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Evaluation of Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project

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Meaningful Measures Ltd
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Acknowledgements:

The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project was a partnership project with Bath & North East Somerset (BANES) Council and in collaboration with their Somer Valley Rediscovered Project. The project was funded by the West of England Combined Authority through the UK Government Prosperity Fund. A special thanks goes to the participants of the focus group and to the participants who completed the survey.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not represent those of Avon Wildlife Trust.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project, led by Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) in partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council, aimed to engage local communities in nature-based activities to enhance green spaces and biodiversity. The project, funded by the West of England Combined Authority, built on the existing Somer Valley Rediscovered initiative, ran from May 2023 to March 2025.

Methods

A mixed-methods evaluation was conducted using a survey sent to 50 participants and a focus group conducted with participants from all four project sites. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and thematic coding, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the project's outcomes.

Results

Survey Results (Quantitative & Qualitative Data from 35 Participants)

There was a 70% response rate (35/50). Most participants were female (77%), with an average age of 56.5 years. 89% identified as White British, with a small percentage from mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Increased Connection to Nature

- The majority of respondents reported improved relationships with nature after participating.
- Many moved one or more categories higher when rating their relationship with nature comparing before and after the Nextdoor Nature project.

Health & Wellbeing Benefits

- 92% respondents had increased social interactions.

- 50% felt less lonely, and between 47–63% reported improvements in physical and mental health.

Community Engagement & Wider Impact

- 80% respondents took action for nature beyond the project (e.g., in their own gardens).
- Nearly 70% encouraged family/friends to take action for nature.
- 50% had conversations with community leaders to raise awareness.

Avon Wildlife Trust's (AWT) Role

- 92% respondents felt they were empowered to make decisions about their local community rather than having projects dictated to them.
- Almost all respondents gained new skills and confidence to support wildlife.
- Many appreciated AWT's practical and financial support, ecological knowledge, and enthusiasm.

Focus Group findings (In-Depth Thematic Insights from 7 Participants Across 4 Sites)

Personal Benefits

- Increased social connections – participants met like-minded people they didn't know before.
- Gained ecological knowledge – learned about native species, optimum planting positions, bat conservation, pond creation, and wildlife habitats.
- Developed practical skills – learned stakeholder engagement, communication strategies, and running community groups.

Wider Benefits & Ripple Effects

- Improved local community spaces – e.g. creation of nature trails, bat boxes, wildflower areas, and ponds.
- New collaborations – local schools, councils, housing associations, and businesses joined efforts.

- Projects continued beyond Avon Wildlife Trust's involvement due **to** increased local ownership.

Reflections on Avon Wildlife Trust's Approach

- Participants valued Avon Wildlife Trust's enthusiasm, encouragement, and hands-on support.
- The community-organising model (letting locals lead decisions) was seen as highly effective.
- The support with communication and networking was crucial in sustaining efforts.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Building community trust takes time – one year was not enough for some residents to fully engage. Longer project timelines to build trust and sustain momentum is needed.

Desire for continued Avon Wildlife Trust's support – even if just in a light-touch advisory role, which will help to maintaining long-term volunteer engagement which remains a challenge.

There is a need for flexibility – some planned projects had to be adjusted due to external constraints (e.g., loss of land permissions).

Conclusions

The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project exceeded all the desired outputs and outcomes. It successfully strengthened community engagement, improved nature connectedness, and enhanced health and wellbeing. Participants felt empowered to take ownership of local green spaces, demonstrating a lasting impact beyond the project's funding period. This evaluation highlights the long-term value of community-led nature initiatives and the critical role of organizations like Avon Wildlife Trust in fostering sustainable environmental engagement.

Recommendations:

The recommendations relate to the current project and then to future projects

Recommendation 1

The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project has been a big success. It is recommended that Avon Wildlife Trust and existing partners seek funding for Avon Wildlife Trust to provide light-touch support to the community groups. This will allow the existing relationship with residents to be developed further.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that Avon Wildlife Trust continue using a community organising approach when working with community groups as the impact on people, communities and nature is very positive.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended more time is spent engaging with communities before projects begin to ensure that appropriate ways of engaging with all residents in the communities are developed.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that there are clear assurances are received that there are no anticipated changes of ownership to land, before community projects are started.



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Introduction

In 2021, The Wildlife Trusts launched a 10-year strategy¹ that included "Team Wilder," a community organizing program aimed at engaging people to act for nature's recovery. A logic model was created for Team Wilder's implementation, and it was determined that further funding was needed to further develop Team Wilder e.g. via Nextdoor Nature (NDN) and other community organising initiatives. In 2022 The Wildlife Trusts received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable this community-based initiative to empower people to take action for nature in their local areas. Nextdoor Nature aimed to create a cultural shift in how Wildlife Trusts operated, promoting inclusivity and wildlife conservation. Staff in individual Wildlife Trusts were able to reach out to a range of community stakeholders in an area and support them to work together to decide what nature based project they would most like to do for their local environment.

The overall aim of the Nextdoor Nature was to bring together a diverse range of people to act for nature in their neighbourhoods, creating resilient community groups, enabling a sense of local pride and helping wildlife thrive. Ultimately it is hoped that this approach will foster a wilder, more nature-positive society where people actively contribute to nature's recovery. Using a community organising approach Wildlife Trust staff provided workshops, support, encouragement and share their ecological knowledge. This then enables communities to feel confident to undertake their nature based projects. Communities become upskilled and more knowledgeable to take action of nature and gain many additional benefits to their own wellbeing.

The Nextdoor Nature programme was evaluated across the federation of Wildlife Trusts between 2022 - 2024 and showed a widespread adoption of community organising principles². It also showed an increase in equality, diversity and inclusion in the community groups they were working with. This audit also highlighted how the central team in the federation could support and enable the individual Trusts to then go out and work with communities using community organising approaches.

¹ The Wildlife Trusts (2022) Bring Nature Back: The Wildlife Trusts Strategy 2030

² Polley M., Seers H & Sabby A. (2024), Final evaluation report: Results from Audit survey regarding Team Wilder and Nextdoor Nature. Meaningful Measures Ltd, UK.



For The Avon Wildlife Trust specifically, Nextdoor Nature Somer Valley was an additional Nextdoor Nature project to the one that was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Due to the growing momentum for this type of approach, The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project was a partnership project with Bath & North East Somerset (BANES) Council and in collaboration with their Somer Valley Rediscovered Project. The project was funded by the West of England Combined Authority through the UK Government Prosperity Fund and ran between May 2023 to March 2025)

The intention was for the Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project to build on the existing work through Somer Valley Rediscovered, which is a Strategic Green Infrastructure project in the Somer Valley working with Parish and Town Councils on five public green spaces. It aimed to enable more direct work with community groups and residents in the area, drawing connections between investment in larger areas of green space and the ability of residents to bring nature to their homes and immediate surroundings. AWT, therefore, worked within four community areas in the Somer Valley to embed confidence and skills within that community to sustain greater care for the local natural environment.

This Nextdoor Nature project aimed to deliver the following outputs:

- 200m² of improved green or blue space
- 100 trees planted
- 35 active and sustained participants in the community
- 140 increased visitor numbers to local green space.

These outputs were exceeded and are reported on in Avon Wildlife Trust's Final Report.

The outcomes that were set by Avon Wildlife Trust were:

- The project has engendered a sense of local pride
- People will have increased their connection to nature
- People have improved health & wellbeing
- People have a greater awareness of nature in their neighborhood
- Individuals and communities feel confident to continue to take action for nature

These outcomes are reported on in this report.

Methods

This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach to understanding the impact of Nextdoor Nature in the Somer Valley, Bath. A survey was sent out to 50 people who participated in the projects. A focus group was also conducted to get a deeper understanding of people's experiences of taking part in Nextdoor Nature across 4 sites.

Data collection

Survey

The survey with open and closed questions was co-designed by Meaningful Measures Ltd and staff at Avon Wildlife Trust. The questions in the survey can be found in Appendix 1 and covered:

- People's level of nature connectedness
- Impact on wellbeing,
- Other personal benefits
- benefits to people other than themselves.
- Challenges involved with Nextdoor Nature projects
- Participant demographics (Appendix A).

The survey was created in Microsoft forms and disseminated as a digital link by Avon Wildlife Trust to everyone who had participated in a Nextdoor Nature project between 2nd January 2025 and 11th February 2025. Paper copies of the survey were also given out by Avon Wildlife Staff at Nextdoor Nature project meetings. Survey data was anonymised and securely shared with Meaningful Measures Ltd.

Focus group

An online focus group was run by Meaningful Measures Ltd in January 2025 with 7 participants representing the 4 different Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project sites (Peasedown St Johns, Paulton, Writhlington and Somer Valley Campus, Bath College). Participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form (Appendix B) before taking part in the focus group. Informed consent was received from all the participants before the focus group was started. The questions used can be found in Appendix C.

Data analysis

Survey data was checked and analysed using descriptive statistics for the quantitative data. Where people had selected predetermined items, the frequencies were calculated and displayed as bar charts/pie charts for ease of interpretation. Additional open comments were analysed using content analysis to identify the key themes emerging from this qualitative data.

The focus group was recorded and auto transcribed. The focus group transcript was checked and corrected against the recording, anonymised and coded using thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006). Emerging categories were organised into three main themes.

Data storage and security

All evaluation data was stored in password protected, encrypted files in a secure, GDPR compliant cloud-based storage location by Meaningful Measures Ltd. No data files were stored on individuals' laptops. Meaningful Measures Ltd staff are also trained in GDPR compliant data processing procedures and accredited by Cyber Essential Plus.

Results

The results of the survey to Nextdoor Nature participants are presented below. This is then followed by the results of the focus group.

Survey

35/50 (70%) of Nextdoor Nature participants responded to the survey. The data is presented below.

Demographics

Age: 31 people provided their age, which ranged from 26 - 80 years old. The average age was 56.5 +/- 15.2 years old. The ages were split into categories - the largest contribution came from those between 46-65 years old (Figure 1).

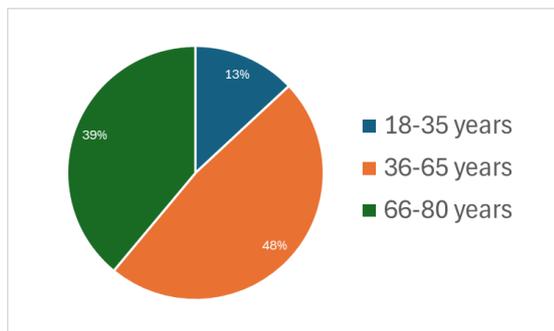


Figure 1. Age categories of Nextdoor Nature participants.

Gender: 27 (77%) of participants were female and 6 (17%) were male. 2 people (6%) did not want to give their age.

Ethnicity: 31(89%) participants were White, White Welsh, or White British, 2 (6%) were from other or mixed ethnic groups and 2 (6%) preferred not to say.

Health status: 7 (20%) participants had a long-term condition or a learning difference which has a substantial impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks. 4 (11%) preferred not to say and the majority 24 (69%) preferred not to say.

How long have you been involved with the Nextdoor Nature project?

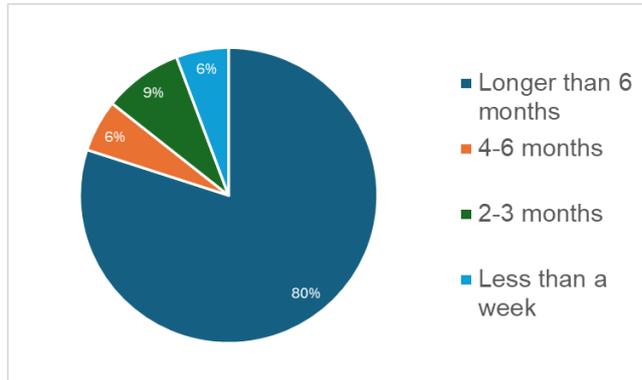


Figure 2. Duration of involvement with Nextdoor Nature (n=35)

As shown in Figure 2, 80% of participants responding to this survey had been involved with their Nextdoor Nature project for longer than 6 months. Similar proportions had been involved for either a week, 2-3 months or 4-6 months. This shows that many participants are remaining involved with their projects.

The Impact of taking part in Nextdoor Nature

Relationship with nature

Survey participants were given some images to look at to select how they viewed their relationship with nature (Figure 3). They were asked to select which image best described their relationship with nature before taking part with Nextdoor Nature and since taking part in Nextdoor Nature.

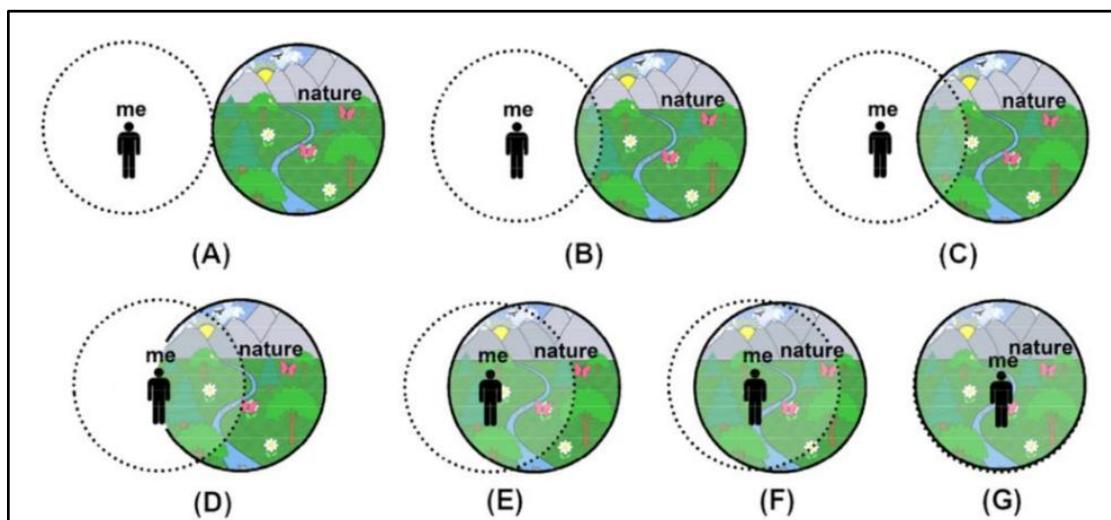


Figure 3 Diagrams reflecting different relationships with nature.

Overall, there was a shift towards people being more connected to nature (Figure 4). Before taking part in Nextdoor Nature a broad range of relationships with nature described from feeling completely separate to nature (A on Fig 3) through to fully connected (G of Fig 3). The majority of participants before taking part in Nextdoor Nature had a reasonable to good relationship with nature (D & E on Fig. 3 respectively).

After taking part in Nextdoor Nature there were a much higher proportion of people who felt completely connected to nature and very well connected to nature (G & F on Fig. 3 respectively).

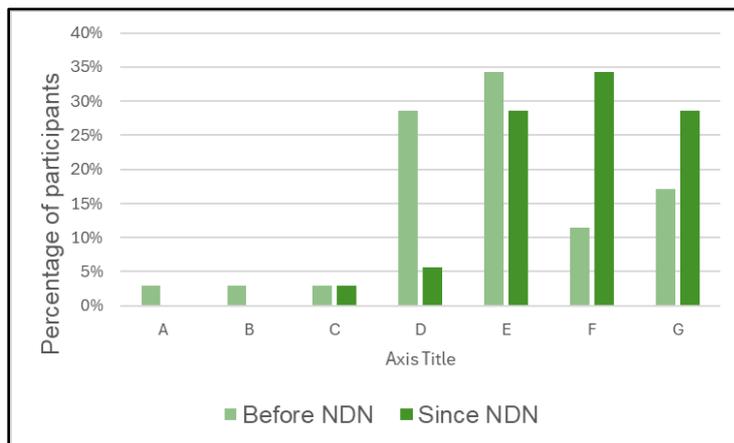


Figure 4. Participant's relationship with nature before and since doing Nextdoor Nature (n=35).

Figure 5 shows the proportion of participants and the number of categories that they improved by, i.e. their level of improvement of their relationship with nature. Whilst the majority had a 1 category improvement, there were a small proportion of people whose relationship with nature was very positively impacted as they moved up 2, 3 or even 4 categories in some cases. The people who had no change in their relationship with nature were most likely to rate this as very good before starting Nextdoor Nature, therefore, there is very little or in some cases, no room for improvement. Overall, this data highlights that the people taking part in Nextdoor nature have a range of experiences relating to nature, and that it is enabling people to become more connected to nature.

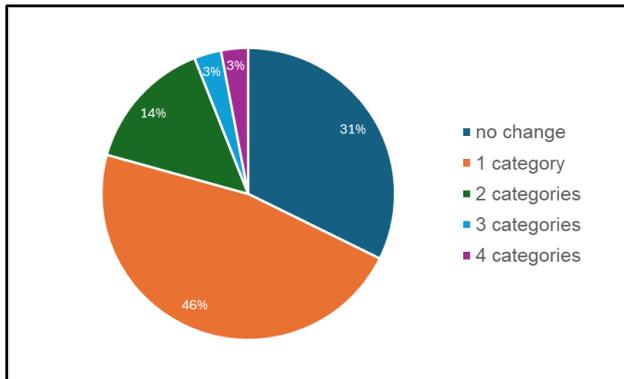


Figure 5. The degree to which participants relationship with nature improved after taking part in Nextdoor Nature (n=35)

One person scored their relationship as getting worse, although none of their other data explains or corroborates this result (not represented in Fig 5)

Impact on health and wellbeing

Participants were asked to rate (strongly agree through to strongly disagree) whether their involvement in Nextdoor Nature had any impact on their health and wellbeing. As shown in Fig. 6 below, benefits to health and wellbeing were identified for many participants involved in Nextdoor Nature.

The domain that was most impacted was social interactions, where 92% of people agreed or strongly agreed that they were having more social interactions with people in their community. Between 47% and 63% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their physical health, mental health and overall wellbeing, had improved. Finally, 50% of participants felt less lonely due to taking part in Nextdoor Nature.

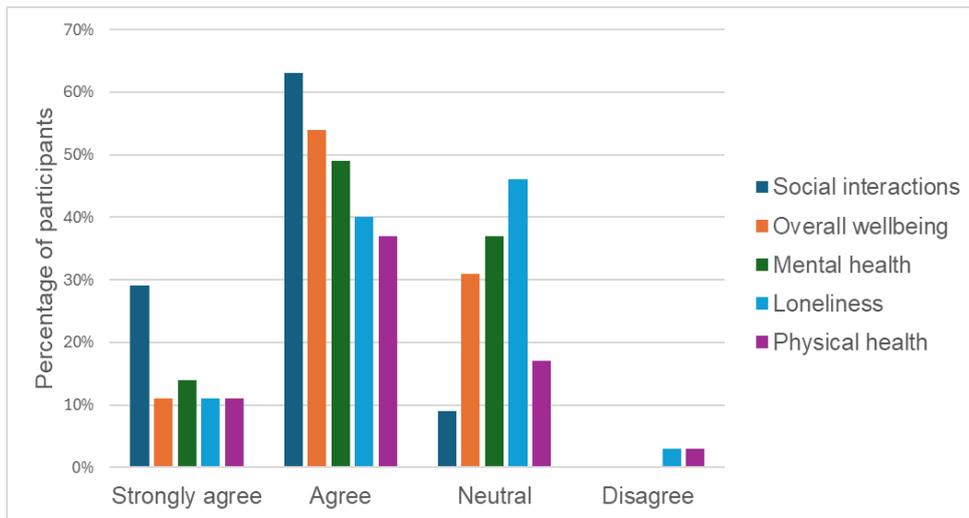


Figure 6. The impact of Nextdoor Nature on participants' health and wellbeing (n=35)

The role of Avon Wildlife Trust

Participants were asked to rate a set of statements from strongly agree through to strongly disagree about the approach that Avon Wildlife Trust used for the Nextdoor Nature projects. Results are shown in Figure 7. The standout result here is that 92% of participants (68% of which strongly agreed) felt that Avon Wildlife Trust helped them to make their own decision about projects they developed in their community groups, as opposed to coming in with pre-determined ideas to be 'done to' the community.

It is also clear from this data that it is unlikely that most of the projects would not have been started in the first place, without the involvement of Avon Wildlife Trust. Furthermore, nearly 90% of respondents have now learnt how to support their local wildlife and are more confident to take action and to share their views on what this action could look like locally. These results clearly demonstrate that the approach of Nextdoor Nature has empowered the community groups to act, by giving them the knowledge and support they need to get started.

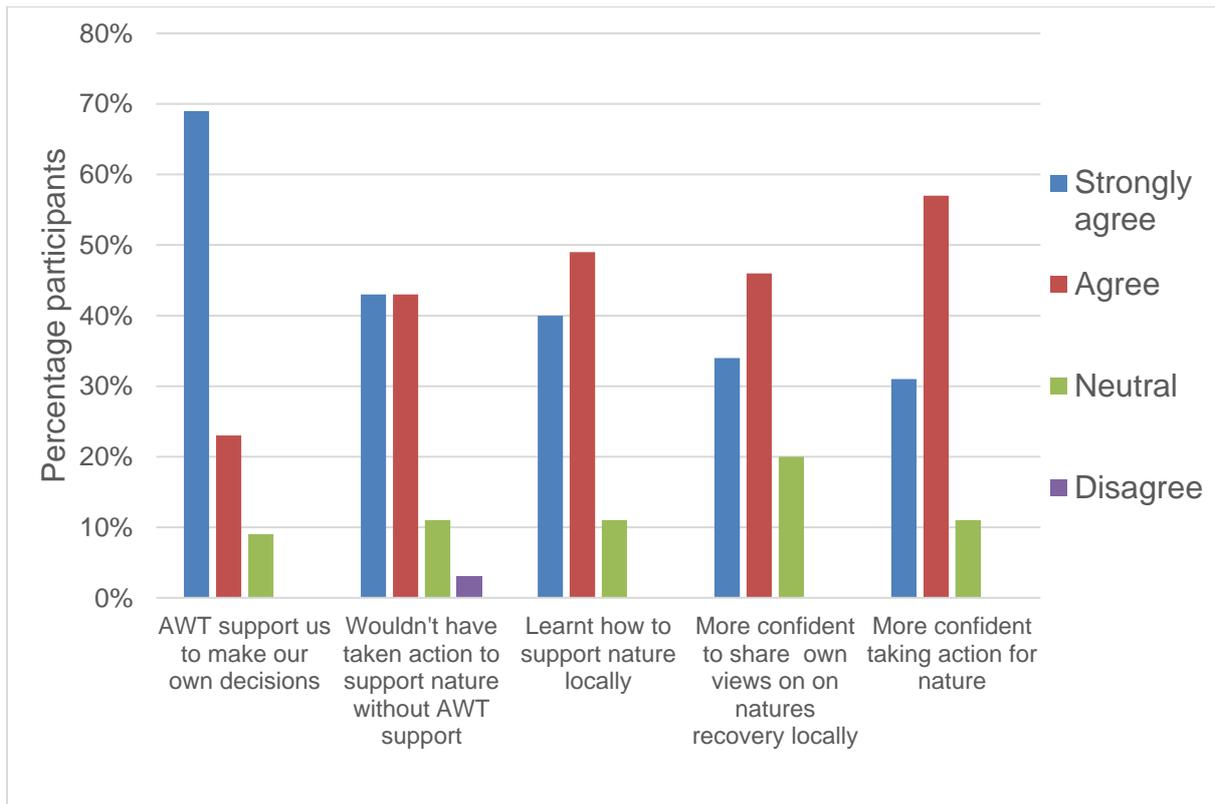


Figure 7. Understanding how Nextdoor Nature has supported people to take action for nature’s recovery (n=35)

An additional open question was available to participants to write in any other comments about the Avon Wildlife Trust and their approach. 34/35 responded to this question which revealed a range of reasons why people appreciated the support from Avon Wildlife Trust. Just the fact that Avon Wildlife Trust was getting involved with the community groups was appreciated.

“It was really exciting to feel that someone was there to pay some attention to our area and provide support to those of us who wanted to improve things for wildlife.”

Many people highlighted how warm, friendly and enthusiastic the staff were and how much they encouraged the community groups.

“They are enthusiastic and keen to get things going. They have lots of help and advice.”



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“Their enthusiasm is infectious! I always looked forward to seeing them. They were very good at gently encouraging us to move forward with the project and get things done...They are both just lovely people!”

Another aspect that was identified was the ability of the staff to convene groups of people together, and the fact that they were a neutral organisation in the local community. The ability to bring people together and keep them communicating with each other e.g. via WhatsApp groups and meetings, enabled projects to get off the ground.

“They were very good at gently encouraging us to move forward with the project and get things done. They provided us with useful contacts and other people to work with. Lots of emails and WhatsApp messages to keep in touch and information about other learning experiences and activities in our area and further afield.”

“they organised many student and staff involvement days. The bird and bat box building, nature walks & bulb planting events were all led by them and pulled in many different departments.”

“By bringing people together, the impact of individuals is enhanced by mutual works”

The final theme that emerged related to the different types of support that the Avon Wildlife Trust provided. Practical support ranged from booking venues, providing financial support, helping with comms or connecting people to other stakeholders. Another dimension of support was with the ecological knowledge and advice they provided, leading nature based events and helping the community groups have clarity on how best to support their local environment.

“Having financial support from AWT helped us be more ambitious in our planting schemes, how best to make use of various neglected areas”

“Helping looking after the wild life and looking after the plantation”

“I liked the bird box making. Information about the wood”

“Their knowledge, physical help in both planning and carrying out the plans and their amiability”

“All support has been brilliant. Opening discussions between different departments and driving forward initiatives. Sharing their expertise, bringing in ecologists to support practical aspects and teaching”

Wider benefits of Nextdoor Nature

As well as understanding how participant’s health and wellbeing benefitted, it was important to understand if there lasting benefits to how that were gained from the support that Avon Wildlife Trust provided. In particular, we wanted to understand if people would have taken action for nature’s recovery if they hadn’t been supported by Avon Wildlife Trust.

We asked the participants to rate statements about potential effects that may have occurred as a result of the Nextdoor Nature (Figure 8), and we provided open questions to capture any other wider impacts of Nextdoor Nature. This helps us to understand if the knowledge and support gained from Avon Wildlife Trust is spreading further into the community.

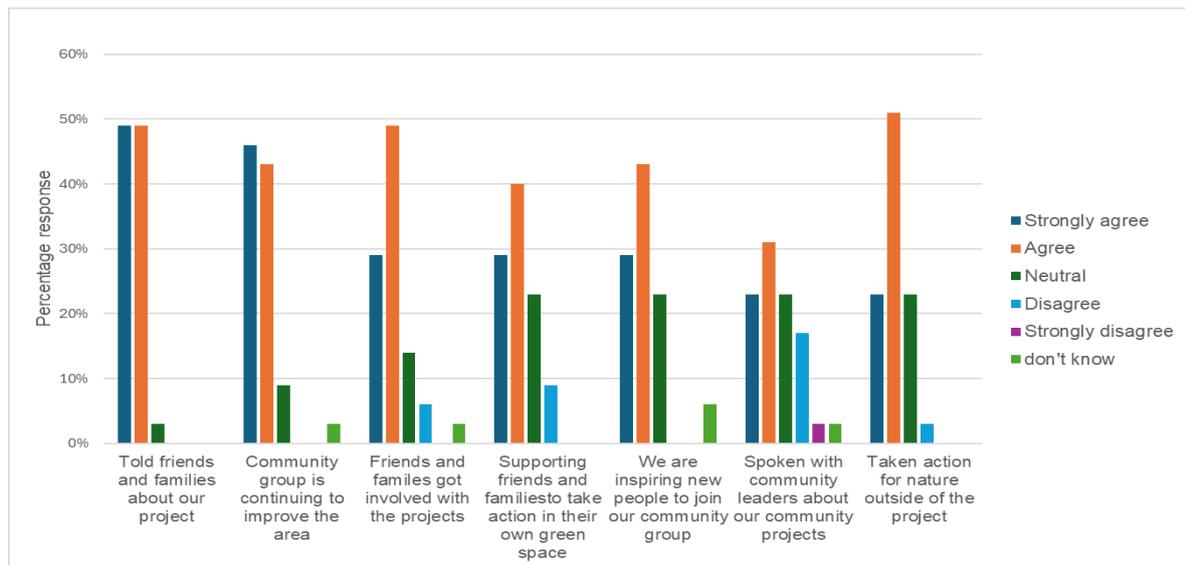


Figure 8. The wider benefits of the Nextdoor Nature project (n=35)

80% of participants had taken action for nature outside of their community group. Almost all participants had shared what their community group was doing with their friends and family. This has led to nearly 80% of participants' friends or family also getting involved with the community groups and 70% of participants supporting friends and family to take action for nature in their own green spaces. This all increases the likelihood of the community groups

being sustained as the formal Nextdoor Nature project comes to an end. Indeed at least 70% of participants feel that they are inspiring more people to join their community group. Additionally, 50% of participants had spoken about the community projects with community leaders. Making this connection helps to raise awareness of the community group's work and help to connect the community groups with other stakeholders that can support their work.

21 people wrote additional comments about the wider impact of Nextdoor Nature. The biggest benefit was with social interactions. It was evident that people made new friends and felt more connected to 'like-minded' people and participants were more aware of who was in their community. There was also a significant effect on the social interactions with children and young people. Interesting by raising awareness of one community group, a local resident who was an ecologist was able to contribute their knowledge.

"I now have a more positive view on sharing my expertise in nature with the community thanks to the support from Avon Wildlife Trust as I work in the ecology sector - without this project I wouldn't have known that local people in my community are interested in learning about bats and taking part in bat walks!"

"Meeting new people, enjoying watching younger community enjoying nature"

"Meeting like-minded people is always a tonic boost"

Not only were social interactions improving but how people felt about other residents in their community and their community in general improved. Participants reported noticing more community cohesion, social interaction, cleaner environment, more pride in their local area. In comparison, before the Nextdoor Nature project participants felt there were less children and young people about and that they knew less residents.

"More people stop to talk to us when we're working in the village and we can share our ways of helping nature and explain how they can help in their gardens by making even small changes."

"I feel more positive about the place I live as I know there are other people who want to do the same things that I do."



“the increase in social interactions in my community has been massive and is a beautiful thing to be a part of!”

“senior management have realised the benefits of having staff and student around site engaged”

“before this project I feel there was a disconnect within the community but now we are far more cohesive.”

Participants also highlighted how they were more knowledgeable about plants, wild flowers, wildlife, and ecology showing the lasting effect Nextdoor Nature has had on themselves and young people.

“I have more knowledge about nature and have had lots of different ideas about how to protect and encourage wildlife”

“It is a great way for children to encourage them to learn about nature”

“I have noticed more of the bats in our area”

Finally, some participants have continued to promote the projects with other stakeholders such as senior management, the local GP surgery, and funders.

“Spoke to the local Dr surgery about our gardening group to get more volunteers involved”

“We have recently won a grant as a community to provide a nature ‘rubbing-post’ trail around Writhlington which was spurred on by the AWT project...”

“Through running a workshop (bat box making) I have now teamed up with another ‘maker’ in the village. Now planning another workshop together.”

Challenges experienced

Participants were asked to identify any challenges they had experienced whilst taking part in Nextdoor Nature. Four participants stated that there were no challenges for them. 21 participants recorded their challenges which are described below. Considering the amount that was achieved across four sites, there were not many challenges reported.

Engaging the whole community was the most frequently mentioned challenge, but this was greatly helped by the support of Avon Wildlife Trust. Participants noted that you can't always find a time to meet to suit everybody. Other participants also noted that engaging the wider community was hard, which meant that not all parts of the community were represented in some of the projects.

“Engaging with the community as a whole and gaining people’s involvement.”

“Difficult to bring the community together and choose days and dates to meet suitable to the wider community to meet.”

A few participants identified the challenge of *“getting the people that have authority to say yes and no to agree to some of the plans”*. One community group started a project in the gardens of a pub but due to the lease changing hands, this project had to be stopped, much to the disappointment of the community group who had already become invested in the project.

Time pressure of wanting to be involved when living a busy life was raised by a couple of participants as was the timescale of Avon Wildlife Trust’s involvement - it was felt that *“Maybe another year...would cement a longer lasting relationship for the project to continue with local involvement.”*

Other challenges were raised by one or two participants. These included having funding to *‘continue awareness’* of the work that has been started, navigating the weather which sometimes meant they had to cancel events, the support needed for children *“who would have struggled without help”*.



Focus group of Nextdoor Nature participants

The focus group lasted 54 minutes and was attended by seven participants who between them represented all four Sommer Valley Nextdoor Nature sites. The thematic analysis revealed three specific themes associated with the participants' experiences of taking part in the Nextdoor Nature projects. The themes included Personal benefits; Wider benefits and ripple effects, and The Avon Wildlife Trust approach. These themes will now be explained further.

Personal Benefits:

This theme highlights the range of personal benefits that participants experienced. For some participants they expressed how they enjoyed the experience of Nextdoor Nature as a “rewarding time” or an “incredible experience”. There were three distinct categories to how participants benefitted from Nextdoor Nature, all of which helped - i) Nature based knowledge and education; ii) Social interaction; iii) Skills for running community groups.

Nature-based knowledge and education: This was the most frequent comment across all projects as to how participants had benefitted from the staff at Avon Wildlife Trust. For example, participants appreciated being taught about putting together a design for bulb planting and then being helped to plant bulbs in the appropriate locations. They were taught about wild plants, wildflowers, about bats, and how to develop ponds, how to plant and tidy the garden to best support wildlife.

“I thought we benefited a lot because there's lots of things I didn't realise that were open to the general public from the wildlife trust and stuff that we could use”

“the links to some of the sessions that you do like I was going to do the wildlife flower one so things like that that I wouldn't have known how to go about but we've been told about them so we know that they exist so all that sort of thing as well so there's been lots of opportunities to learn stuff”

“It was a great opportunity to pick-up actual kind of understanding with regards to nature, fauna and flora. Through for example the bat watching exercise that we did with the special



kit to pick up the bat sounds which was absolutely incredible to know that these little creatures are so prevalent in our area and someone like me would never have been able to spot them or understand more about their habitat”

“Avon Wildlife Trust staff turning up getting involved with what we were doing helping us adjust our methods of planting tidying up so using the sticks to build homes for creatures”

Social Interaction: Over half of the participants met ‘like-minded’ people in their communities who they were previously unaware of and have continued the social interaction.

“also because we’ve had little groups and we’ve got our WhatsApp group. I’ve met more people in the village as well that are like-minded. So that’s been really really good.”

“And also I mean I’ve met people ... that I didn’t know existed”

“for me personally because I enjoy kind of interactions with people”

Skills to run community groups: In this category, participants identified a range of skills they picked up from staff at Avon Wildlife Trust which they found useful. Several groups mentioned the communications aspects, and how they learnt more communicating to people what they were doing. One participant found the stakeholder engagement work by Avon Wildlife Trust very useful and interesting; others benefitted from the support to run the community group and keep the momentum going helpful.

“it was also very interesting to see the whole stakeholder engagement side of things...we were quite sceptical about the level to which people would participate in our area and... but seeing how Avon Wildlife Trust went about trying to communicate people with people, the effective use of their channels with WhatsApp and Facebook and everything was I found was really really interesting.”

“and yes the communication and ways that we try and interact with people and it’s given us a much better understanding of what we’ve done and how we want to take the group forward.”

Wider benefits and ripple effects:

As well as personal benefits, participants explained that there had been many wider benefits from their participation in Nextdoor Nature. From the data three main themes emerged: i) Community spaces and activities; ii) New stakeholders, iii) Sustainability and legacy of community groups. Each of these themes will be explained further below.

Community spaces and activities: One of the most frequently reported wider benefits was the work being done to improve community spaces, specifically by increasing the wildlife available. Across the four Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature groups, an impressive range of areas had been improved. Noticeably, these projects all improve the area for the residents whether other residents get involved or not. Activities and achievements included adding a nature trail, bat boxes and a pond to the Somer Valley Campus at Bath College, providing a space to support the mental health of students and staff by being able to engage with nature.

“We were an agricultural college. So, there was a lot of things to bring in the different departments and different students in, with bat boxes, building different things like that. bulb planting and a nature trail through our landscape.”

“students will be able to come out here and actually enjoy this beautiful nature trail that we created. So that's a huge benefit for us here.”

In Peasedown St Johns, bulbs have been planted to improve the local area, a gardening group has been supported by Avon Wildlife Trust, a community group has been supporting the local hedgehog population and a wildlife survey in the local cemetery has been carried out.

“I run a gardening group on Thursday mornings in the village... I think one of the biggest benefits for us was that [Avon Wildlife Trust] arranged a wildlife survey in one of our public spaces where it's actually the cemetery which is where we run our gardening group

“We did a bulb planting in one of our public areas in one of our fields and the different visual support that was given to us with banners and flyers and little activities for the kids was great. So yeah, it's been very positive. We can start to see the benefits coming through now, which is good”



“And we had a five-year program, how to benefit and how to encourage more wildlife and lots of ideas from seed collecting to putting up wildlife and wild fauna flora posters around the village. So, that was really really good.”

In Writhlington, a nature trail was developed, workshops on making bat boxes are supporting the local bat population, bulbs have been planted, a site called the plantation, owned by a housing association has been cleared of the fly tipping and made into a space for residents to benefit. A children's playground has also been reinstated, enabling children to be outdoors and physically active. Pond making workshops have enabled the pond area in the local allotments to be doubled, supporting nature's recovery in that area.

“We have done a couple of workshops making bat boxes and we made 27 on Saturday at a workshop. It also provided a sort of a spin-off from that was that I wanted a sort of nature trail through Writhlington which said it's very big Writhlington in terms of it's like a spider's web really

“we have done bulb planting. We've cleared up the plantation and the playground which is next to the plantation has been reinstated now... So it has sparked off other things it has.”

“I participated in a pond workshop... And then following that, we built some mini sort of ponds, but I was able to take that sort of experience back and work with a team at Writhlington allotment and as a result, we've doubled the size of the pond that we had there originally.”

In Paulton there has been an increase in people helping to improve various areas across the village and they are planning further ways of highlighting nature to the residents

“we've benefited so much even through the Pride in Paulton part with [xxx] turning up getting involved with what we were doing helping us adjust our methods of planting and tidying up so using the sticks to build homes for creatures and so it's been a very rewarding time sort of with [xxx]”

“With our new group ... we're planning a wildlife trail around the village. There's a kind of historic walk around the village which has already been planned. So, we're going to go on that and see if there's things of wildlife that we can point out. So while people do that walk, they can look at wildlife stuff as well and maybe get some of those rubbing points for kids to do.”

New stakeholders:

There were a range of new stakeholders that became involved in the Nextdoor Nature projects in addition to residents in the area. Being able to involve a wider range of stakeholders enables more initiative to be achieved and sustained.

At Bath College, seeing how the initiative has developed has encouraged the College to be more formally involved.

“it's actually caused the College to take the initiative to have somebody in their sort of position to start organising those things because up until now we haven't had somebody to try and lead that initiative. But having somebody producing posters sending them out to us to put them up has made the College realise that they need to do that. So that's again caused by them taking that lead.”

In Peasedown St John, the local primary school became involved in making hedgehog posters, which provided an opportunity to introduce the idea of nature conservation to younger children. The Parish Council also committed to supporting the groundwork put in place by Avon Wildlife Trust and the local gardening group.

“I'd seen posters when we've been around or little road sign things when we've been on trips, ... about hedgehogs and [xxx] was saying that she's going to approach the local primary school. And I think they did make some posters with they all drew their little hedgehogs and things”

“The wildlife survey in ... the cemetery [has] now been adopted by the parish council and they work through the maintenance program that was set by Avon Wildlife Trust.”

In Writhlington, a day care organisation in the village got involved with the community group, the housing association supported the clearing of the 'Plantation' site, and BANES council came on board to support the reinstatement of the children's playground. Furthermore, the community group secured funding through a local Dragons Den scheme to increase what could be achieved alongside Avon Wildlife Trust.

“so we have a day care centre in Writhlington and they have been part of this as well, as they were very keen to become more part of the village land they have asked for an expert woodworker to go and show them how to make some things.”



“So through the work at the plantation with the support with the guys from [Housing Association] to kind of clear the area, wood chip it and everything, we've got a solid foundation to create something that is an enjoyable space”

“and the playground ... has been reinstated now and it has been worked on by BANES [Council]. So hopefully that will be much better in future time.”

“I applied for money from the Dragons Den in Norton Radstock and got a thousand pounds towards [the nature trail] and put it with Avon Wildlife Trust's money.”

In Paulton, a new collaboration between the Pride in Paulton group and The Prince's Trust is developing with the aim of having young people from The Prince's Trust:

“[xxx] puts us in touch with the Prince's Trust. So we're working towards finding a way of getting the young people brought out to give us some more sort of manual help in some of the bigger jobs that we want to do. So that, could be a really great benefit to some of the projects we have in mind, and you hope to introduce young people to some of our ways in which we sort of look after the environment.”

Future projects and sustainability

All the participants were sad that the formal involvement and funding from Avon Wildlife Trust was coming to an end. Despite this, participants highlighted how they felt there was a sense that the projects started were sustainable. Partly due to their new knowledge that they gained from Avon Wildlife Trust's staff, partly as there were more stakeholders now involved and partly as the local community are also getting more involved. One participant also pointed to the aspect of building trust with people in the local community which they felt was now beginning.

“So it's just beyond the learning that we did, it's everything that comes basically with that and so there's a lasting impression that's left of skills that we've picked up as well as that kind of self-love to our local community that we've kind of kicked off. That then will make everybody far more invested in wanting to see it carry on so it's not a one and done.”



“We've got something really started here. There's a ball rolling. So, we're already organizing further events and things that we can do with different groups of students in the coming year, when the weather gets a bit better. We've revitalized the pond area ourselves which will be going under further works. this has been a really productive project”

“previously it was just well, it's nice let's have a pond if a few frogs turn up then great but now there's a deep understanding of that and all of that will have a lasting impact so I think it's the sense of legacy really that extend ends beyond just the actual specific kind of tasks or workshops that we did.”

The Avon Wildlife Trust Approach

The aim of the Nextdoor Nature projects was to use a community organising approach to develop local projects with communities and residents, and to avoid turning up, doing what is thought to be best for the residents and then leaving. Using a community organising approach require the Avon Wildlife Trust staff to spend time getting to know the residents and community groups, to help them decide what projects would be good to work on and then support the project work. Participants were asked what they thought about this approach. Within this last theme there were several categories that emerged in the data analysis including the skills and education, personal qualities of Avon Wildlife Trust staff, and the challenges of using this approach. This will be discussed below.

The approach

At some point in the focus group, every participant expressed their appreciation for the support and the approach taken by Avon Wildlife Trust. It was clear from several participants that they feel their projects only got as far on as they had, because Avon Wildlife Trust had been involved.

“I think that the support we've had from Avon Wildlife Trust has been amazing”

“We just really appreciate all the effort, and the hard work put in by Avon Wildlife Trust to come and support our projects and help us to how to get some things on board that we wouldn't have known about.”

“I would just like to say thank you basically to all the input that they put in.”



“it's been fantastic. I don't see that we would have got as far as we have or have achieved anything like this without this kind of interaction and support.”

There were some specific aspects of the approach that were particularly appreciated which echo some of the benefits reported earlier on in this section. One aspect was the right information, skills and education that was provided by the staff from Avon Wildlife Trust.

“in terms of the approach, I think that right from the very start we got the parish council involved ...I found that Avon Wildlife Trust gave us that information first of all and with having the support of parish council it meant that very big jobs which really my little gardening group weren't able to do because of age and restrictions and different things, we got the support right away from the parish council. So, it wasn't quite so labour intensive. So, I think their approach has been good from my experience.”

“The team have really given us a lot of education and sowed the seed to continue things and only positive things to say. I think it's been brilliant.”

“we did a bulb planting in one of our public areas in one of our fields and the different visual support that was given to us with banners and flyers and little activities for the kids was great.”

“the bat watching exercise that we did with the special kit to pick up the bat sounds which was absolutely incredible to know that these little creatures are so prevalent in our area and someone like me would never have been able to spot them or understand more about their habitat”

The other aspect of the approach that was highlighted was the convening element. The support and encouragement from Avon Wildlife Trust was truly appreciated. The enthusiasm really encouraged the community groups to believe in what they were doing. Support to create group chats helped people share their ideas and meet new people.

“And what's been great is that all the way through there's been the opportunity for genuine meaningful kind of education regardless of the age. So, right from the very small ones who understand which way up you need to plant a bulb up to kind of adults who can understand how they can help foster future kind of engagement with the children and help play their part within the community has been great”



“I think definitely the way to continue having hands on support to liaise and have someone to talk with has been instrumental here. Otherwise up to now, it's been very much me on my own trying to do this thing...”

The support to put communication strategies together was also highlighted. This meant that even when the community groups were experiencing challenges, they had the tools to find alternative options.

yes the communication and ways that we try and interact with people, and it's given us a much better understanding of what we've done and how we want to take the group forward.

“So as I say we got the WhatsApp group, everyone stuck together and there were other things that we got together and did.”

“Yeah. I think it's just their enthusiasm is kind of infectious really because we've been pride in Paulton, we've been working together for 10 years but we do meet up every week but we kind of got a little bit stuck in a rut. But then when she came and kind of bigged us up which we thought we are doing good stuff and encouraged us to put stuff in the press and then on social media and then everyone's commenting saying yeah you're doing a really good job which is nice to know”

“[xx] set up a group which we did have a couple of meeting opportunities for us all to plan out what would be really good to have in the hive and they came along and supported it and again really enthusiastic which makes I don't know about everyone else but it makes me feel really enthusiastic as well and we set it all out and this is what we wanted”

Challenges of using this approach

There were a few challenges that were experienced in the projects. In Writhlington, many efforts were made to engage all the residents the village, but this proved to be much harder than the community group anticipated.

“I think the biggest challenge or the biggest lesson potentially that could be learnt is about engaging with diverse groups within the community...why we've failed to kind of get the engagement that we hopefully would have liked really.”

The focus group provided time to reflect on this, and two interlinked thoughts emerged on why the uptake from one group of residents was slower than anticipated. One person suggested that it takes time to build trust and that there were signs that this was starting, just as the project was coming to an end with Avon Wildlife Trust. The second reason was the length of time that the project was running for. This particular project was only for 1 year which created some tensions.

“it has been a really good project, but I think it would have benefited terrifically, particularly in Writhlington, if it's been a two-year project because that you can't build trust in a year and the amount of pressure it put on not only Avon Wildlife Trust to get things through and pay, get the finances sorted out. It also put pressure on people in the village who felt we've got to do this now there's a time and so I think that really did have quite a big impact and it would have been terrific if we could have had longer, - they could have had longer to actually build up relationships with the people. “

“it's also I think trust building up with people who have been quite reluctant to engage but that takes time but that is beginning.”

A different challenge was identified in Peasedown, where the community group with the help of Avon Wildlife Trust had started planning a garden renovation in the local Hive Community Centre right but the permission to do this was subsequently withdrawn. This was very disappointing for all involved, however, with the help of Avon Wildlife Trust, the community group found several other projects to work on instead.

“somebody higher up was like no you can't do that and it didn't come to pass. And I felt sort of like I thought all their effort that they've made to come and do all of that and then now you're saying you can't do any of it. But fair play to Avon Wildlife Trust they kept on board and we still had meetings and we did other things.”

Another participant identified that the getting started aspect was challenging as people were suggesting many different potential projects and there was an expectation that it would be clearer at the outset what the project was. A key aspect of community organising is, however, coproducing the projects with the community to ensure they are relevant and community led.

“for me the approach did work but I think we would have liked a bit more clarity about what we were doing because I know we were suggesting things and other people were

suggesting things and we weren't sure whether they're being picked up on or not which either way is fine."

Another challenge identified was the reality of maintaining the interest of people who have joined the community group or come along to an activity put on. Maintenance of volunteers is essential to the sustainability of the community groups.

"But the problem has been retaining the interest. Our Pride in Paulton group we meet during the week which we know is difficult for a lot of people. So we have been really trying to do the other activities for the Red Lion group on a Saturday at the weekends so that more people are available and we have had at least three more people that have shown interest now."

The final challenge related to how to manage the ending of the formal involvement by Avon Wildlife Trust, which have been overwhelmingly positive. The focus group participants reflected on this:

"the way of easing out of the end of the project is difficult because that support has been so enthusiastic and so taking us forward that we want to be able to keep that going. and it's just really sad that it is ending."

One participant suggested that they could form a WhatsApp group combining all four project sites, so that they could share with each other their progress and ideas, which demonstrates how the community groups are now organising themselves to support each other.

Discussion

Personal benefits of Nextdoor nature

The data collected in this evaluation has revealed a range of personal benefits to people who participated in the Nextdoor Nature community groups. One theme, prominent in the majority of survey respondents and focus groups participants was the increase in meaningful social connections that people made i.e. connections with 'like-minded' people. Often these were with people they didn't know existed in their community. There were also improvements in mental, physical and general wellbeing for many participants. Social connections play a crucial role in overall well-being, with strong relationships linked to better

mental and physical health outcomes. Research indicates that social support can reduce stress, improve immune function, and even increase longevity³. Additionally, individuals with strong social ties tend to have higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction^{4,5}.

Additionally, to social interactions, many participants felt their mental and physical health had also improved.

Another clear benefit for many Nextdoor Nature participants was an improved relationship with nature. Evidence is building to suggest that developing a strong connection with nature offers benefits for both mental and physical health^{6,7}. Engaging with natural environments has been shown to improve mood, reduce stress, and enhance cognitive functions such as concentration and memory⁸. Additionally, spending time outdoors can lower blood pressure, boost immune system function, and promote overall well-being⁹. A 2023 study highlighted that individuals who regularly interact with nature experience reduced anxiety and depression¹⁰.

Taken together both the increase in social interactions, wellbeing and the improved relationship with nature will promote health benefits for these participants.

Wider benefits to friends, family and the community.

Survey data showed that many participants went on to share their experiences and knowledge on how to support nature with friends and family. The most striking data was the number of people who spoke about an increased sense of pride for their community, that it

³ Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine*, 7(7), e1000316.

⁴Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13(1), 81-84.

⁵ Lumber, R., Richardson, M., & Sheffield, D (2017). Beyond knowing nature: Contact, emotion, compassion, meaning, and beauty are pathways to nature connection. *PloS one*, . 12(5), e0177186

⁶ Seers H, Mughal R and Chatterjee H (2022) Evidence Information Note EIN068 Connection to Nature, Natural England, UK

⁷ Seers H, Mughal R and Chatterjee H (2022), Links between natural environments and mental health Natural England Evidence Information Note EIN065 National Academy for Social Prescribing, UK.

⁸ Bratman, G. N., Hamilton, J. P., Hahn, K. S., Daily, G. C., & Gross, J. J. (2019). Nature experience reduces rumination and subgenual prefrontal cortex activation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112(28), 8567-8572.

⁹ Twohig-Bennett, C., & Jones, A. (2018). The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes. *Environmental Research*, 166, 628-637.

¹⁰ White, M. P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J., Wheeler, B. W., Hartig, T., Warber, S. L., Bone, A., Depledge, M. H., & Fleming, L. E. (2023). Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and well-being. *Scientific Reports*, 9, 7730.

was cleaner, and that the community felt more cohesive to them. This was often connected to the sense of having more social connections.

The knowledge and confidence that was acquired by the participants enabled them to tell their friends and families about their community groups, get them involved and also to help friends and family make positive adaptations in their own gardens and green space to support nature. Furthermore, participants could tell other stakeholders such as the local council, the local GP and local housing association about their endeavours.

The value brought by Avon Wildlife Trust

Nextdoor Nature is about enabling communities to decide what action they want to take for nature locally, and participants felt that this approach worked. Participants were able to identify that the support from the staff at Avon Wildlife Trust was key in enabling them to take cohesive action as a community group. Furthermore, many participants didn't think the action for nature would have happened without the support from Avon Wildlife Trust.

Key areas of support that were identified included helping participants to i) Bring people together in the community who didn't know each other ii) learn about effective comms strategies, iii) learn specific ecological knowledge, iv) connect groups to a wider set of local stakeholders who could support the action v) provide a lot of encouragement, vi) help groups respond to challenges they faced.

The community groups are keen to have continued light-touch support from Avon Wildlife Trust after the funding runs out but have shown that they could in theory sustain their groups and continue to take action in their local community. Ideally the light-touch support would provide some advice and encouragement to prevent a forced and abrupt withdrawal of support.

Limitations and challenges

The main limitation to the project was the time available to get the community groups taking action, due to the set-up work that needed putting in place initially i.e. recruitment of community organising staff. A key aspect of community organising is the need to meet community groups and build relationships with them, before starting on projects. This step can't be rushed as the relationship between the community organiser and the community groups is essential to success projects further down the line. This left only 12 months to

work with the community groups on the specific projects and engage with local residents in their communities. At the end of the 12 months there were some residents who needed more time to build up trust before getting involved in projects, which demonstrates the time it takes to build community-led projects. This also highlights that it may take longer for some community groups to fully understand how best to provide activities for some residents in their local communities if they have different lifestyles or demands in their lives.

Nevertheless, the Nextdoor Nature groups are able to continue building the relationships with local residents and understanding their needs, despite funding for Avon Wildlife Trust coming to an end.

Finally there were 50 participants in the community groups across all four sites, but responses were from 35/50. Whilst 70% is a decent response rate, the survey does not represent every community group participant.

Conclusions

Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature exceeded all the outputs aimed for and fulfilled the outcomes that Avon Wildlife Trust set themselves. The personal and wider benefits identified in this evaluation are that the Nextdoor Nature groups have improved the physical, mental, social and general wellbeing of the participants involved. Furthermore, the participants have supported friends and family to improve their own green environments and there is an improved sense of community cohesion and pride. There is evidence that Avon Wildlife Trust has provided enough education, support and connection to other stakeholders to enable the community groups to sustain their projects and develop new ones, with only light-touch support now needed. Challenges in fully engaging some sections of communities remain. It is not always possible to develop relationships with all residents in the timeframe of this project, however, relationships are continuing to develop. These developments and benefits could not have been realised without the intervention of Avon Wildlife Trust. Further funding for Avon Wildlife Trust will enable them to build on the initial success and support further positive impact for the communities and the natural environment. This will continue to support the health and wellbeing of all the residents.

Recommendations

The recommendations relate to the current project and then to future projects

Recommendation 1

The Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project has been a big success. It is recommended that Avon Wildlife Trust and existing partners seek funding for Avon Wildlife Trust to provide light-touch support to the community groups. This will allow the existing relationship with residents to be developed further.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that Avon Wildlife Trust continue using a community organising approach when working with community groups as the impact on people, communities and nature is very positive.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended more time is spent engaging with communities before projects begin to ensure that appropriate ways of engaging with all residents in the communities are developed.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that there are clear assurances are received that there are no anticipated changes of ownership to land, before community projects are started.

Appendix A Survey

Nextdoor Nature Somer Valley Survey

We have enjoyed working with you on the project, which aims to inspire people to come together to take action for nature where they live. Please help us understand how the project has supported you and how we could improve it. Knowing about your experience will help to know if this type of work is effective and support future funding for Avon Wildlife Trust.

Your responses will be completely anonymised so no one will know your identity. All the anonymised survey data will be analysed by researchers at Meaningful Measures Ltd. They will provide a report for Avon Wildlife Trust. You can stop completing the survey at any time and your data will only be used to understand how people have benefited from the project.

As a thank you for completing this survey you have the chance to enter a prize draw for £30 of vouchers. You can choose between supermarket vouchers or national garden scheme vouchers.

| Question 1. How long have you been involved with this project/ activity? | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Less than a week | <input type="radio"/> | 2-3 months | <input type="radio"/> |
| 1 - 3 weeks | <input type="radio"/> | 4-6 months | <input type="radio"/> |
| At least a month | <input type="radio"/> | Longer than 6 months | <input type="radio"/> |

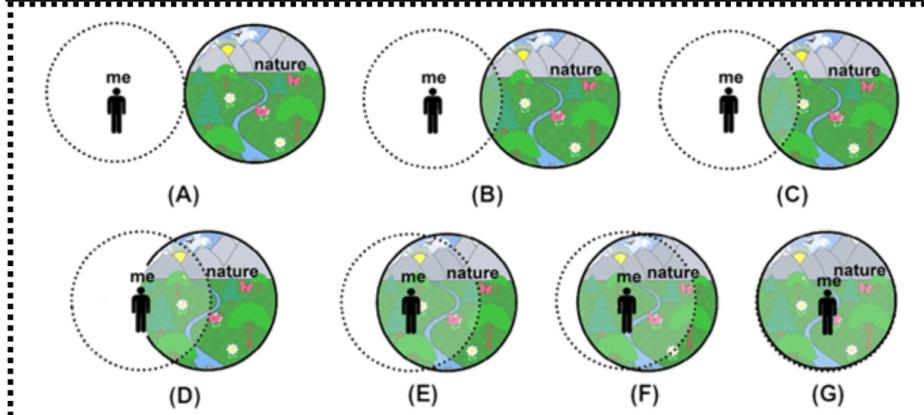
Question 2: Thinking back to before you took part in the project / activity, please circle the letter that best describes the relationship with the natural environment.

Looking at the image below, how connected were you with nature?

Question 3: Since taking part in the project / activity, please circle the letter that best describes your relationship with the natural environment now.

Looking at the image below, how connected are you with nature?

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|





We are interested to understand if you have benefited from being involved with the Nextdoor Nature project. Please can you choose an option to show how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

4. As a result of my involvement with this project / activity...

| | Stongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|--|---------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I feel my mental health has improved | | | | | | |
| I feel my physical health has improved | | | | | | |
| I am less lonely | | | | | | |
| I am having more social interactions with people in my community | | | | | | |
| My overall wellbeing has been improved | | | | | | |
| I feel the project/activity I have taken part in is meaningful | | | | | | |

5. have you noticed any other ways you have benefitted? (please write them down)



We are interested to know about the wider impact of being part of your project /activity. Please can you choose an option to show how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

6. As a result of my involvement with our project /activity...

| | Stongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|---|---------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I have learnt about things I can do to support nature locally | | | | | | |
| I am more confident taking action for nature | | | | | | |
| I am more confident to share my own views on what I think is important to nature recovery locally | | | | | | |
| I felt that Rhea and Steph supported us to make our own decisions about the project | | | | | | |
| I would not have taken this action to support nature if Rhea and Steph had not supported me | | | | | | |

7. Are there any other ways that you feel you have been impacted by your involvement in your project /activity? (please write your response below)

8. What aspects of support from Rhea and Steph did you find most beneficial? (please write your response below)



We are really interested to know if there have been wider benefits than just to yourself from taking part in your project /activity. Please can you choose an option to show how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

9. As a result of my involvement with our project /activity...

| | Stongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know |
|--|---------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| I have taken action for nature outside of the project | | | | | | |
| I have told my friends and family about our project / activity | | | | | | |
| Some friends and family have got involved with our project /activity | | | | | | |
| I have helped friends and family to take action in their own house/garden/ local green space | | | | | | |
| I have started to discuss other project ideas with our community group | | | | | | |
| I have spoken with local community leaders to make them aware of our project /activity | | | | | | |
| We want to continue as our community group to improve our local environment | | | | | | |
| We are inspiring new people to join our community group | | | | | | |

**10. Are there any other wider benefits you have noticed as a result of your project?
(Please write your responses below)**



**11. What challenges did you encounter when doing this project?
(Please write your responses below)**

12. Is there anything else you want to tell us about the project? This can be positive or negative feedback.



About you

Finally, we'd like to ask some questions about you so that we make sure we get feedback from lot of different people. All the information you give will be kept 100% confidential and will not be used to identify you in any way.

13. How old are you? Please write you age in years below or 'prefer not to say'

14. What best describes your gender

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Female | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Male | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-binary | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

15. Do you consider yourself to have a long term health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long term impact on your ability to carry out day to day activities?

Examples may include epilepsy, depression, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), or deafness.

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |

16. How would you describe your ethnic background?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black, Black Welsh or Black British | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| White, White Welsh or White British | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other ethnic group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |

As a thank you for completing this survey you have the chance to enter a **prize draw for £30 of vouchers**. You can choose between supermarket vouchers or national garden scheme vouchers. Please enter your email address below.

Appendix B Participant information sheet

PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

Evaluation of Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature Project by Avon Wildlife Trusts

Researchers: Dr Marie Polley and Dr Helen Seers, Meaningful Measures Ltd.

You are being invited to take part in an evaluation to explore the impact of the Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature Project by Avon Wildlife Trust

Meaningful Measures Ltd is helping Avon Wildlife Trust evaluate the impact of their Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature project. As a person who took part in this project, we would like to understand your experience of Nextdoor nature and what you found beneficial or impactful.

The evaluation will involve you:

- Taking part in a small online focus group over Googlemeet. This will approximately 45 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed and then anonymised.

Please note:

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- Withdrawal from the research will not affect any involvement or relationship you have with Meaningful Measures Ltd or Avon Wildlife Trust.
- You have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn, as long as this is practical and for personal information to be destroyed.
- You do not have to answer particular questions if you do not wish to do so.
- Your responses will be made anonymous and will be kept confidential unless you provide explicit consent to do otherwise. No individuals should be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the evaluation, or any publications arising from it.
- All computer data files will be password protected. The researcher will keep files in a secure place and will comply with the requirements of the UK GDPR regulations tailored by the Data Protection Act (2018).
- Any hard copy documents, e.g., consent forms, will be scanned and kept securely in a digital form in a password protected file. The hard copies will then be destroyed.
- If you wish, can receive information on the results of this evaluation. Please indicate on the consent form if you would like to receive this information.
- The researcher, Dr Marie Polley can be contacted during and after participation using the following contact details Marie@meaningfulmeasures.co.uk; 07565 259414



Consent Form: Evaluation of the Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature Project by Avon Wildlife Trust (delete yes or no as applicable)

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have been given the Participation Information Sheet and/or had its contents explained to me. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have had an opportunity to ask any questions and I am satisfied with the answers given. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand I have a right to withdraw from the research at any time and I do not have to provide a reason. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that if I withdraw from the research any data included in the results will be removed if that is practicable (I understand that once anonymised data has been collated into other datasets it may not be possible to remove that data). | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to receive information relating to the results from this study. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wish to receive a copy of this Consent form. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I confirm I am willing to be a participant in the above evaluation. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I note the data collected may be retained in an archive and I am happy for my data to be reused as part of future research activities. I note my data will be fully anonymised (if applicable). | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

This consent form will be stored separately from any data you provide so that your responses remain anonymous.

Admin use only

I confirm I have provided a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and have given the participant an opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered.

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C Interview Schedule Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature

Once introductions and the purpose of the focus group has been explained, any questions answered, start recording

Openers

Can you briefly describe the project you were involved with?

Key questions:

Q1 Do you feel you have benefited as a result of being involved with the Somer Valley Nextdoor Nature projects?

Q1a Perhaps you can tell me a bit about the different ways you have benefitted?

Q2 This has been a new approach by Avon Wildlife Trust to involve the community at every step of the way, right from identifying the project to undertake. I am keen to understand what has been most important to you about this approach.

Q2a Follow up question - is there any particular reason why...

- that's really interesting, can you tell me a bit more about that....

Q3 Have you seen other benefits or ripple effects as a result of the initial support received?

Q4 If you had a magic wand, is there anything about the approach or project that you would change?

Q5 Is there anything else you would like to say that we haven't already covered?

REPORT END