

**GROWING GREEN CAREERS AND  
IMPROVING ACCESS TO JOBS IN NATURE**

# **NEW TO NATURE:**

## **12-MONTH IMPACT REPORT**

GROUNDWORK UK AND WAVEHILL, APRIL 2024



## INTRODUCTION

New to Nature is an ambitious programme of paid work placements designed to deliver life changing career opportunities for people from underrepresented groups, whilst contributing to wider efforts to create a more diverse and accessible natural environment sector.

January 2024 marked the end of the first 12-months of delivery, with the first ten Trainees graduating from their placements. This report seeks to summarise the impacts of the programme to date on Trainees and participating organisations ('Placement Hosts'), whilst identifying potential learning for the wider sector.

New to Nature is being delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, Youth Environmental Service (YES), Prince's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse, with an external evaluation being undertaken by Wavehill. It is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (The Heritage Fund) as part of celebrations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the King's Coronation.





# WHY IS NEW TO NATURE NEEDED?

The New to Nature programme was developed in response to two critical challenges:

## 1. The need for a new green work force

Responding to the climate and nature emergencies requires a new green work force. The Government's Green Jobs Delivery Plan talks of supporting the creation of 480,000 skilled green jobs by 2030, with some employers and industries already struggling to meet demand. For example, the Institute of Chartered Forestry has called for urgent action given meeting current tree planting targets will require a 70% increase across the workforce.

Green jobs are not universally understood and are not necessarily seen as a career of choice – particularly amongst young people. New to Nature aims to attract people who may not have previously considered a career in the natural environment sector, demonstrating the breadth and quality of opportunity as well as genuine career prospects.

## 2. Lack of diversity in the environmental sector

New to Nature was launched on the premise that the environmental sector does not have a diverse workforce and is not currently reflective of the communities it seeks to engage with and serve. Only 4.8% of 'environmental professionals' come from a non-White background (compared to the all-profession average of 12.6%). To add to this, there is a history of pathways into environmental careers being dependant on experience gained through unpaid work, which is not possible for many people on low incomes. These issues mitigate against people from a wider variety of backgrounds taking up opportunities in this sector due to the perception that this work is 'not for people like them'.

New to Nature seeks to complement the work already going on in the sector to address these challenges by:

- Providing high quality placements and positive experiences for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market.
- Helping to make the environmental sector more inclusive and diverse, with particular focus on building the capacity of smaller organisations.
- Creating a network of Trainees influencing change within their Placement Host organisation and working together to champion greater diversity and youth voice within the sector.
- Delivering learning and evidence to support ongoing campaigns for a national Youth Environment Service able to provide a pathway into green jobs and a mechanism for delivering commitments in the Government's 25-year Environment Plan.

The Heritage Fund solicited bids for the Jubilee Placements programme (later becoming New to Nature) in order to support ambitious targets for nature recovery in their Heritage 2033 strategy, recognising that a larger, more diverse and more representative workforce is required to help collective efforts to reverse nature's decline. The solutions developed through New to Nature deliver against the Fund's new strategic investment principles that focus on saving heritage, protecting the environment and supporting the organisational resilience of the natural environment sector.

## ABOUT NEW TO NATURE

New to Nature has so far provided 95 work placements in a range of landscape and nature roles, targeting people from diverse backgrounds, specifically young people (aged 18-25) who are:

- > ethnically diverse,
- > disabled, and/or
- > economically disadvantaged

Each Trainee participates in a full-time, year-long paid work placement, hosted by an organisation within the natural environment sector, and is supported by a Groundwork Employment Coach, with access to a peer network, development programme and individualised training budget. The employer ('Placement Host') benefits from access to training and development opportunities to enhance their Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategies.





## Delivery model

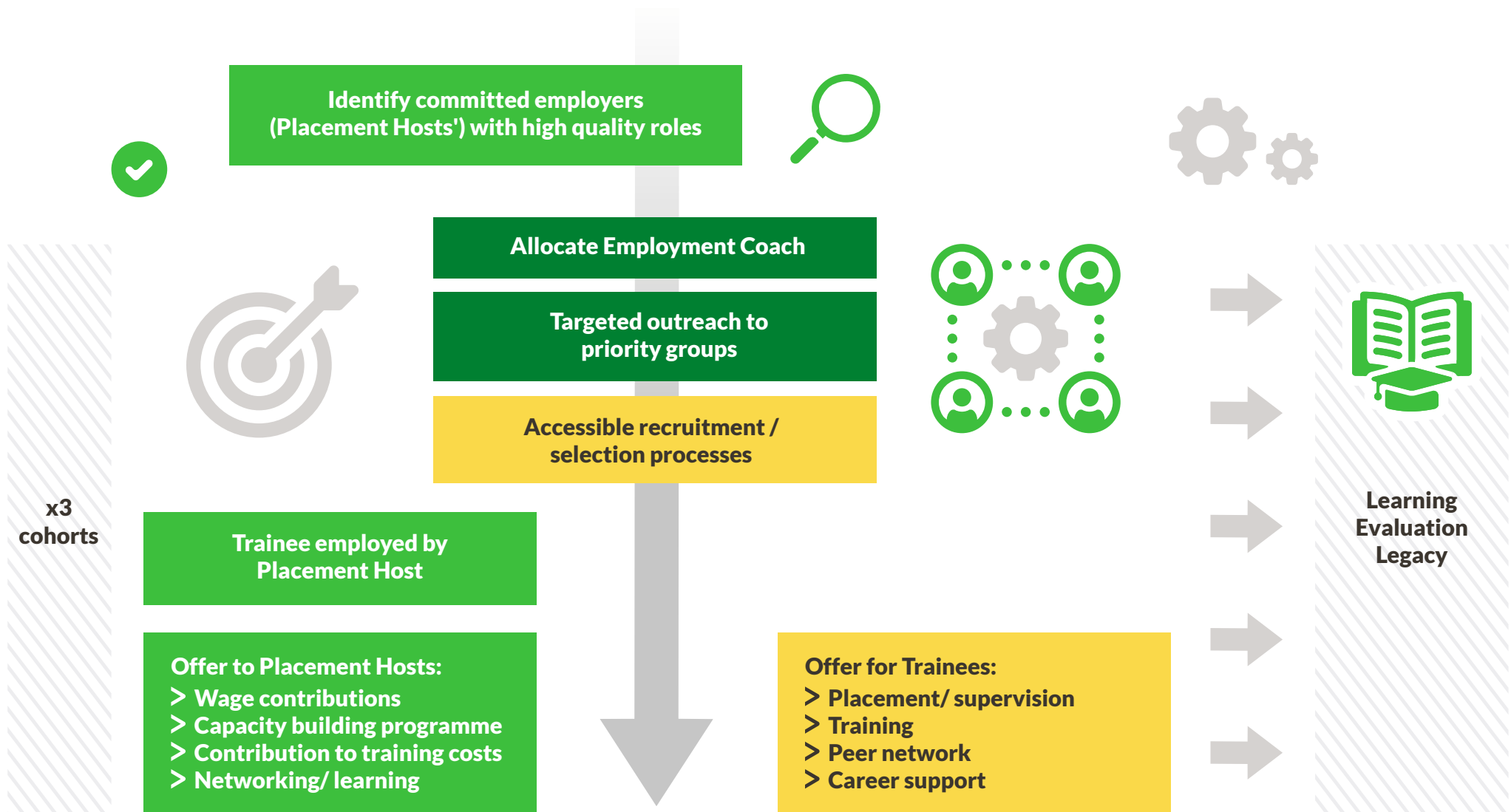
The New to Nature model is made up of the following activities:

- > **Identifying diverse opportunities hosted by committed organisations** via sector outreach and a competitive expression of interest process to create a diverse portfolio of opportunities.
- > **Targeting potential Trainees from underrepresented groups** by implementing outreach strategies and utilising partnerships to attract applicants from priority groups and deploying accessible recruitment strategies to break down barriers.
- > **Waged work placements with careers support** and creating a full time, 12-month work placement, paid at the Real Living Wage, with a personal budget to address any barriers to work.
- > **Participant careers support, training and networking**, including an Employment Coach to help support longer-term career aspirations, a training budget, and a peer development programme.
- > **Placement host capacity-building and networking** via a training programme and peer network. designed to support organisations with their commitments to becoming more diverse and inclusive
- > **Evaluation and learning** by gathering and disseminating feedback, evidence and learning to inform future practice.





# New to Nature Delivery Model

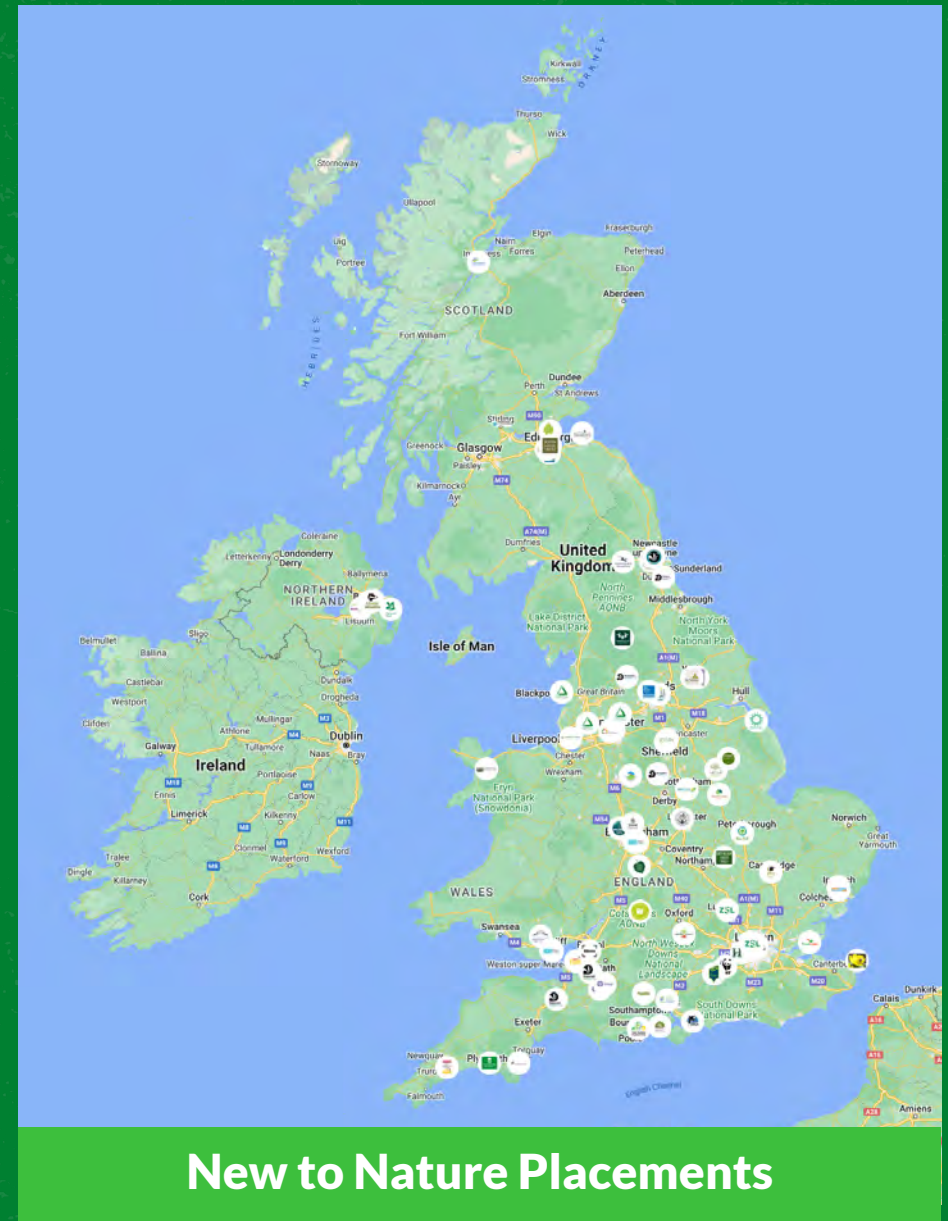




## Scale and scope

82 not-for-profit organisations have hosted New to Nature placements, ranging in size from small charities with less than five staff, to public bodies and international NGOs with over 5,000 staff. All placements centred around land and nature, with diversity of opportunities prioritised to help cater for different interests and abilities amongst priority groups.. The result was that field-based roles such as rangers and conservation officers were advertised alongside communications, policy and fundraising roles.

Placements were selected on the basis of Placement Host commitment to a more inclusive sector and the quality of the placement, demonstrated by the learning opportunities created and the prospect of longer-term career progression. Geographical distribution of opportunities was also a priority, including across all UK nations.



**New to Nature Placements**



## IMPACT TO DATE:

### 12 MONTHS OF NEW TO NATURE



**98 Trainees** have been recruited to New to Nature roles.<sup>1</sup>



**82 organisations** have hosted New to Nature Trainees – they range in size from a staff team of two to over 6,500.



**86% of New to Nature Trainees** recruited are from priority groups, with:

- > **29%** from an ethnically diverse background
- > **42%** being disabled
- > **63%** being from a low-income background
- > **54%** from more than one priority group



**9 out of the first 10** New to Nature Trainees (Cohort 1) have secured ongoing employment at the end of their placement, with eight of those remaining in the natural environment sector.



**100% of New to Nature Trainees** report that New to Nature has allowed them to gain new skills and experiences that will help them with their future careers.



**92% of New to Nature Trainees** report that they are now confident of finding a job in the field they want to be in.



**94% of New to Nature Trainees** state that they are 'very' interested in working in the environmental sector.



**88% of Placement Hosts** will make or have already made recommendations for change within their organisation based on their New to Nature experience.



**95% of Placement Hosts** have expressed interest in participating in programmes like New to Nature again in the future.

<sup>1</sup>Including replacements to two roles and one job share arrangement



# IMPACTS ON TRAINEES

## Understanding barriers to the environmental sector

New to Nature Trainees are helping to deepen our understanding of the barriers that are preventing people from joining the environmental sector:

- > Over half of all surveyed Trainees believe that careers in the environmental sector are not accessible to people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and/or working-class backgrounds, and two thirds perceive the sector as inaccessible for individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions.
- > Reported barriers include a lack of experience (compounded by a prevalence of unpaid work. experience which excludes those on low incomes), competition, and the need for formal qualifications
- > Trainees reported that it was 'hard to find' appropriate entry-level roles within the sector.
- > Despite these barriers, 94% of Trainees were very interested in working in the environmental sector beyond their New to Nature placement.

'Many opportunities in this sector rely on extensive work experience, volunteering or unpaid internships which are not accessible to people who have grown up in poverty and currently still live under the poverty line. This also makes it very restrictive to people with disabilities/long-term health conditions.'

- Trainee

'As someone from a working-class background, I've absolutely struggled with the costs involved in obtaining environmental qualifications that many sector jobs want. I'm fortunate because I got to attend further education but for someone who's a school leaver, unless you have connections within the sector already, it's basically impossible to get into.'

- Trainee

'The programme is incredible and is so needed. There is this massive diversity problem in the sector and we always talk about, it's always acknowledged, but you don't really realise and understand it. For instance my first day in the office where it was just white people and I thought maybe [the Host Organisation] having a New to Nature programme meant that they had done work on diversity in the past. It definitely felt like this programme was the first official step they had taken which I think is very welcomed and very needed. Seeing visible diversity have been really encouraging. I have felt very, very welcomed by my organisation.'

- Trainee



## Reaching priority groups

New to Nature has been successful in providing opportunities for people who are underrepresented in the natural environment sector:

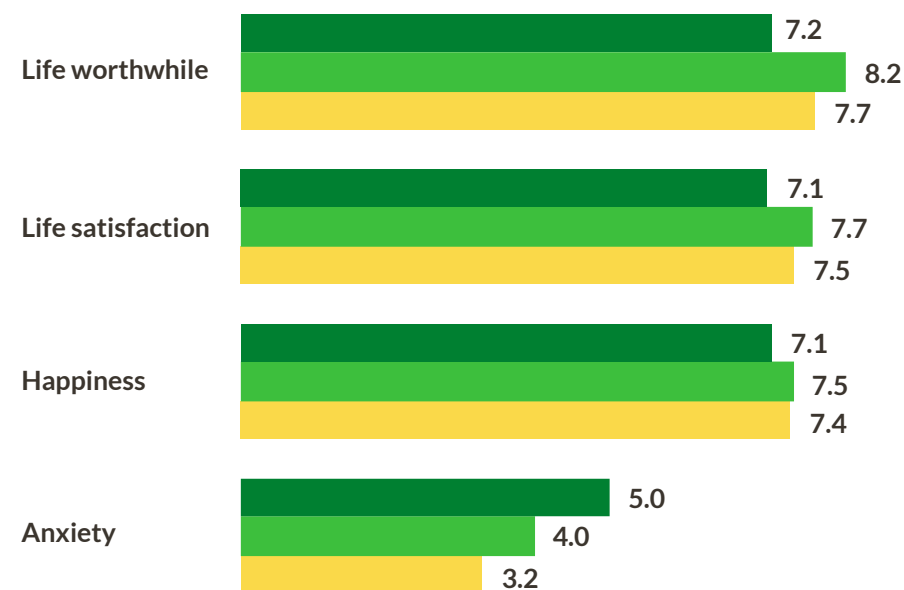
- > 86% of New to Nature Trainees are from at least one priority group, with 54% being from more than one group. 29% of Trainees are from an ethnically diverse background, 42% have a disability, and 63% are from a low-income background.
- > Of those who consider themselves disabled, 43% have a learning difficulty, 33% are neurodivergent, 20% have a long-term health condition, 45% have a mental health condition, and 8% have a physical impairment.

## Impacts on individuals

New to Nature Trainees have participated in evaluation interviews at the beginning, middle and end of their placement. In interviewing the first two cohorts of Trainees the evaluation has found:

- > **Improved wellbeing** amongst Trainees, with general wellbeing having improved across all Office for National Statistics Wellbeing measures (see Figure 5.1). At the start of New to Nature, Trainees self-reported feelings of life satisfaction and happiness that were lower than the national average, with average scores exceeding the national average as placements have progressed.

Figure 1: ONS Wellbeing Scores

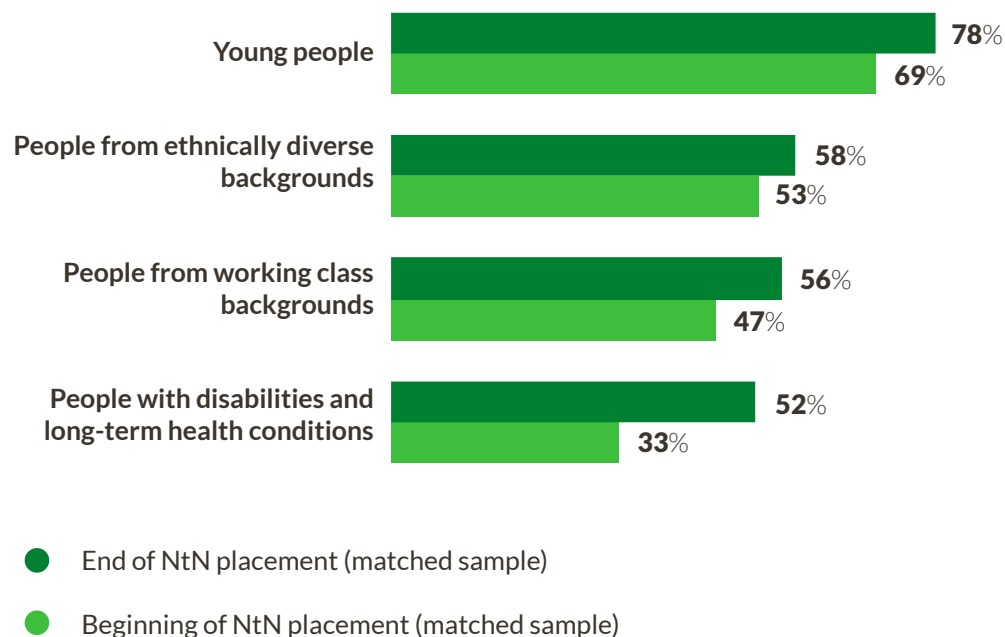


- Beginning of NtN placement (matched sample)
- End of NtN placement (matched sample)
- National Average



- > **Improved perceptions of the accessibility of environmental careers** for people from underrepresented groups (Figure 5.2), supported by inclusive and supportive New to Nature experiences, whilst recognising that structural barriers (e.g. prevalence of unpaid work experience) remain

Figure 2: Perceived accessibility of the sector for...



- > **Increased interest in working in the environmental sector**, with 94% of Trainees stating that they are 'very' interested in working in the sector, compared to 88% of Trainees at the beginning of their placement.
- > **Increased knowledge of careers in the environmental sector** amongst Trainees, with 98% of Trainees reporting that they felt well informed on the sector on the opportunities it holds, compared with only one Trainee reported feeling well informed on the sector at the beginning of their placement.
- > **Increased confidence around job prospects**, with 92% of Trainees reporting that they feel confident they can find a job in the field they want to be in, and 94% reporting confidence in progressing within that job.

'I've thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and I'm gutted it's coming to an end. It's made me a lot more confident within myself and within my ability to push myself when it comes to different career aspects because I've always been someone who struggled with imposter syndrome quite bad so being able to have this opportunity to go out there and get on with it it's allowed me to progress, made me feel a lot more confident and capable of what I can bring so I feel like I can go for higher positions in the future and manage projects or situations a lot better.'

- Trainee

‘Personally, the New to Nature programme has given me a lot of confidence and empowered me to work in the environmental sector, which is something that I was beginning to give up on prior to obtaining this role. I had previously thought that my disability and circumstances made me unemployable and I was never going to see a role that I would fit into but this placement has shown me otherwise.’

**- Trainee**

- Trainees report that they have gained new skills and experiences that will help them in their future careers, with 91% reporting that their placement has helped them ‘to a great extent.’
- New to Nature is helping participants to progress directly into longer-term employment, with 9 of the first 10 New to Nature Trainees having progressed directly into further employment at the end of their placement, with 8 staying in the natural environment sector. At the time of reporting, 17 current Trainees had already secured future employment, with 16 reporting that New to Nature had helped them to secure this employment.





## Trainee case studies



### Ade

Trainee Learning Office  
At The Royal Parks

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Ade, now 26, had paused her university education due to the effects of Covid-19 and experiences of institutional discrimination. New to Nature has fostered her enthusiasm for breaking down barriers and developing equal opportunities for young people to access nature's green spaces.

"I ultimately applied because, as a young person, it has been hard to find paid job opportunities in the nature heritage sector, which can have various barriers to accessing it. Since 2017, I have been campaigning over the intersections between racism and environmental issues.

As a passionate young woman of Afrikan-heritage, I will be using my lived mental health experience and my involvement with delivering workshops and community activities. I aim to develop my professional career in environmental education, with a focus on intersectionality and improving access to public green spaces through supporting the education and community engagement work that The Royal Parks does so well."



### Laura

Nature Project Assistant at Royal  
Society for the Protection of Birds  
(RSPB)

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Despite multiple qualifications and years of volunteering experience, Laura, now 26, was finding environmental careers inaccessible, particularly because her autism can make interviews and communicating with new people challenging. Now working at the RSPB Belfast's Window on Wildlife nature reserve, Laura is building her confidence in a role focused on making nature accessible to people like her.

"Creating roles that have a person's experiences like this at the core not only creates new job opportunities for underrepresented groups, but it helps the organisation to learn and grow from their experiences. This was the first job I've had where my neurodiversity was actually an asset and not something that I had to cover up or something that made me less employable. Not only is the job accessible to me, the placement is centred around making nature more accessible to people like me.

It has been very helpful to have a network of other Trainees to connect with and provide peer support. It's great to have others who are going through the exact same thing and who are also 'new to nature.'"





## Greg

Nature Recovery Assistant at Deadham Vale, and Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

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New to Nature was a perfect starting point for Greg's conservation career, a prospect which had seemed unattainable without certain qualifications. As a Nature Recovery Assistant, Greg, (now 26) is now gaining the experience and knowledge required to work in conservation beyond his placement.

"I would have really struggled to find a similar role without this placement. Similar positions are nearly always unpaid, I wouldn't have had the money to support myself or the energy to work another job at the same time.

I'm getting a lot of experience and increasing my knowledge around conservation. I'm also meeting a lot of people in the profession who have given me a lot of advice and pointers on how to get into this industry. There are so many people out there who could be a massive aid to the environmental sector, but are unable to get over the initial barriers such as being unable to work long periods unpaid, lack of qualifications or disabilities. Being close to nature can improve anyone's life, and getting more people to care and become involved, bringing their unique skills and knowledge, is incredibly important."

For more case studies visit:

[www.groundwork.org.uk/new-to-nature-legacy](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/new-to-nature-legacy)





# IMPACTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

## Meeting demand from the sector

New to Nature has been received positively by natural environment sector organisations, many of whom have cited an appetite for taking practical action to address a lack of diversity in their organisation, and the benefits of increased capacity to their teams.

- Over 300 representatives attended market engagement events following the launch of New to Nature. Expressions of interest were received for 164 roles, of which only 95 could be supported with the funds available.
- 96% of Placement Hosts reported that New to Nature has met or exceeded their expectations, with some describing how New to Nature is 'opening their eyes' to the impact programmes like this can have on their organisation and the people they employ.

'From a host perspective, for us it shows just what someone can do when given the opportunity. There just aren't enough opportunities [for people] to prove themselves, the right person with the right support can do wonderful things.'

– **Host Organisation**



## Motivations for getting involved

The majority (82%) of Placement Hosts are taking part in New to Nature because they want to be part of a more inclusive and diverse environmental sector. Hosts recognised that their workforce is not as diverse as it could be and that they want to be part of positive action that would benefit the sector in the longer term. Specifically:

- Hosts acknowledge a lack of representation across all protected characteristics and how this could discourage applicants from diverse backgrounds. Many report that they receive very few, if any, applications from individuals with protected characteristics.
- Small staff teams, low staff turnover, and limited funds have been identified as common barriers to a more diverse workforce, alongside limited knowledge of how to recruit more inclusively.
- Hosts report that the additional resource secured through New to Nature has allowed them to dedicate more time and effort to widening participation in their organisation's workforce.

'We are very aware of the lack of diversity in our sector and our own records show that we have never had an application from a candidate that identifies as either having a disability or part of an ethnic minority. Although we are a [small organisation] we are trying to take systemic steps to address this. The New to Nature post is part of the organisation's learning towards greater inclusivity.'

**- Host organisation**

## Building capacity

New to Nature was designed to be accessible to nature-focused organisations of all sizes, reflecting that the natural environment sector is diverse but that resources are often scarce, impacting upon the pace of change towards a more diverse and inclusive sector. Feedback via interviews with Placement Hosts shows that New to Nature has delivered the following impacts:

- Placement Hosts reported that a heavily subsidised placement has allowed them increase capacity and to recruit where they would otherwise not have been able to, providing a focus to develop more inclusive approaches.
- Being able to bring new staff into their organisations with fresh perspectives and ideas has demonstrably improved their organisations. For example, some Placement Hosts provided examples of their Trainees implementing new activities to reach wider and more diverse audiences, which will now be adopted in the longer-term.



## Impacts on practice and future commitments

Feedback from Placement Hosts tells us that New to Nature has aided learning and encouraged organisations to take new approaches which will benefit them in the future. Notably:

- Deploying effective strategies for attracting more diverse candidates, including targeted outreach via partners who are better placed to reach more diverse audiences. 80% of surveyed Hosts stated that they had utilised outreach via local networks and groups to promote their New to Nature Traineeship.

‘We were struggling to reach beyond the typical types of candidates who apply for our roles. Through New To Nature, we have found ways to reach more diverse job seekers and remove barriers that prevented certain candidates from applying.’

– **Host organisation**

- Reviewing application and selection processes to minimise bias and maximise opportunities for positive action. 98% of Hosts confirmed that the New to Nature recruitment process was different to their organisation’s typical approach, with 93% saying that the approach was effective.

‘We received some absolutely brilliant applications from candidates we wouldn’t usually reach. The recommended process allowed us to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for applicants and allowed them to gain confidence and experience, even if ultimately they were unsuccessful in getting the position.’

– **Host Organisation**

- 85% of Hosts report that they will make or have already made recommendations for change within their organisation based on their New to Nature experience.
- Placement Hosts commonly report that engaging with New to Nature has changed staff attitudes because of the positive impact Trainees have had on project work. For example, as a result of the ability and insight of their New to Nature Trainees, Placement Hosts reported that they are now actively recruiting individuals without degrees and/or young people.
- 88% of Placement Hosts confirmed that being involved in New to Nature has improved their organisation’s practices around diversity and inclusion.
- Training delivered by Mission Diverse and Disability Rights UK, covering Intersectionality, Microaggressions, Disability Awareness and Race Awareness, has been attended by 177 employees of Placement Host organisations.
- Over 90 organisations (New to Nature Placement Hosts and other nature sector employers) demonstrated their ongoing commitment to working towards a more diverse nature sector via the **Force of Nature campaign**.

## Influencing change in the sector

Placement Host feedback suggests that New to Nature is contributing to longer term change towards a more inclusive natural environment sector:

- > All Placement Hosts reported that New to Nature has successfully challenged issues inherent within the sector around inclusivity and diversity. In most cases, Placement Hosts reported that New to Nature has allowed the sector 'open up' about the lack of diversity in the sector and encouraged organisations to better communicate with one another and share good practice, training and resources. In particular, Placement Hosts valued the opportunity to address challenges as a 'collective' through New to Nature.

'It is definitely addressing [inclusivity and diversity issues inherent within the sector]. When we are all involved in something we challenge each other. We are involved in so many networks and we share what we learn out of this with our peer organisations. Funding is always the block. There is so much added value by all doing this at the same time. Having it together has been really valuable to the sector. I really really value that Groundwork did not narrow what a green job is. Green skills have to be so much wider. The fact that it involved so many more [roles] has made it much more interesting to organisations and young people.'

**- Host organisation**

- > Most Placement Hosts reported that New to Nature has supported the sector in its journey towards becoming more inclusive and diverse. Whilst organisations described New to Nature as an important step, it was also commonly acknowledged that the journey towards a truly inclusive and diverse sector would require sustained efforts and greater changes to practice across the sector.

'[New to Nature] brings [the issues] to the forefront. It's exciting to see how many people are passionate about this project and gives you hope that the sector can change. However, the people still remain predominantly white. Steps are and need to carry on being taken.'

**- Host Organisation**

## Appetite to do more

- > In a February 2024 workshop, attended by 44 Placement Hosts, 95% stated a desire to participate in these kinds of programmes in the future, to support their equity, diversity and inclusion plans.
- > Via the external evaluation, all Placement Hosts reported that they would want to take part in New to Nature again. In most cases (68%), Placement Hosts reported that their ability to take part in the programme would be dependent on a wage subsidy being retained.



## Placement Host case studies

### Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) West Midlands

RSPB West Midlands engaged with New to Nature to better engage individuals from diverse backgrounds, provide individuals with greater access to nature, and foster careers in conservation. New to Nature supported them to broaden their approach to recruitment, providing space and information to review recruitment practices.

#### Alex Sharrod, RSPB West Midlands, Visitor Experience Officer:

“We've always had issues with developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. It's been really good to get involved with this and just see how we can improve and how we go about learning how to reach different people.”

“We had a really good response from the recruitment process, lots of applicants and lots of interest. We had to talk to lots of people and had lots of support as well from Groundwork. It allowed us to look at different places to advertise different ways to go about advertising and interviewing, how to change our recruitment process to allow lots of people with different backgrounds and needs to feel comfortable and find it easy to follow the recruitment process.”

“I think it's been a really good programme. It's shown that we can recruit from different audiences. I think it's shown us that we should change our recruitment process a little bit to help make it easier for people from different audiences to apply for jobs in the sector.”



## British Trust for Ornithology

The British Trust for Ornithology were keen to change perceptions around the types of people working in the ornithology sector. Supported by the allocated training budget, their New to Nature Trainee developed their skills and knowledge and was quickly able to contribute to the Trust's work. This has demonstrated the value of paid internships, challenged assumptions that interns require too much time and resources, and has encouraged the Trust to offer more opportunities for individuals without a traditional ornithological background.

### Faye Vogely, Youth Engagement Manager, British Trust for Ornithology:

"We really benefit from having someone younger on the team. That's really allowed us to be more inclusive in the work that we do because she brings the age category we work with into the staff team."

"I'm very pleased to say that our Trainee has been offered a permanent position with adjusted pay to recognise her contribution to the organisation and team."

"I'm hoping that this will show the rest of the organisation the growth potential in an individual as well. When she came, she'd never worked with young people before and hadn't had a full-time job before in this sector. She's expanded her knowledge, and her skills are to the point where four months into her contract they already said let's make a permanent."

## Green Synergy

Being a small charity, Green Synergy was contending with limited capacity and sought additional resources for its garden operations through the New to Nature programme. Support from Groundwork was instrumental in providing coaching, equipment and support to their New to Nature Trainee. The programme facilitated learning about neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments in the workplace, improving inclusivity and awareness among staff members. Beyond providing opportunities for the Trainee, the programme also facilitated exchanges with other organisations and opened the door for other organisations to get to know Green Synergy.

### Ana Oliviera, Garden Manager, Green Synergy:

"I think the programme is very good for small organisations that struggle with funding to increase capacity in the team."

"I think it will be improving inclusivity and recruitment practises and awareness around issues around race and neurodiversity and disabilities. I have become a lot more aware, and I think the workplace will become a more inclusive place as well as a result. When people need to think creatively as well having different points of view and different lived experiences, it does make for a better outcome."

"The programme will have made a big difference for our Trainee."



## LESSONS TO DATE

**New to Nature has attracted more diverse candidates than standard recruitment practices.** Factors in making this a success have included:

- Organisational commitment – Being prepared to challenge and change existing practice, to be clear with intent, and to commit time and resource to doing things differently
- Understanding positive action and how to avoid positive discrimination – Providing the basis on which to level the playing field for candidates from underrepresented groups
- Mobilising partnerships - Particularly with organisations better able to reach diverse audiences

**New to Nature has opened doors for Trainees,** many of whom report that they have aspired to pursue a career in the environmental sector but have faced multiple barriers. Success factors have included:

- Creating entry level roles – Removing the need for qualifications or experience in favour of motivation and a willingness to learn
- Considering accessibility – Being explicit about commitments to creating reasonable adjustments for disabled people, presenting a strengths-based culture, and addressing practical barriers such as rural work locations
- Real Living Wage and personal budget to address barriers to work – Helping to ensure that people from low-income backgrounds aren't excluded, addressing the perception of low pay in the sector, and reversing trends around unpaid work experience

**New to Nature Trainees reflect positively on the quality of their experience** – resulting from designing the programme around the needs of people from priority groups. For example:

- Insistence that all roles offer clear potential to develop skills and build a range of experiences
- A supportive work environment, reinforced by committed line managers and appropriate supervision
- Structured career support, including an individualised training budget, goal setting, reflective practice to capture learning, and signposting and support to progress beyond the placement
- 12-month placements maximising the opportunity to gain valuable experience

**New to Nature are delivering multiple benefits to Trainees from underrepresented groups.** New to Nature placements is positively impacting Trainees in several ways:

- Improving wellbeing, with feelings of life satisfaction, and happiness higher than the national average
- Increased confidence around job prospects
- Inclusive and supportive experiences during placements have improved Trainee perceptions of sector accessibility for underrepresented groups

**Peer networks have proved valuable** – both for Trainees, who have benefited from ‘peer consultancy’ sessions to explore common challenges and build resilience, and for Placement Hosts who have participated in quarterly Community of Practice workshops to share learning on their New to Nature experiences, informing their future plans.

**Potential to benefit from Neurodiverse talent, has been showcased through New to Nature, with 23% of Trainees identifying as Neurodivergent.** The programme has responded to this by:

- Providing specialist training sessions to Placement Hosts around managing neurodiversity
- Providing additional support to neurodivergent Trainees, including the creation of a peer network
- Sharing resources about a strengths-based culture with Placement Hosts

**There is an opportunity to build the scale and impact of New to Nature, evidenced by:**

- Strong appetite amongst Environment sector employers for more placements
- The positive culture of progress and learning amongst the Placement Host Community of Practice, illustrated by the number of organisations committing to changing practices
- High levels of demand from applicants, with a high percentage from priority groups
- Encouraging levels of New to Nature Trainees staying in the sector at the end of their placement

**Sustained efforts are needed to materially impact upon the demographics of the natural environment sector:**

- Placement Hosts report resource limitations that, without external intervention, will prevent them from building and maintaining the momentum needed to help them contribute to a more diverse and accessible nature sector.
- An annual, rolling programme of New to Nature placements has potential to deliver more widespread change via a growing alumni of New to Nature graduates, and an increasingly active and aware community of Placement Hosts.
- Different models of employer financial contributions should be explored (potentially including private sector employers) in order to build the business case for continued investment.





## NEXT STEPS

The existing programme of New to Nature work placements will end in the summer of 2024, with a full evaluation report anticipated in September 2024. This will explore the longer-term legacy of New to Nature Placements on participants and Placement Hosts, as well as identifying learning that could inform future programmes, and practice in the wider sector. Guidance and learning from the programme will be added to The Heritage Fund's website so it can be used by other organisations applying for funds to support projects that include paid trainees. It will also be used to train The Heritage Fund's staff in what constitutes a good, well-structured paid-traineeship programme.



All New to Nature Trainees will be provided with careers and job search support as they reach the end of their placements, supporting transition into permanent employment within the nature sector where there is appetite and opportunity. Groundwork is exploring the feasibility of a longer-term alumni network, in order to extend the peer support benefits felt between New to Nature Trainees.

Placement Hosts will be supported to embed the learning from New to Nature via Community of Practice sessions focusing on sharing forward plans, sustaining good practice and influencing wider organisations, and a small 'Legacy Fund' enabling organisations to invest in their own EDI priorities and to maintain forward momentum.

Groundwork and partners continue to explore opportunities for continuation of the New to Nature programme, with aspiration for a multi-year programme with an annual intake offering the opportunity to build the alumni of New to Nature Trainees, to undertake more targeting to diversify placement types and address geographical needs, and the ability to test different priority groups and financial contribution models.

### Find out more

[www.groundwork.org.uk/new-to-nature-legacy](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/new-to-nature-legacy)

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## GROUNDWORK

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To find out more about Groundwork,  
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