

Naturally Healthy as a Tool to Deliver Wellbeing Interventions in Devon

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment & Transport

Recommendation: that the Health and Wellbeing Board support the approach of the Local Nature Partnership's new action plan and seek continued funding for the Naturally Healthy initiative, and to work closely with Public Health to align outcomes.

Introduction

The Devon Local Nature Partnership has an initiative called Naturally Healthy which has been running since 2015. At present this is jointly run by Active Devon and DCC. The initiative has

- An active forum of over 200 members in Devon from 100 organisations across health, environment, and public sectors
- A successful Sports England funded 5-year project focussing on getting over 55s active across Devon (project name: Connecting Actively to Nature/CAN)
- An annual communication campaign to encourage the public to be Naturally Healthy. This is linked to the Activation Fund that organisations can access to facilitate a wide range of events.

CAN is due to end in June 2023. We are in the process of reviewing the learning and outcomes, with monitoring and evaluation being provided by Exeter University. Naturally Healthy is also due a review and update. It is an opportune time to do this, with post covid learning and a much wider recognition of the benefits of being active outside.

Therefore, we are creating a new action plan, and will be applying for funding to deliver it.

Proposal

Our vision is that everyone in Devon will be happier and healthier through an increased connection with nature.

Devon has amazing natural outdoor spaces to offer and a huge variety of ways to be naturally healthy, including walking, cycling, wild swimming and bird watching. Spending time in nature is proven to benefit everyone's health and wellbeing, and therefore the Devon Naturally Healthy initiative aims to link up the health and environment sectors and ensure that contact with nature is promoted as part of our health and wellbeing service.

Our Action Plan involves two areas.

1. A targeted programme focussing of areas of highest health inequalities in Devon

- A CAN style programme of work that supports people being active in nature. CAN is targeted at over 55s. This programme of work would target key locations (based on LSOAs in consultation with Public Health Devon) and focus on demographics who are least likely to self-refer/visit a GP (again in consultation with Public Health Devon)
- This will be achieved by working with our wide network of groups and partners across Devon, and taking the core learning from CAN.
- This programme of work will report monitoring/evaluation to Public Health Devon
- A key part of this work will be targeting young people, as it is stated as a recommendation in the Public Health Devon Annual Report 21/22.

2. A broad scheme of work across Devon

- Across Devon there are also opportunities to improve the Naturally Healthy offer for everyone.
- Potential to create an annual forum of link workers across the county to help support them and share with them resources etc. This forum would be collaboratively designed with link workers.
- Training for activity leaders across the county about how to engage people with wildlife in their sessions. This can be run by Local Nature Partnership partners (i.e. RSPB/DWT etc).
- Develop a monitoring framework that organisations can use to evaluate user experience of their programmes, as recommended in the Social Prescribing across Devon August 2020 report commissioned by the Devon Sustainability and Transformation Partnership.
- Working with planners/transport/public rights of way to improve local access to good quality green space.
- Continue to have an activation fund for organisations throughout the year – potentially more targeted.
- Continue to run the Naturally Healthy forum as it is an active forum and useful way to share ideas, update people on the latest guidance etc.

Options/Alternatives

If we continue with the status quo

- The CAN project supports a network of 60+ partners, these partners deliver ongoing opportunities for over 55-year-olds in Devon, a significant proportion of whom are inactive, isolated, have long term health conditions and disabilities. Projects and initiatives are designed to be inclusive, safe, welcoming and at an appropriate level to encourage participants to begin a behaviour change journey to being more active, socially connected and connected to nature. Over 2000 individuals have benefitted to date.
- CAN also supports the volunteer workforce who support the delivery of many of these projects.
- The CAN partnership meets regularly to share learning, impact and resources and is a network that is contributing considerably to the Green Social Prescribing agenda in Devon.
- CAN has been shared at a national level as an example of good practice

- When the CAN project ends in June 2023 Active Devon will aim to provide limited support to groups in its place. However, the legacy, support and facilitation and funding of groups would for the most part will finish.
- The Naturally Healthy forum will continue, but without active projects to further learning, develop training and bring in resources it would lose momentum. Many of the forum members attend due to being involved in CAN.
- The Activation Fund is for organisations to use to facilitate events and is funded through CAN. In 2022 it funded 60 events which reached over 700ppl supporting them to go outside and discover new groups.

Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

Please see below the overview timeline. We will be consulting with a variety of stakeholders that include:

Naturally Healthy steering group meets three times a year

- Chair: James Szymankiewicz – Ilfracombe GP
- Tom Mack - Active Devon
- Kate Hind - DCC Environmental Partnership officer
- John Amosford - Public Health
- Gareth Dix - Active Devon
- Mark de Bernhardt Lane - Aquifolium
- Tania Skinner – Public Health
- Sarah Jennings – DCC Ecologist and Local Nature Partnership manager
- Ben Totterdell – Exmoor National Park
- Andrew Simpson – NHS Torbay and South Devon Trust
- Darin Halifax – NHS

Naturally Healthy Forum meets four times a year – over 100 organisations and over 200 members are part of the forum. Organisations represent the environment sector, health sector, local authorities, CICs and charities.

Local Nature Partnership working group – meets three times a year. 40 members from Devon environmental organisations. Chaired by Peter Chamberlain DCC Environment Manager

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb onwards
High level outcomes designed	/					
Naturally Healthy Steering group feedback	/					
HWB board						
Naturally Healthy forum stakeholder engagement						
Theory of change model created						
Informal meeting with funders						
Local Nature Partnership working group consultation						
Naturally Healthy steering group scrutiny						
Meetings with stakeholder groups 1:1s						
Funding applications of interest						
Full funding application						

Strategic Plan

Climate change

Prioritise sustainable travel and transport with more opportunities for cycling and walking

- We will be working closely with colleagues to improve access to good quality green space locally. We will be contributing to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (a new mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature established by the Environment Act 2021).

Child Friendly Devon

- **Improve children and young people's mental health including strengthening support for those at risk of emotional or mental health problems**
- **Understand and support children and young people where their mental health is suffering including strengthening support for those at risk of emotional or mental health problems**
- Targeting LSOA areas of need will focus on groups who are of most need in these areas and this includes children and young people. Active Devon has school leads who will be able to assist with reaching young people in these areas, and we will also work closely with trusted and well-developed community partners.
- The Devon Local Nature Partnership hosts the Network for Environmental Educators in Devon working group which works with education providers in Devon.

Tackle poverty and inequality

- **Promote services that increase resilience, self-reliance, and independence**
- Naturally Healthy works with individuals to improve wellbeing and resilience within Devon communities.

Improving health and wellbeing

- **Give people greater opportunities for walking and cycling to increase their physical activity**
- The second area of Naturally Healthy detailed above will focus on how to improve access to good quality green space through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Biodiversity Net Gain, planning criteria and through work with local partners (for example the five AONBs in Devon)
- **Improve mental health by improving access to mental health and wellbeing services and strengthening support for young people at risk of emotional or mental health problems**

- The first area of the Naturally Healthy Action plan will deliver access to interventions to help improve low level mental health issues by increasing opportunities for people to be active outside and connect to nature.
- The second area of the Naturally Healthy Action plan aims to train up activity leaders to enable them to deliver nature connection in their sessions. It also aims to set up a forum for link workers in Devon. This forum will be co-led by link workers to help deliver their needs as a peer-to-peer support forum, connecting to the latest information and resources, and also sharing information on being active and accessing green space in Devon.
- **Tackle social isolation, particularly among older, younger and disabled people, and those with a long-term illness**
- The first area of the action plan will work with Public Health Devon to identify who would benefit most from these interventions (people who are isolated, disabled, health deprivation etc)

Financial Considerations

The Devon Local Nature Partnership supports Naturally Healthy by providing 0.2 ft of the environment partnership officer's time to work closely with Active Devon, Travel Devon, Public Health Devon, Natural England, AONBs etc to deliver the initiative alongside Active Devon. This provides value for money as a core role of facilitating, project managing, communicating etc. Naturally Healthy.

CAN was funded by Sports England. We are now looking for other external funding sources.

Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

The Action Plan aims is to help deliver more access to good quality local green space. This will reduce the need for people to travel.

It also aims to connect people to their local natural environment. People will become more connected to nature and advocates of their local green space.

Equality Considerations

An Impact Assessment will be taken on proposed plans in due course. We want to target resources to areas of high health inequalities (in consultation with Public Health Devon).

Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

To summarise, Naturally Healthy is aiming to work in a more strategic way to achieve targeted benefits in Devon for wellbeing. We want to demonstrate the impact this strand of work can have, and to make sure it's delivering for Public Health Devon and our wide network of partners.

Meg Booth – Director of Climate Change, Environment & Transport