

Press Release: Generation Green 2

£4.5 million Defra-funded project is helping England's most socially disadvantaged young people forge closer connections with nature

A project which will help more than 25,000 young people living in England's most socially disadvantaged areas to connect with nature and rural life through nights under the stars, outdoor residentials and a host of other inspiring experiences is in full swing.

By the end of the project next spring, Generation Green 2 will have delivered more than 41,500 experiences focused on nature connection and outdoor education to young people who would otherwise be the least likely demographic in the country to spend time in the nation's most beautiful landscapes.

Delivered by a coalition of 24 organisations and funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Generation Green 2 aims to help address major inequalities in access to nature by cultivating a wider interest in green spaces among the next generation, fostering lifelong wellbeing benefits among participants and opening protected places to a wider demographic.

Generation Green 2 supports key recommendations in the 2019 Landscapes Review, addressing the need for a wider range of first-time visitors to engage with protected landscapes in order to help make them fit for the future.

Connections for the future

Poorer communities and people from ethnic minorities in the UK have the worst access to green spaces. Research has shown that 18% of children living in the most deprived areas never spend time in any kind of natural space.

Almost half of the country's most socially deprived areas are more than 15 miles by road from a protected landscape (such as a National Park or National Landscape), and opportunities to explore these landscapes are hindered by inadequate transport options.

Yet an extensive body of research shows that people who are more connected with nature are usually happier and more likely to report feeling their lives are worthwhile. Nature connection also leads to more willingness to take action to help our wildlife and the environment. In the context of collapsing biodiversity and the climate crisis, closer relationships with nature are more vital than ever before.

Generation Green 2 aims to help disadvantaged young people forge lifelong connections to nature by taking them on multi-day residentials, farm visits, day trips and nights under the stars, all based in National Parks, National Landscapes and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

These experiences will help young people connect with nature, cultivate a sense of care for the countryside, and enjoy the wellbeing benefits of spending time in the outdoors.

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High demand

This ambitious project is being delivered by the Access Unlimited (AU) Partnership, a unique coalition of not-for-profit youth organizations, school residential outdoor providers, and organisations managing protected landscapes.

The AU coalition includes the YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Field Studies Council, Girlguiding, Scouts, National Parks England, and the National Landscapes Association. Nine National Park Authorities and eight National Landscapes are involved in course delivery.

Funding for Generation Green 2 has been provided by Defra as part of its ongoing support of access to nature.

Participants in the project will be young people from geographic locations in England falling into the Index of Multiple Deprivation scale (1-3), and through schools that exceed a threshold of 30% of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Delivery of Generation Green 2 began in spring this year and has so far enabled almost 6,000 young people to take part in experiences across England. Demand for courses from participating schools and groups has been extremely high and there is currently little remaining availability.

Feedback so far has often testified to the value and power of outdoor education, with one teacher remarking: "It was amazing to see the interaction between different year groups and students that wouldn't normally talk to each other at school. On this trip they have been smiling, relaxed and willing to chat to each other." (Full quote below).

Further information about Generation Green 2 is available here: www.yha.org.uk/generationgreen.

Building on success

This project is the second major initiative delivered by the Access Unlimited coalition.

It will build on the work of the first Generation Green project, a £2.5 million programme which supported another key recommendation of the Glover review by - among other things - widening participation in outdoor-related jobs and volunteering, creating seven apprenticeships, 10 new jobs, a paid internship, 30 YHA Kickstart placements, and 659 skilled volunteer roles.

An independent evaluation carried out by the University of Derby showed that the facilitated day and residential trips which were also a part of the first Generation Green project led to an immediate significant impact in young people's connection with nature and sense of inclusion in nature. The University of Derby are conducting similar research into the impact of Generation Green 2.



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Quotes

“Since 1930 YHA has been committed to helping young people connect with nature and the outdoors, especially those with least access. Unique and innovative programmes like Generation Green 2 give us the unique opportunity to work alongside major not-for-profit outdoor education partners to deliver even more life-enhancing experiences across our youth hostel network in England. This project brings the vision of a night under the stars for every child one step closer.”

James Blake, Chief Executive YHA (England & Wales), and Chair of the Access Unlimited coalition

“The young people in our area were impacted massively by COVID and the cost of living crisis, not only financially but socially and culturally too, and the school is generally feeling the impact of that with the level of deprivation rising in our city. Our trip to YHA Malham in the Yorkshire Dales National Park could not have happened without the support from Generation Green 2. It was amazing to see the interaction between different year groups and students that wouldn't normally talk to each other at school. On this trip they have been smiling, relaxed and willing to chat to each other.

I was emotional seeing them together at Janet's Foss waterfall and hearing the sense of achievement that they are coming away with. It is hard to put into words the impact that this trip will have on them.”

Amy Armstrong, teacher at St John Bosco College, Liverpool

“Have you ever tried pitching a tent in the driving wind and rain, on your own? It's tough, but much easier if you work together as a team. Or how about sitting with your friends watching a sunrise over the mountains the morning after? Now that's beautiful.

“These are exactly the kinds of moments Generation Green 2 will unlock at scale, and it's my firm belief that the more we expose Britain's young people to them, the more they'll understand not just themselves, but our wild places. And the more they do that, the more they'll want to care for and protect them - not fear them. The positive difference Generation Green will make to our collective future cannot be understated.”

Martin Davidson, Chief Executive, The Outward Bound Trust



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Through Access Unlimited, the Field Studies Council has inspired thousands of young people to access nature for the first time and ignite that vital spark of curiosity in the world around us. We've seen their eyes widen, horizons expand, and possibilities multiply for their future relationship with the natural environment.

"Our charity has enabled secondary school students and young adults to access personal and professional learning through online and place-based courses about nature. By utilising high-quality biodiversity publications and experiencing residential at our specialist field centres, they can immerse themselves in some of nature's most awe-inspiring locations.

"We were excited to be able to offer again unique guided access for the young people most in need of the opportunities that many of us take for granted. Showing them that nature can not only provide a lifetime of enjoyment and wellbeing but can also offer opportunities for incredible future study and rewarding, fulfilling careers. We are pleased to have played a part in their journey of discovery."

Mark Castle, Chief Executive, Field Studies Council

"Generation Green will enable more than 3,200 Scouts to have the opportunity to further connect with nature by facilitating access to unique outdoor experiences.

At Scouts we support young people to engage with natural environments as it encourages personal development, curiosity, creativity and ultimately building on skills for life.

This project bridges the gap and ensures as many young people as possible have a chance to benefit and learn from the outdoors."

Aidan Jones, Chief Executive, Scouts

"National Parks are critical to providing access to green spaces for the nation and we are delighted that through Generation Green 2 thousands of young people will be enabled to connect with nature within our spectacular landscapes. Being alongside nature in National Parks and learning about how we conserve and enhance our natural environment is an inspiring and exciting journey that we want all young people to have a chance to experience."



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Jayne Butler, Executive Director, National Parks England

“The UK’s National Landscapes teams are thrilled and proud to be part of this project. This generous investment from UK Government will enable us to take a significant step forward in our mission to bring amazing experiences in National Landscapes to even more young people. Two thirds of the population of England lives within half an hour’s journey time of their nearest National Landscape, being able to connect and enjoy these treasured places on their own terms will give them a genuine stake in their future. Working with our partners in the Access Unlimited coalition, we will ensure that more of our young people have the chance to connect with the nature, culture and wonder of their nation.”

John Watkins, CEO, National Landscapes

“We’re very glad that further funding has been granted to this project. We know how important access to the outdoors is for children’s mental wellbeing, so being able to experience outdoor spaces, particularly for young people who might not usually have access, is really positive.

“At Girlguiding, we want girls to experience adventure and connect with the outdoors, and this funding allows us to continue to invest in girls’ access to nature through our residential camps and outdoor activities.”

Angela Salt, CEO, Girlguiding

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Notes to Editors

This is a 12-month project that builds on the success of the first phase of Generation Green, delivered in 2021/22.

The first phase of Generation Green connected young people to nature, created and saved jobs, and helped build an aspirant workforce for a green recovery post Covid pandemic.

This project aims to connect young people who live in areas of social disadvantage in England with nature in a protected landscape and is funded by Defra. The project will fund day visits and overnight experiences for 25,167 young people in National Parks and National Landscapes, providing 41,521 days and nights under the stars.

Discover more at www.yha.org.uk/generationgreen.

[About Access Unlimited](#)



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The Access Unlimited coalition was formed in December 2019 as a coalition of non-for-profit school residential and educational providers.

The coalition includes YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Scouts, Girlguiding, Field Studies Council, National Landscapes and the 9 National Parks in England. It is led and managed by YHA (England & Wales).

National Landscapes joined the Access Unlimited coalition in 2023.

Its aim is to ensure that there are opportunities for every child and young person to access high quality learning and residential experiences in our protected landscapes.

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