



Transforming The Trent Headwaters

Green Spaces and
Watery Places



Made possible with



**Heritage
Fund**

Who Are We?



Transforming the Trent Headwaters is a new project based around the River Trent from its source in Biddulph Moor, the channel through Stoke-on-Trent, and its tributaries in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

For the last 18 months, we have been speaking to local residents and communities to understand what people think of their river, which will guide our future work to improve the local environment for wildlife and for people.

What Did We Do?

To understand what local people think, we went to spaces where people gather:

- Family events
- Health and wellbeing events
- Local festivals
- Local markets
- Community groups
- Faith groups
- Sports clubs
- Walking groups



Using photos of the river and local history, postcards, maps and a river game for children, we chatted over tea and toast, got involved in activities, helped in community gardens and more, all while asking what people think of their local green and watery spaces.



Green Spaces

Public, private or community gardens, allotments, nature reserves, parks, woods, cemeteries, rough ground, anywhere that plants grow.

Watery Places

Rivers and brooks, canals, pools, ponds and lakes.



Who Did We Talk To?

- Families with children, from pre-school to teenagers
- Young people
- People with physical and mental health conditions
- People with learning disabilities, autism and other neurodiversity
- People recovering from addiction and who had experienced homelessness
- People from a range of ethnicities
- People who have lived all their lives in the area
- People who are new to the area
- People seeking safe asylum
- People from the LGBTQ+ community



What did you tell us?



Green Spaces

Almost everyone we spoke to was interested in nature – e.g: growing tomato plants on windowsills, having a community garden or allotment, photographing wildlife, doing nature-inspired arts and crafts.

Lots of community groups already use nature and the outdoors to increase social connection and improve health benefits.



“Magic happens every time I go into Lyme Valley Park, whether it’s a butterfly or the woman feeding the crow.”

Newcastle Market

“The six towns, the green spaces are the gaps between the towns, it’s a unique feature of the history of Stoke-on-Trent.”

Etruria Canal Festival

“We have ADHD, me and him (young son), we’re outdoors a lot and we love it. He can burn off some energy outdoors. We walk through Park Hall to get to school and it’s wonderful to see the ducks, the leaves on the trees.”

Literacy Trust Event, Bentilee





Watery Places

Local canals (Trent and Mersey Canal and Cauldon Canal) are seen as more accessible and better known than the River Trent. Canals are linked to the history of Stoke-on-Trent, and are taught in schools. It's not always clear where the River Trent is in Stoke-on-Trent!



"Where is the Trent? I've lived here all my life, and I don't know. I have seen it at Trentham but where does it come from and where does it go afterwards?"

Walk Talk Action

"Where does the Trent flow?"

Urban Wilderness



Volunteering

People are proud of the volunteering that they do to help others and local nature. There are so many community groups in the area which wouldn't exist without local volunteers giving their time for free.



"I love the simplicity of being outdoors, you can't learn that being in a classroom. I volunteer at Westport Lake, I love the birds."

Clarice Cliff Primary School

"Need more volunteers to support people with needs outdoors."

Project Indi





Wildlife

Lots of people love the urban wildlife they see. We heard about people spotting foxes, badgers, dragonflies, newts, pheasants, and feeding ducks.



“I’ve turned to wildlife photography, I can’t walk so far now, and I was looking around for something I could do that got me out. I find the camouflage training really useful, so the birds and wildlife don’t get disturbed so much. There should be a river Trent wildlife photography competition.”

Tri-Services Veterans, Hanley

“Fenton is the greenest town. I come from Fenton but they have built on so many fields since I was a child. I see kingfishers, orange tip butterflies, dragonflies, I recognise them from when I was a paintress in the pot banks, decorating the ware.”

B-Arts Climate Café



Pollution & Development

Not everything we heard was positive – lots of people told us about the litter they see, showed concern for the water quality in the River Trent, and were worried about greenspace being lost to new housing.





Companionship & Support

Lots of people told us they prefer to be outdoors with someone else, to enjoy friendship and to have someone to chat to. For some people, this is also to help them feel safe and secure.



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“I don’t like to be on my own, I’d like to walk with other people, have the company. I have some health issues myself.”

Cobridge CIC

“The canals need to be safe and accessible. I wouldn’t go alone, and I wouldn’t take my grandson. I feel guilty that he’s missing out when he’s with me but I daren’t go, I feel vulnerable.”

Birches Head Get Growing



History, Memories & Culture

We heard that local history and heritage is very important to the people of Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire. The canals, pot banks and traditional local industries were all talked about with pride.

Lots of people shared memories of playing outdoors as children, exploring fields, waterways and nature.

“

“The old mines are now parks.”

Project Indi

Ford Green Brook



Gawton's Well, Knypersley





Accessibility



There is lots that can be done to improve accessibility to green spaces and watery places. 'Not knowing where to go' is a big barrier to getting out and exploring nature. We heard a sense of frustration that some outdoor spaces are inaccessible for people with limited mobility, or for people who use wheelchairs, crutches or have pushchairs. Lack of transport, and distance to outdoor spaces are barriers to spending more time outside for some people. Toilets, parking and benches were mentioned a lot! These would help more people get outdoors, and would help older people, families with young children, and anyone who needs to stop and rest while outside.



"I use crutches, and a wheelchair so nowhere is really accessible. Silverdale isn't accessible though it says it is, it's too uphill."

Meir Matters

"I can't walk very far, walking used to be my hobby. I come here on the bus. I struggle to walk now and I miss it."

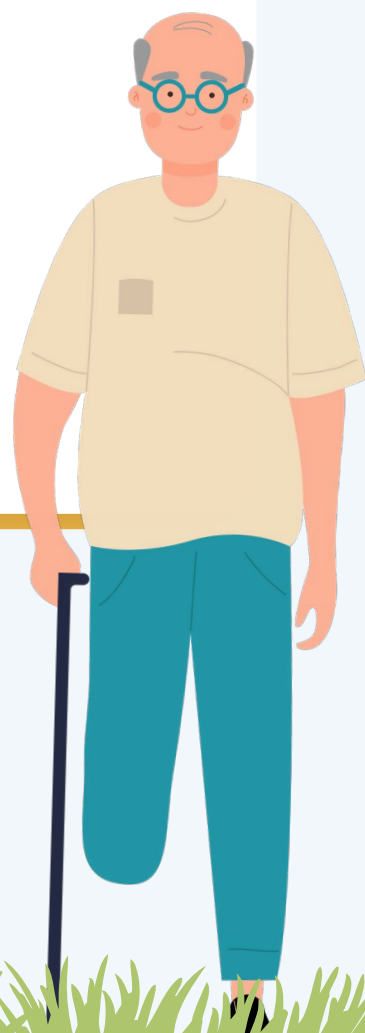
Young at Heart, Kidsgrove

"It's hard to get around places if you have limited mobility and can't walk far, you need to know the distance, where you can stop, if there will be toilets."

North Midlands OLGBT+

"Good to have sensory walks, possibly with audio-posts and maybe guided walks."

Appetite Consultation



Transforming the Trent Headwaters is a partnership project led by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

We would like to thank everyone who welcomed us and spoke to us during this project, and who shared their experiences of green spaces and watery places so generously.

