and catering with a number of young people having examples of poor treatment and feeling unvalued when working in this field.

Ultimately it is not the type of job which stops young people from getting involved, it is the lack of awareness of the sector in general, the visibility of the roles specifically and the lack of supportive routes into the sector.

*'You wouldn't know the range of opportunities. You just hear 'birds' and not know there is quite a lot of range there'.*

#### **Access and clear pathways with opportunities to learn and progress**

From our conversations with young people, it is fair to suggest there is a waiting workforce who are just not being reached. They are keen to learn and to be engaged in something productive. From their point of view, it appears to be less about creating a specific type of job and more about creating suitable pathways that provide opportunities at different access points. In general, they are also aware they may not stay in a specific organisation but they do want skills they can take with them. Therefore, pathways need to be recognised by more than one organisation and need to include a range of access points and recognised learning opportunities.

This includes gateway opportunities for those with less confidence, fewer demonstrable skills and understanding of what is available:

*'I'm not as nervous now. Kickstart has given me experience, confidence. I never thought I'd help put up a polytunnel, but I did'*

*'I'd worry I'd not do the job properly so I would like to know there was training there. Would feel better knowing that'*

*‘Apprenticeships, the word is intimidating as I was only in school for a few years’*

Follow on opportunities could also provide a point of entry for those with more awareness but who still need training opportunities, such as apprenticeships.

*‘The courses are a big part of the progression. I want to keep learning, take the skills onto whatever’s next’.*

### **Wider sector offer**

The young people we spoke to would welcome a more coordinated offer from the sector as a whole. This could include a central organisation such as NNS which employs and supports them with placements and access to apprentice level learning. Such an organisation could also provide a portal or one-stop shop promoting the range of nature related opportunities available and work in partnership with other bodies such as Careers’ Wales and other youth organisations. This would be additionally helpful for those apprenticeships which rely on work-based learning (see next section).

*‘The idea of organisations getting together and offering a range of options to try is a definite yeah, that definitely appeals’*

*‘I’d definitely be up for the opportunity to try across organisations’*

### **Volunteering**

While volunteering was not dismissed as a way to access skill development if it led to a clear qualification or demonstrable experience, those with additional responsibilities were very much aware of the barriers of that being a route for them to follow without financial recompense.

*‘Yes, I’d volunteer if I thought it would help me get a job. I’d have to do something on the side though, fund myself’*

*‘Child care is an issue. My child minder has just told me she’s going away so I’ve got to find someone else’.*

*‘I can still learn skills while you pay me’*

*‘I would volunteer, give it go as its good for your CV and I would get a job if I had experience’.*

### **Access to information**

While the idea of apprenticeships was generally well received in our focus groups, many felt that finding the required information is challenging. Many opportunities are advertised through organisational websites or through colleges. It also varies depending on where in Wales you live.

*‘I’ve no idea how you hear about them. You have to be in college to hear about them’*

*'Once past 18, you just think work, work, work and don't think about these other routes. It makes things like this so hard'*

*'I wouldn't go to a college to search for these, for an apprenticeship as I'm looking for work and so why would I go to a college? The fact it is a college is barrier'*

The lack of in-person support of having access to someone who can help was also flagged as an issue. So much is now done on-line e.g. [Careers Wales](#) have on-line information on various routes into training and employment which is a starting point. However, on-line does not always meet the needs of the end user. The array of opportunities from [work experience](#) to [traineeships](#), [Kickstart](#) to [apprenticeships](#), along with the various 'gatekeeper' organisations involved in arranging placements is a maze not easy to navigate. For those more comfortable directly approaching an organisation to find out about opportunities it is difficult to know where to start. Organisations can feel intimidating and it can be hard to know how to get questions answered.

*'The biggest problem is knowing who to speak to at the start. How do you know? It would be better to have the option to go to a person or to go and see them'.*

Having a person who can work with external organisations such as Careers Wales, schools, colleges, supporting agencies, and provide a welcome face to young people would be invaluable.

### **Young People's Expectations of Organisations**

Above all, the young people we engaged with want to be valued, nurtured and supported. The idea of entering a work environment is intimidating and those at this side of the employment market may have had previous negative experiences:

*'When I worked for a traineeship they boasted about those who got through but they ignored those who struggled'*

*'Attitude towards workers, I'd want somewhere that cares about workers'*

*'Confidence. I'd want somewhere supportive or I'd worry about doing something new'*

They would appreciate more accessible and user-friendly recruitment practices and better information on the organisations and work they do. As a cohort they cited both ethical and moral practices of organisations as being important.

*'I wouldn't want to be associated with a company that has a bad reputation'*

Or

*'If a company was known for racism or anything like that'*

## Other Barriers

Unsurprisingly transport is an issue.

*‘Transport. Not everyone can afford or even wants to drive’*

This is a known cross sector issue which continues to be unaddressed. For an organisation like RSPB Cymru, it is compounded by the location of key employment sites. In the long-term options to address this include lobbying of funders & Welsh Government, developing a partnership with Transport for Wales and playing a wider role in the need for alternative networks for the benefit of both nature and people. In the short term more creativity is required. One solution is to explore the use of electric bikes and to provide them as part of the role - in particular but not exclusively for young people in rural areas.

## General comment

As a general note, throughout the course of this work we heard many comments (and not just confined to RSPB) to the effect that everyone wants to speak to young people yet when they try, they can't find them. As consultants, while we recognise and applaud the interest in engaging young people it is necessary to emphasise the obvious - engaging with young people takes work. All relationships take work. If organisations wish to engage effectively with young people, they need to invest time and resource into building those relationships. Such relationships also need to be mutually beneficial otherwise, why would anybody, young or older, bother?

## REVIEW OF THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

It is important to acknowledge there is support available for young people who are in school/ college although it's unclear whether this is successful across the board. An example is the services provided at [Cardiff & Vale College](#):

*‘... the Careers and Ideas Team at Cardiff and Vale provide a range of services for our students, this includes personal guidance (progression routes, help with job searches, applications to Higher Education), they also help with CV's, interview prep and run events and workshops throughout the year’* Rebecca Lewis, Careers, Enterprise and Progression Manager/ Cydlynnydd Cyflogaeth a Dilyniant

Other organisations offer support, help and advice. [We Mind the Gap](#) offer 3- and 12-month paid programmes:

*‘A 3 month virtual programme for 16 - 18 year olds. A chance to gain new skills and experiences and with the support of a mentor, build a plan for a bright future; a 12 month life-changing programme for 18+ year olds including six-months’ paid employment, work placements, coaching and mentoring sessions, activity days and experiences’*

While these kinds of programmes can work well for those in need of lots of support they are not for, or known about, by everyone who might benefit. We Mind the Gap staff also flagged the time taken to build up trust and engage with young people prior to them joining a programme. While Kickstart is seen as being valuable the fact it relies on the young people to take responsibility and contact the host organisation can itself be a barrier

*‘Also it can take a long time to engage with the young person owing to their anxiety. We had one who wouldn’t speak to staff (to do the initial assessment) ... it took 2 weeks to get her to agree to meet. The personal touch is really important. It is not that they don’t want to engage with the programme as they will often demonstrate this by the work they do at home. It is confidence that is often the issue’* We Mind the Gap support staff

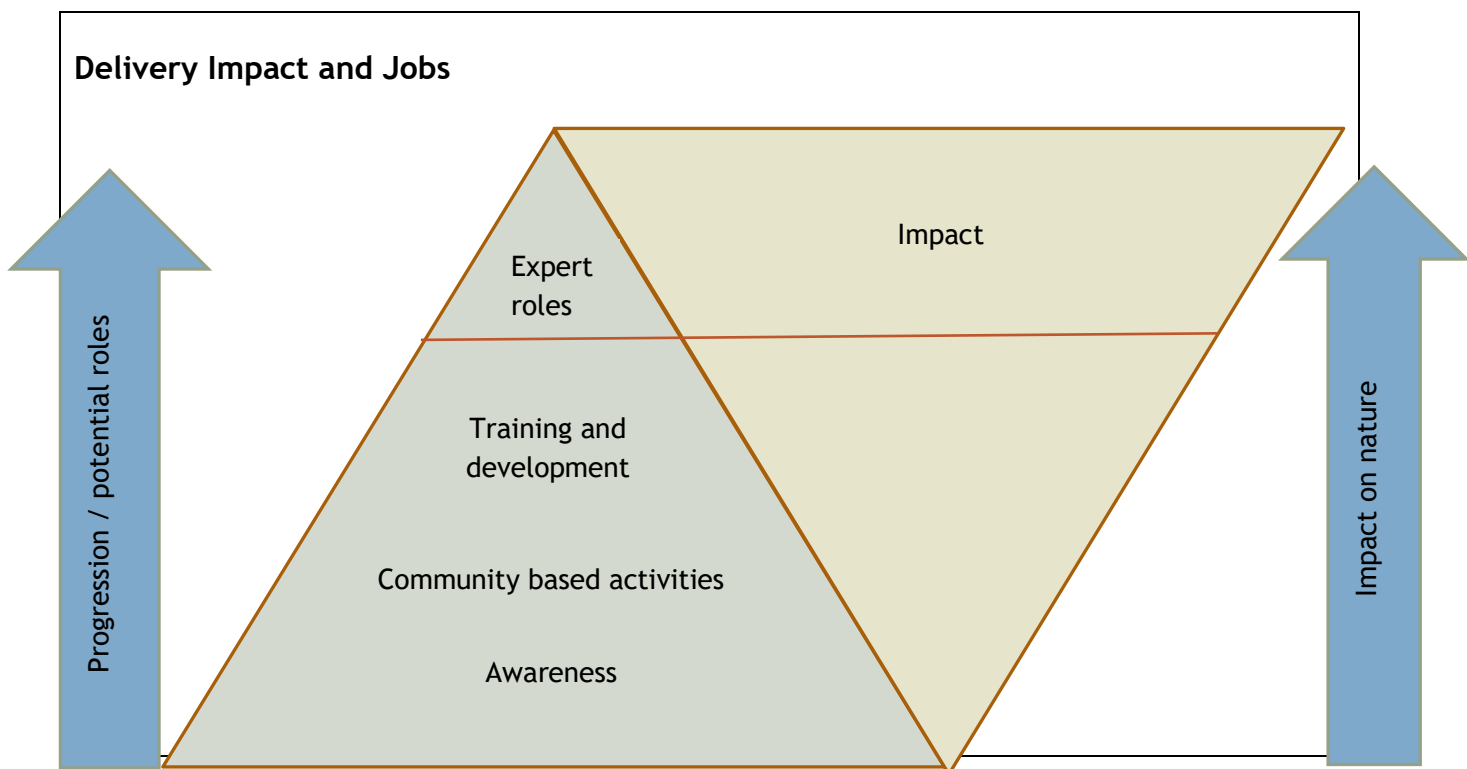


Figure 3

The RSPB Cymru report ‘Estimating the Scale’ sets out the future need for green jobs:

Type of investment	Employment (FTE)
Restoration and creation of priority habitats	1,000
Restoration and creation of boundary features	1,151

Environmental land management advice	87
Improving and creating urban green spaces	500
Planting additional woodlands for net zero carbon	167
Biodiversity net gain	114
Control of invasive non-native species	20
Nature conservation surveys, monitoring and evaluation	20
Nature based tourism development plan	3,875
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,934</b>

Table2

There is evidently the need for future job creation within the wider sector yet reports of large numbers of applications for existing roles and, the process recounted by many qualified and experienced staff of trying to gain employment in the sector, suggests that any new role would quickly be filled by already qualified, experienced individuals, desperate to work within the sector. As such we contest there is a present or future skill shortage within RSPB Cymru. Instead, we suggest there is shortage of roles and jobs available for those with experience and a shortage of access routes and pathways to engage, employ and develop a diverse audience.

We recommend RSPB Cymru:

- Agree a definition of entry level roles which acknowledges the requirement for training and development and, where possible ring fence those roles for entry level recruits;
- Break down the nature work outlined in the table above identifying the type and level of skill required for each category. Use this to build jobs which meet both entry and experience requirements and develop learning and career pathways between the two;
- Create community based roles to work in and alongside communities to improve and create urban green spaces (see Relationships and external presence below);
- Depending on the set up of an NNS in Wales either
  - Consider offering secondment opportunities for current RSPB staff to NNS to support projects and manage opportunities for young people as part of a staff development offer. This will in turn open up internal opportunities and potential progression routes for other staff. Or,
  - Create new roles which will actively support and manage teams of young people which deliver against some of the restoration work outlined in the table above. This will require funding and/or support from an NNS or other funding body.

### Develop pathways

As noted above there is a need to develop pathways into the organisation and sector and, while we recognise there may be a desire to immediately provide a whole range of roles and opportunities via schemes such as Kickstart, we question the longer-term benefit of any stand-alone approach. While doing so may benefit organisational diversity in the short



term, without follow on roles and opportunities the longer-term impact is likely to be limited for the organisation, nature and young people themselves. The young people we engaged with were interested in opportunities that led somewhere - the initial starting point could be relatively brief, such as a traineeship, but importantly there needs to be an idea of 'what next' - what are the pathways that open up as a result of completing a specific placement?

Recent organisational wide experience when recruiting for Kickstart roles also indicates that just having the roles is not enough. We recommend a more sustainable approach which builds capacity, support, opportunity and develops community relationships gradually and at the same time. In brief we recommend for RSPB Cymru<sup>7</sup>:

- 1+ partnership and development role in Wales to support the creation of entry level roles, organisational readiness, including support for line managers, and relationship building;
- By December 2021 increase in the number of Kickstart roles in Wales (an additional 5 ring fenced for young people with limited qualifications and/or experience to complement the 4 roles already available in Wales. This could be done via other support agencies such as Princes' Trust, Careers Wales or WCVA. In fact we would recommend a multi-agency approach and advise that further investigation and relationship building be undertaken by the above post-holder. Should the Kickstart scheme continue<sup>8</sup> the number of placements can continue to be extended. Alternatively, [Jobs Growth Wales](#) provides a mechanism for placements, albeit with a contribution to employers of 50% towards wages rather than the 100% via Kickstart;
- The development of clear pathway and progression route for young people which links Kickstart with apprenticeships and offers interviews for ring fenced roles;

The offer of additional apprentice roles in departments other than Tech Services (4 in first year).

### Redesign of recruitment practices

As noted above current recruitment practices do not necessarily fit the purpose for which they have been established. While there is much which can be done to change this, we recommend the following in the first instance:

- Agree a definition of entry level roles and ring fence those roles which fit the criteria
- For entry level roles move to a process of recruitment for attitude e.g., willingness to learn, enthusiasm, rather than one based on qualification and experience
- Match requirements for the role clearly to the job so that excessive requirements for entry level roles are not required

---

<sup>7</sup> An example workplan to put this in place can be found in Part 3 of the accompanying 'Toolkit for Implementation'. Details on potential partnerships and opportunities can be found in Part 2 of the Toolkit.

<sup>8</sup> The current government funded Kickstart scheme is due finish at the end of December 2021, with funding (100% for employers) continuing until June 2022 for placements starting in December. There is no end date for Jobs Growth Wales (50% funding for employers).

- Offer different ways of applying - many organisations are offering application by film, power point and/or the typical statement of suitability traditionally requested
- For those roles which are entry level adapt the interview process to enable people to excel e.g., send out questions so people can prepare, reduce the formality of the interview
- Ring fence some roles for apprentices and Kickstart graduates to be guaranteed an interview

### Suggestions from Young People on recruitment

*'More examples, pictures so people know what the jobs/ volunteering are'*

*'Show what people can do, what they are doing. So people get motivated'*

*'Social media, get better pictures. Show more roles and opportunities and tell us about them'*

*'Be realistic, say, come to us and you'll get this, we do this. Tell us what we will do day to day'*

*'Hearing other people's experiences would be good'*

*'Just talking about the benefits to the person. What they will get out of it and what they can do, like changing the environment'*

*'I'd want before and after pictures so I can see the difference I could make'*

*'For RSPB, if they put out more about what they do and what the job is and the things you'd do'*

### Additional Resource

There is a need for additional resource to support young people to access some of these roles. Traditionally accommodation has been provided for some roles and, while this can be useful it does not reduce the personal barriers faced by some of the young people we engaged e.g. those with dependants, communities who stay at the family home for longer and those with low confidence or anxiety.

Travel remains one of the biggest barriers and we recommend looking at other alternatives such as buddying schemes which support lift shares and funding for electric bikes.

It is also why taking projects and programmes out to communities is another recommendation, see below.

### Relationships and external presence

*'I have (heard of nature organisations) but only for oil and over in such and such a place. You know, animals covered in oil and needing volunteers. It would be better to focus on the places you are in. If you knew there was an accident on your doorstep you are more likely to take notice and care. If it's an area you*

*recognise it will pull your attention. If you had a picture of your town centre you would take care and notice’.*

In general, the young people we spoke to were unaware or had very limited knowledge of RSPB and the nature related sector overall. Their educational experience was that of being funnelled into the next education establishment or, if not academic but lucky, signposting to traditional non-academic routes. However, some we spoke to felt forgotten.

Our conversations with young people raised the question of cultural and social capital. The young people we engaged were not part of networks and communities where the nature sector had presence or perceived relevance. Without exposure to the work, the people and the outcomes delivered in settings that are significant to them, they will remain disconnected. As a staff member said:

*‘If you don’t have a connection to nature & don’t want to learn about it then you don’t want to save it’.*

For this to change it requires investment in relationships, a community presence, being seen and being seen to have an impact. This will in turn, provide opportunities for more job creation.

An example of how this could work can be found in the logic model in Figure 4 below, and in Part 1 of the accompanying ‘Toolkit for Implementation’.

We recommend the following:

- RSPB Cymru to develop a programme of work which goes out and plays an active and ongoing role in the communities and places where people can be found. This is new work and requires a shift from purely a focus on RSPB Cymru delivering nature impacts to recognising the role local people play in delivering those impacts. Building community relations and supporting community initiatives to support and work for nature locally
- This is an opportunity to develop new roles within the organisation and for those to also support traineeships, placements & apprenticeships as entry level opportunities
- This requires the organisation to access and work with skills currently available in the community and to provide opportunities for other skills development. Alongside awareness raising, this approach will link to benefits for nature and economic recovery by creating job opportunities and raising the role and profile of nature and of the organisations that support nature, see figure 4.
- To develop and promote an internal culture which supports, values and rewards
  - inter-personal skills of people management & mentoring,
  - active inclusion and,
  - the development and nurturing of external relationships.

As quoted in the EDI report by Full Colour: *‘People need support, feedback on personal behaviour and challenge as well as information if they are to take the personal journey to becoming more equal and inclusive in their own behaviours. Ultimately the culture of an*

*organisation is made up of individuals' behaviours and whether EDI becomes part of the RSPB's culture will depend on people being willing to adapt their natural behaviours'*

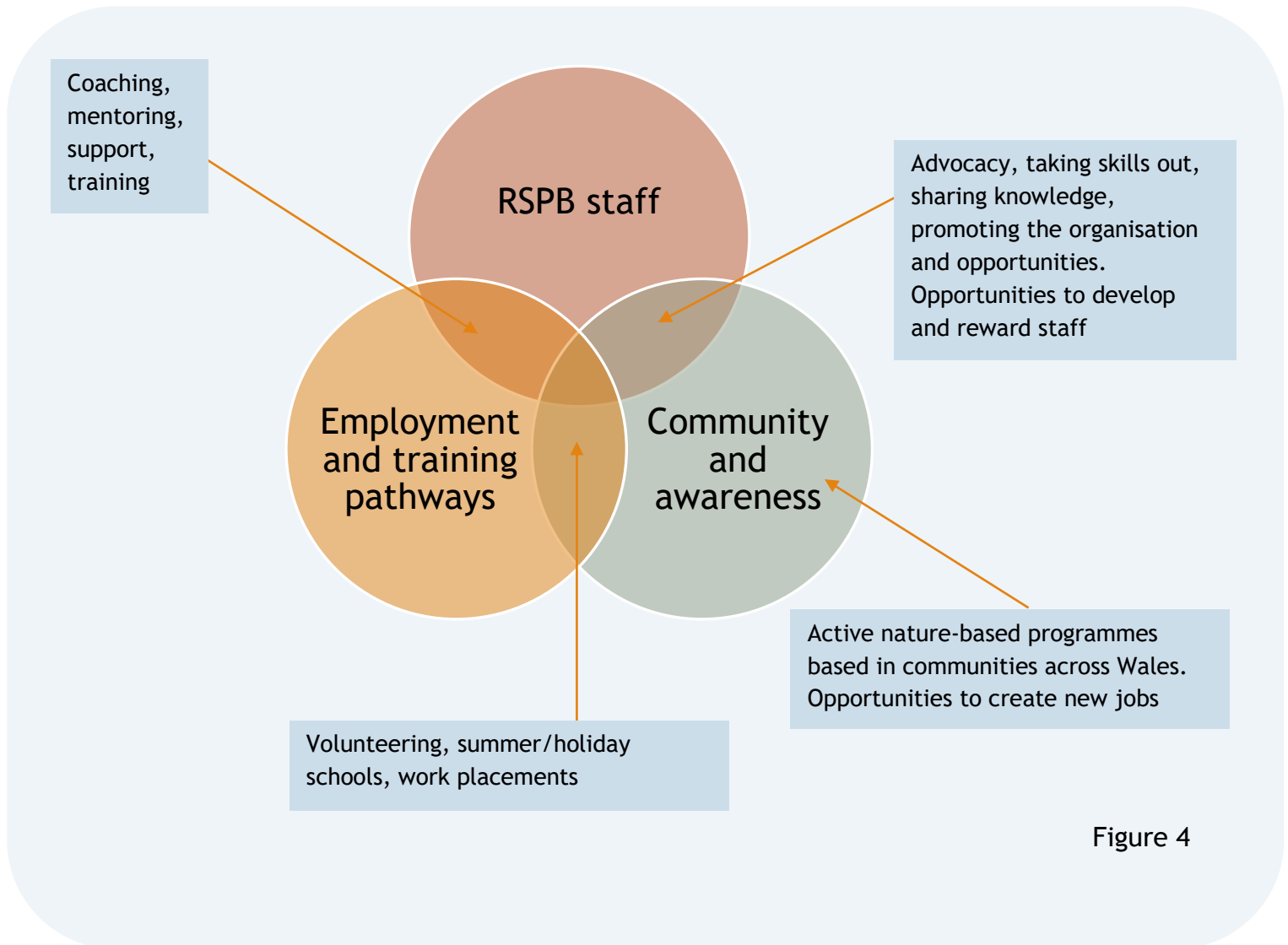


Figure 4

## Appendix - acknowledgements and references

Our particular thanks to the young people who attended focus groups and to the following organisations who kindly hosted the sessions:

### Cynon Valley Organic Adventures

Cynon Valley Organic Adventures is a branch of the West Midlands Open College Network and offers a range of courses to suit all needs. 'Our school placements vary in terms of time/achievement and we

have something to suit even the most disengaged of learners. We offer flexible placement options to schools to suit individual needs’.

<https://cynonvalleyorganicadventures.com/>

### **We Mind the Gap (Wrexham) & We Mind the Gap (Mold)**

Based in North Wales and North West, offering a range of programmes including: A virtual programme for 16+ year olds. A life-changing programme for 18+ year olds including six month paid employment, work placements, coaching and mentoring sessions, activity days and experiences.

<https://wemindthegap.org.uk/>

### **EYST: Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team**

Set up in 2005 by a group of ethnic minority young people in Swansea. Now with groups in Swansea; Wrexham; Cardiff and Newport. Aims to fill a gap in provision for young BME people aged 11-25 by providing a targeted, culturally sensitive and holistic support service to meet their needs. Provides a range of services including education, employment, health, family support and community safety. Aims to challenge and counter negative stereotypes about ethnic diversity and to increase awareness and understanding about the diverse communities who live in Wales, improving community cohesion.

<http://www.eyst.org.uk/>

### **Erddig Youth Group**

The Erddig Youth Club is an award winning club, seeking to provide young people with a safe and exciting place to grow, develop and enjoy being young. The Erddig Youth Club combines both youth work and volunteering.

## **List of desktop research**

### **EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

[Our Bright Futures](#)

[Future Generations](#)

[Future Generations, skills report](#)

[Future Fit Nesta](#)

[Race, Ethnicity & Employment](#)

[TUC report on jobs creation](#)

[Pearson: routes into work](#)

[NNS Draft proposal to Welsh government](#)

[Our Future in the Land, FFCC](#)

[Wellbeing of Future Generations Act](#)

[Making Sure Kickstart Works](#)

[Environmental volunteering amongst young people](#)

[Senedd research into youth unemployment through Covid](#)

[Institute for Fiscal Studies: COVID-19 and the career prospects of young people](#)

[The Princes Trust Youth Index](#)

[Princes Trust report on Covid & youth unemployment](#)

[Transition Economics/ Friends of the Earth: Emergency plan for green jobs](#)

[The Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales 2020 to 2021](#)

### **INTERNAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

RSPB Youth Plan, April 2021  
RSPB Youth Strategy 2019  
RSPB Strategy to 2030  
Focus on Young People, 2019 -2020  
Saving Nature Through People Engagement Strategy, 2019 - 2022  
[Developing a Green workforce in Wales, Matt Rayment, 2020](#)  
[Briefing on NNS, Tabea Wilkes](#)  
EDI report by Full Colour, March 2021

## ORGANISATIONS CITED AS RELEVANT EXAMPLES

[Cardiff & Vale College \(careers & ideas team\)](#)

[Careers Wales](#)

[EYST](#)

[We Mind The Gap](#)

[North Wales Training](#)

[Cynon Valley Organic Adventures](#)

[Black Mountains College](#)

[Race for Nature's Recovery](#)

[WCVA Cymru](#)

[Llandrillo College](#)

[Prince's Trust](#)

[Bridgend College](#)

[Coleg Gwent](#)

[North Shropshire College](#)

[NPTC group](#)

**WEBSITES: Careers Wales/ Government/ Training/ Careers/ Apprenticeship Guidance/ Kickstart**

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/>

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/getting-a-job/jobs-growth-wales>

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/funding-your-studies/react-funding>

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/courses-and-training/traineeships>

<https://wcva.cymru/funding/kickstart-scheme/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

<https://gov.wales/funding-support-employment-and-training-wales>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/skills-and-training-programmes/staffing/employability-skills-programme>

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/apprenticeships>

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-reconstruction-challenges-and-priorities-html>

<https://workingwales.gov.wales/>

## APPRENTICESHIP / PLACEMENT / JOB OPPORTUNITIES (SELECTION)

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/green-academies-project>

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/blog/cennad-lichen-apprenticeship-scheme-update>

<https://botanicgarden.wales/get-involved/work-for-us/>

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/jobs-and-placements/jobs/job-listing-page/?lang=en>

<https://acwcerts.co.uk/web/framework/2511-2>

<https://wgc.ac.uk/page/1599/dyffryn-gardens-wales-national-trust-apprenticeship-information>

<https://www.countryside-jobs.com/volunteers/apprenticeships-and-interns>



[https://cat.org.uk/courses-and-training/graduate-school/courses/?gclid=Ci0KCQjws-OEBhCkARIsAPhOkIZ\\_Y8qS9ydfNbKwkYCmm4BMJXo5ZmhCQ4](https://cat.org.uk/courses-and-training/graduate-school/courses/?gclid=Ci0KCQjws-OEBhCkARIsAPhOkIZ_Y8qS9ydfNbKwkYCmm4BMJXo5ZmhCQ4)

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/rspb-job-vacancies/getting-your-dream-job/>

<https://www.conservation-careers.com/job/wellbeing-trainee-kickstart-scheme/>

<https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/>

## Other

[NNS hub](#)

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015

Green Academies Project Evaluation 2019 - National Trust