



#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: Welcome to English

Tell us a bit about your group

Welcome to English helps newcomers to Hull (mostly refugees and asylum seekers) to learn English, make new friends and find out about living in Hull, through community participation.

What actions did your group want to take and why?

The beauty of learning English is that it can be done doing just about anything! As part of our partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, we are using this opportunity to give people the chance to explore nature, engage with environmental issues and be more active and social, whilst improving their language skills. Students are keen to teach others about nature and climate change in their home countries and find out more about wildlife in the UK.

Many of our students are from farming backgrounds and are now living in deprived inner-city locations. Many are suffering from poor mental health. Our sessions enable them to be aware of, enjoy and take action for nature on their doorstep, and further afield when opportunities arise.

What sorts of things have you done for nature so far?

- Held regular discussion groups where students, staff and volunteers have worked together to plan what we would like to achieve.
- Successfully built relationships with 2 landowners and negotiated agreements for us to access outdoor space on a local community allotment and an underused community garden called Villa Gardens – until recently we had only indoor classrooms available to us.
- Trialled some initial fruit and veg growing in small beds made from upcycled materials, ahead of a planned larger food growing project in 2023.

“ Our recent lessons have included outdoor field trips to The Living Seas Centre at Flamborough and the Humber Estuary to explore topics including marine pollution, flooding, street trees and species migration, and have incorporated practical actions such as a beach clean and building nest boxes. ”



- Started to run regular gardening sessions on the community allotment, where we have successfully built a partnership with Cosmo CIC, who manage the site. We're now supporting Cosmo CIC to develop their communal allotment with nature in mind, as well as helping several individual gardeners on their plots.
- Begun working with The Goodwin Trust (who own Villa Gardens) and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to create a site development plan for Villa Gardens, which will incorporate a focus on action for nature, as well as prioritising projects and activities which aim to engage more residents in using the garden space, thereby building community cohesion.
- Built an environmental focus into our literacy lessons, encouraging learners to discuss issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, and COP 27, and look at what actions families and individuals can take to reduce their impact on the planet. Our recent lessons have included outdoor field trips to The Living Seas Centre at Flamborough and the Humber Estuary to explore topics including marine pollution, flooding, street trees and species migration, and have incorporated practical actions such as a beach clean and building nest boxes.



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Nextdoor Nature

What resources or support have you used?

We are making our own set of learning resources, which we are testing and will adapt for use with future students. They are in the form of topic-based worksheets, at three different levels (we have students who cannot read and write any language at all, through to students who have completed university). The worksheets are intended to be used in small volunteer-led groups. They include reading, writing, discussion, and research.

We are in the process of purchasing a range of resources to make lessons more engaging and to help students, both in terms of their research skills and their opportunities to take part in practical tasks. These include books such as The RHS' 'Let's Get Gardening' which we are using to support the development of our allotment projects, wildflower seeds and plug plants to enable us to create pollinator-friendly areas within Villa Gardens, and boots and gloves, so that all students can take part in practical sessions on our outdoor sites, as well as engage in tree planting activities around the city.

The main resource we have used so far is knowledge- that brought by our students from their experience in their countries, along with that contributed by Andy, our supporting Wilder Communities Engagement Officer at Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

Did you empower or involve others?

We always involve our students in all stages of our projects. For example, we are running sessions where we are supporting students to work together to decide how we will use the land we have secured to have the best impact for people and for nature. Not only does this give them more ownership of the project, but it is also providing an opportunity for them to have a purposeful discussion in English.

How did it make you feel?

Staff and volunteers at Welcome to English are always keen to be involved with projects which allow us to facilitate hands-on learning and offer new experiences to our learners. Being



in a new environment (and particularly an outdoor one!) is refreshing, exciting, fun, and sociable.

What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

We have started to consciously include things about nature and the environment in most of our regular topic-based sessions for learning English. For example, in English sessions about food we discuss the benefits eating less or no meat.

What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife whilst doing this?

Our favourite moments are always when students from very diverse backgrounds share their skills to produce something together (such as the nest boxes that we constructed recently) or when we see the confidence with which they speak (in English) about nature and the environment in the country where they grew up.

Watching students use binoculars for the first time by the river Humber, with Andy providing expert knowledge about which birds from our local area migrate to countries that our students are from, was a memorable experience.





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What do you plan to do next?

We have lots of exciting plans in the pipeline, including:

- Beginning work on the plans we are developing for Villa Gardens – these include: undertaking baseline species surveying, designing and constructing a bench which will allow students to rest together in the garden but also incorporate a planter for herbs and perennial wildflowers to benefit pollinators, creating wildflower meadow strips in the garden to attract grasshoppers, butterflies and other pollinators, building and installing raised beds in the garden to allow students to grow their own fruit and vegetables, creating a flower garden which we plan to plant with the national flower of each country represented among the different nationalities of our learners.
- Learning and sharing knowledge about the benefits of trees in urban areas, before working in partnership with the Environment Agency to plant trees around a flood storage scheme in the city.
- Liaising with Hull University, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and other partners to set up a ‘nocturnal nature session’, where we hope to learn more about star constellations, as well as studying native nocturnal animals and the things that we can do to support them.
- Continue supporting Cosmo CIC with the development of Thornton community allotment, along with other public green spaces around the city.



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- Writing advocacy letters to lobby our local MPs to do more for our environment- such as changing planning legislation to ensure that swift boxes and bat bricks are incorporated into all new builds in the city above a certain height.

We are also looking forward to doing some guided walks around the residences where many asylum seekers are based within Hull and the East Riding. One of the hotels is in a former botanical garden in Cottingham, and one is right next to the river Humber. We are excited to find out more about the nature on their doorsteps in these locations and explore activities that can support people to use nature to support their mental health and wellbeing.

To contact us or find out more please visit:

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