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The Parks Agency

# Wildspaces! Evaluation

**VOLUME 1: MAIN REPORT**

for Natural England

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## **Editorial note**

This work was commissioned by English Nature in June 2006. English Nature was absorbed into a new agency, Natural England, which took over operations in October 2006.

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# English Nature

## Wildspace! Evaluation

### 1 Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of the Wildspace! grant scheme, commissioned by English Nature in June 2006. English Nature was absorbed into a new agency, Natural England, in October 2006.

The Wildspace! evaluation was carried out by The Parks Agency in partnership with Andrew Parsons Associates, Leisure Consultants. The Parks Agency is a leading consultancy in the green space sector and has recently led or partnered several research and development projects for a number of agencies involved in the regeneration of public open space including CABE Space, GreenSpace, the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Green Flag Award scheme, Lantra, the Countryside Agency, English Heritage and the Civic Trust.

### 2 Wildspace! - Its background

Wildspace! was delivered by English Nature as part of the Big Lottery Fund (BIG), formerly the New Opportunities Fund (NOF), Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities (GSSC) programme.

Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities, launched in January 2000, was an umbrella scheme worth £125 million across the UK and was NOF's first environmental programme. It was "designed to help urban and rural communities throughout the United Kingdom understand, improve or care for their environment by: creating, preserving or promoting access to green spaces of educational, recreational or environmental value to the community; and encouraging small community-based projects that engage local people in improving and caring for their environment and promote sustainable development".

NOF elected to run the programme as partnerships across a range of existing organisations who were invited to enter proposals for funding. The Award Partners were announced in September 2000 and the individual schemes opened for applications in spring 2001. The first grants were announced in summer 2001 and all funding had to be committed by March 2007. In 2004 the New Opportunities Fund was merged by Government with the Millennium Commission and the Community Fund to form the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) which has taken over the administration of former NOF initiatives, including GSSC.

In England there were seven award partners receiving contributions from the national lottery as follows:

1. Barnardo's – Better Play (£9m over 3 years)
2. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) – People's Places (£6m, 1000 spaces over 5 years)
3. Countryside Agency – Doorstep Greens (£13m, 200 Greens over 5 years)
4. English Nature – Wildspace! (£7m over 5 years)
5. Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) – SEED (£14m for sustainable development and transport over 3 years)
6. Sustrans – (£7m umbrella scheme for Green Routes and Safe Routes)

7. Sport England – green spaces, playing fields and children’s play (£31m umbrella scheme)

Wildspace! aimed to help local communities to create more Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and to improve existing ones. Through this scheme £7 million was distributed to local authorities, wildlife trusts and charitable groups who are involved in the management and development of LNRs in England, particularly in disadvantaged areas that lack access to natural open space. All funding for the scheme was committed by July 2003 when the scheme was closed to new applications. Funded projects ran until September 2006.

## 2.1 Targets and delivery of the scheme

At the scheme’s inception the following aims were established:

- to create 200 new LNRs over the life of the scheme
- to fund the 'visitor friendly' enhancement of 2 LNRs per region as examples of best practice
- to fund the employment of 46 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs)
- to fund the development of two LNRs per region as centres of excellence for environmental education

English Nature set targets for the relative funding split between the different elements of the grant scheme as follows:

- 45% to support project work on LNRs
- 50% to support the employment of Community Liaison Officers
- 5% to enable the purchase of land for the purpose of declaring LNRs

### **3 Wildspace! – Its evaluation**

**The evaluation was designed to examine two main effects:**

- The social impact – including the benefits to local communities, increased community coherence and involvement in local environmental projects, educational opportunities, and the opportunity to partake in healthy volunteering pursuits
- The environmental impact – including the benefits to biodiversity, sustainability, land management and local environmental enhancements

**Across these two strands particular attention was paid to:**

- The value of employing Community Liaison Officers and the impact of this role on both social and environmental gains
- The sustainability of the LNRs created and/or improved under the scheme

**The aims of the evaluation were to assess the effectiveness of targeting against these four main aims:**

- To increase the number of LNRs in England
- To realise the potential of LNRs for wildlife and the community by enhancing the quality of experience for users
- To enable the employment of Community Liaison Officers to facilitate community participation in the management and development of LNRs. This is a key element within the evaluation to determine the role of the CLO within the project
- To promote the use of LNRs for environmental education

#### **3.1 To increase the number of LNRs in England**

**Target:** Create 200 new LNRs over the life of the scheme.

**Priorities:**

- communities in areas of urban rural deprivation
- areas where people lack access to natural open space
- Local authorities without previous LNRs
- Projects that allow biodiversity gains to be realised

#### **3.2 To realise the potential of LNRs for wildlife and the community by enhancing the quality of experience for users**

**Target:** To give grants towards the ‘visitor friendly’ enhancement of two LNRs per region that can be used as examples of best practice from which others will learn.

**Priorities:**

- Projects that enable ‘friends of’ groups to be established
- Enable new community groups/individuals to enjoy LNRs, their management and development work

- Projects that show innovation in their approach to LNR interpretation and community involvement
- Projects that make LNRs safe, accessible and enjoyable places to visit

### **3.3 To enable the employment of Community Liaison Officers to facilitate community participation in the management and development of LNRs**

**Target:** to give grants towards the employment of 46 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) throughout the life of the scheme.

**Priorities:**

- Benefit areas of urban and rural deprivation – geographical spread of grants
- Enable long-term community ownership of LNRs
- Facilitate projects which will benefit those with mobility or learning difficulties
- Encourage new communities and groups to experience LNRs

### **3.4 To promote the use of LNRs for environmental education**

**Target:** to give grants towards the development of two LNRs per region as centres of excellence for environmental education from which others will learn.

**Priorities:**

- Provide for young people disadvantaged by lack of access to natural open space
- Show innovation and good practice
- Provide for those with mobility or learning difficulties
- Offer training, learning and personal development opportunities

## 4 Methodology

Baseline information was supplied by English Nature, including a list of contacts, a ‘Beneficiaries Spreadsheet’, in which was collated information supplied by grantees in regular project reports and a copy of a report produced in April 2004 by Shirine Voller, of the Wildspace! grant management team, on behalf of the Wildspace! project board called *Wildspace! evaluation: Governance of the scheme: The benefits of partnership working*. This information, along with the results of a survey into the Wildspace! scheme conducted by the current research team in 2005 as part of the Doorstep Greens Evaluation, provided a solid understanding of the scheme and its administration, strengths and weaknesses.

In order to address the detailed research questions we adopted a varied approach to gathering primary data, consisting of:

- Survey by questionnaire of all grant recipients and CLOs (see Appendix 1)
- In-depth interviews by telephone of managers of up to 24 randomly selected projects
- Accompanied and unaccompanied site visits of LNRs which were improved in 12 of the above 24 projects, to include two of each of environmental education and visitor friendly exemplars
- In-depth interviews of five English Nature Conservation Officers who were involved in promoting the scheme
- In-depth interviews of two Wildspace! managers.

The survey by questionnaire achieved a response rate of 77 from 143 grant recipients, a return rate of 53.8% which compares favourably with a generally accepted return rate of around 30% for postal surveys.

## 5 Research findings - to increase the number of LNRs in England

### 5.1 Targets and priorities

**Target:** Create 200 new LNRs over the life of the scheme.

**Priorities:**

- communities in areas of urban and rural deprivation
- areas where people lack access to natural open space
- Local authorities without previous LNRs
- Projects that allow biodiversity gains to be realised

At the scheme's inception the following aims were established:

- to create 200 new LNRs over the life of the scheme
- to fund the 'visitor friendly' enhancement of 2 LNRs per region as examples of best practice
- to fund the employment of 46 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs)
- to fund the development of 2 LNRs per region as centres of excellence for environmental education

By mid-summer 2006, 169 grant awards totalling £7 million, including 28 'fast track' awards of £10,000 or less, had been made to 143 grantees comprising local authorities, wildlife trusts and charitable groups for land purchase (up to £25,000), capital improvements (up to 75% of costs with an upper limit of £25,000) and revenue grants (up to £53,000 over three years). The awards included funding for 89 CLOs.

### 5.2 Achievements compared to original targets

The aims of the Wildspace! scheme were met and exceeded in respect of the number of new LNRs (140% of target) and the number of CLO posts funded ((194% of target).

#### 5.2.1 To create 200 new LNRs over the life of the scheme

By July 2006 279 new LNRs were designated, increasing the total in England to c 1,160 - an increase of 32%.

We asked grantees by how many did their LNRs increase as a result of the grant. The response was:

(Sample size = 77)	From (no)	To (no)
By how many did the number of LNRs increase as a result of the grant?	148	378

The 230 new LNRs stated in returns from 77 of 143 (54%) grantees represents an increase of 155% whereas the overall increase in LNRs achieved by the Wildspace! scheme across the nation as a whole was 32%. Our returns in fact represent a disproportionately large 82% of new LNRs created through the scheme. As with most surveys, it can be seen that our results evidently come from a self-selecting group of respondents who were more than averagely active and engaged with the scheme. All results from the survey must therefore be interpreted with that potential bias in mind.

**5.2.2 To fund the 'visitor friendly' enhancement of two LNRs per region as examples of best practice**

This target was met through enhancing two sites per region in the following projects to make them exemplars of 'visitor friendly' LNRs:

**Visitor Friendly LNRs exemplars**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Project</b>
Eastern	Epping Forest District Council Harlow District Council
East Midlands	Nottingham City Council BTCV Derbyshire
London	London Wildlife Trust Abney Park Cemetery Trust
North Eastern	Clara Vale Conservation Trust Blyth Valley Borough Council
North Western	Halton Borough Council Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
South Eastern	Rye Harbour LNR Management Committee Brighton and Hove City Council
South Western	South Gloucestershire Council Bath and North East Somerset Council
West Midlands	Wyre Forest District Council Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Yorkshire and Humberside	Foxglove Covert LNR Management Committee Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

**5.2.3 To fund the employment of 46 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs)**

Grants were awarded for the employment of 89 CLOs, almost twice as many as first envisaged.

The majority of these CLOs were funded at the 'standard' rate of £53,000 over three years, a few were half posts funded at £26,500 and some were funded at figures between the two. Of the 89 CLOs, 63 were employed by local authorities and the other 26 by a mixture of conservation groups and other organisations, principally County Wildlife Trusts, Groundwork Trusts and BTCV.

**5.2.4 To fund the development of two LNRs per region as centres of excellence for environmental education**

This target was met through developing two sites per region in the following projects as centres of excellence for environmental education:

### Environmental Education Exemplars

Region	Project
Eastern	Norwich City Council Hertfordshire Groundwork Trust
East Midlands	Groundwork Leicester Nottingham City Council
London	London Borough of Islington The Mudchute Association
North Eastern	Middlesbrough Council Morpeth Borough Council
North Western	Halton Borough Council Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
South Eastern	Elmbridge Borough Council White Cliffs Countryside Project
South Western	South Gloucestershire Council East Devon District Council
West Midlands	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
Yorkshire and Humberside	Leeds City Council City of York

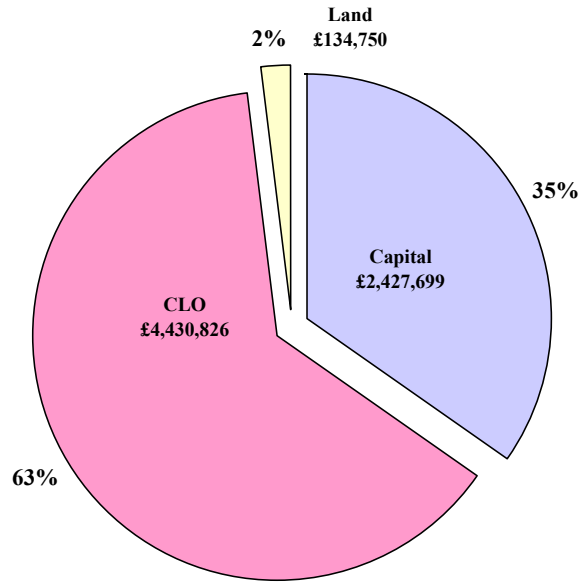
### 5.3 Achievements compared to priorities

The priorities for the grant awards were to target:

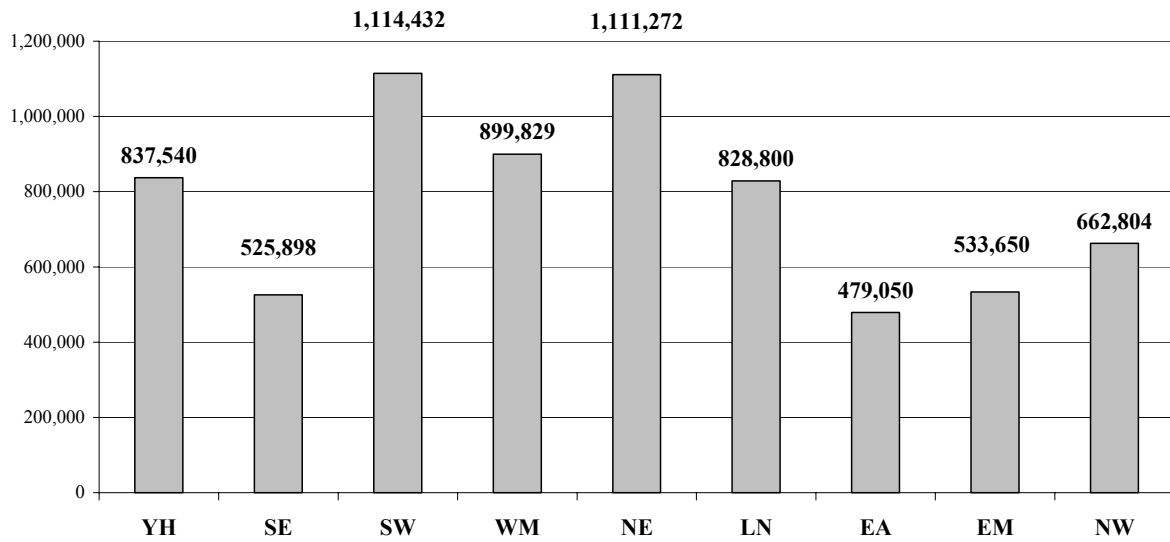
- communities in areas of urban and rural deprivation
- areas where people lack access to natural open space
- Local authorities without previous LNRs
- Projects that allow biodiversity gains to be realised

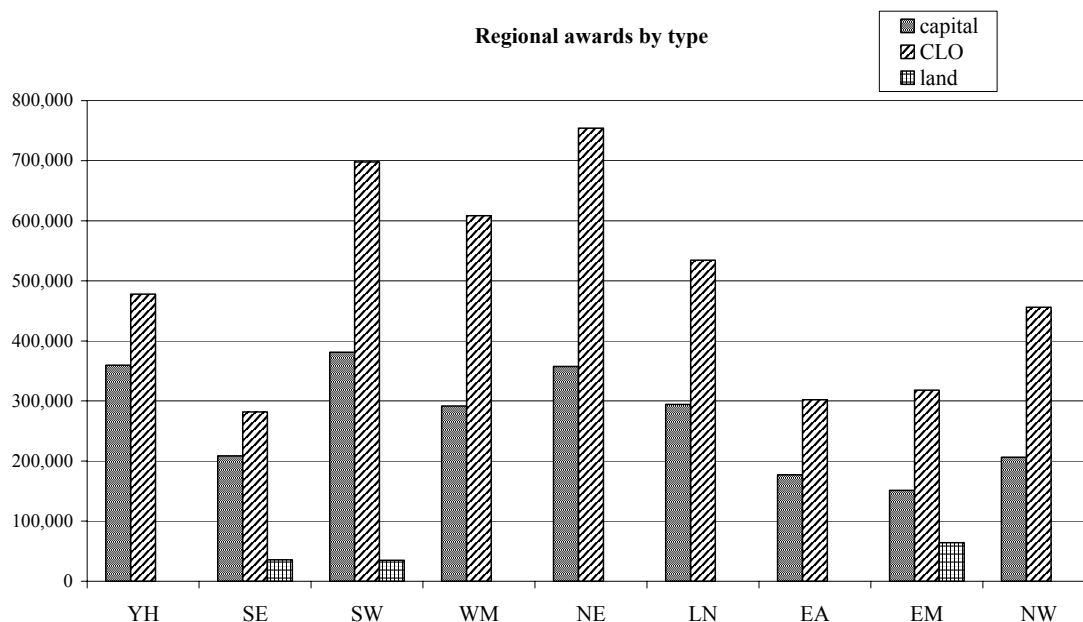
The tables below show the allocation of funds and types of grants awarded across the regions.

**Wildspace! awards by type**



**Wildspace! regional grant awards 16 July 2003. Offers total £6,993,275**





The Programme Board and the Wildspace! Panel agreed at the outset that the relative split between the different elements of the grant scheme should be:

- 45% to support project work on LNRs
- 50% to support the employment of Community Liaison Officers
- 5% to enable the purchase of land for the purpose of declaring LNRs

Analysis of the grants *as awarded* show that the final split between the different elements of the grant scheme was:

- 35% to support project work on LNRs
- 63% to support the employment of Community Liaison Officers
- 2% to enable the purchase of land for the purpose of declaring LNRs

These figures show how the importance of the role of CLOs increased as the scheme unfolded and the higher priority that was given to this element of funding. The lower sums allocated to capital works had ramifications for some projects. The lower than anticipated take-up of grants for land purchase probably reflects the relative difficulty of overcoming the legal and technical obstacles involved in land purchase and the protracted time periods involved.

### 5.3.1 Communities in areas of urban and rural deprivation and areas where people lack access to natural open space

English Nature targeted the Wildspace! scheme at areas of urban and rural deprivation, particularly those that lacked access to natural open space. In awarding the overall grant distribution it was proposed that 70% (£3.8m) should be to projects that were in:

- Local authority areas of high deprivation – as determined by the DETR indices of local deprivation 1998, local authority areas with scores of 10 and above

- Local authority areas of high rural deprivation – as informed by the Countryside Agency’s deprivation indices and European Structural Fund areas
- Areas of high population density – local authority areas with 1000 people per sq km, but taking into account the relatively low population in rural deprived areas.

Also taken into account was the level of LNR provision (more or less than one hectare of LNR to 1000 people) and access to other natural open space.

In order to meet English Nature’s aim to improve access to natural open space, it was proposed to award the remaining 30% (£1.6m) of the grant monies to projects in areas not meeting the above criteria but which would:

- Promote access and accessibility to LNRs - this refers not only to physical access but also to encouraging the use of LNRs by different cultural and social groups, particularly those currently underrepresented
- Demonstrate a high level of innovation - to encourage applicants to think more broadly about how they will engage with local communities in their LNR work to reach a wider/ new audience
- Provide a focus for environmental education and promote best practice - LNRs are often situated within walking distance of local schools, however, are generally underused as an educational resource
- Demonstrate high levels of community participation - where practicable, all projects grant aided should demonstrate community participation
- Enable high local biodiversity gains to be realised - to help deliver Local Biodiversity Action Plans and other local environmental plans and strategies

Looking at these subsidiary targets, we asked grantees how their projects had contributed to a range of outcomes. Their aggregated response was as follows:

<b>Did your project:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
a enable the establishment of Friends Group(s)?	77%	23%
b enable new community groups/individuals to experience or get involved in the management of LNRs?	96%	4%
c enable long-term community ownership or adoption of LNRs?	75%	25%
d facilitate projects which will benefit people with mobility or learning difficulties?	77%	23%
e provide for young people disadvantaged by lack of access to natural open space?	78%	22%
f promote environmental education to the public?	97%	3%
g offer training, learning and personal development opportunities?	87%	13%

h	show innovation in interpretation and community involvement?	86%	14%
i	make LNRs safe, accessible and enjoyable to visit?	94%	6%
j	realise gains in biodiversity?	87%	13%
k	improve the long-term future and/or sustainability of LNRs?	89%	11%
l	contribute to local and national policies and strategies?	88%	12%

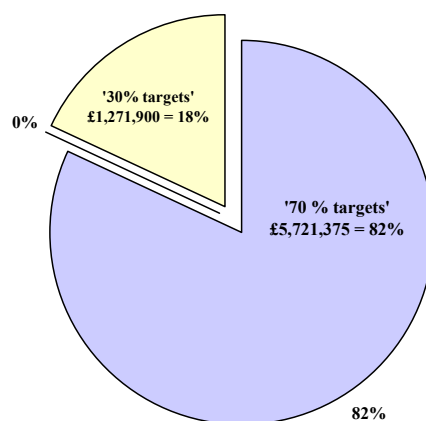
The Wildspace! scheme comfortably exceeded its 70% targets (awards to deprived areas), awarding grants totalling £5,721,375 to 124 projects (150% of priority).

There was a consequent under-provision for the 30% targets as above, £1,271,900 being awarded to 45 projects (79% of proposal).

The scheme was therefore very effective in prioritising areas of high deprivation and those where communities have limited access to natural open space. There is further information about the social impact of the scheme in section 9.1 below.

**Split between 70% and 30% targets - total grant value - 169 Projects, totalling £6,993,275**

**Wildspace! targets**



**5.3.2 Local authorities without previous LNRs**

Our survey showed that some local authorities made spectacular gains in their numbers of new LNRs. Gains recorded included: from 0 to 10 (Calderdale Borough Council); from 1 to 11 (Taunton Deane Borough Council); from 2 to 12 (East Riding Council); from 1 to 10 (North Lincolnshire Council) from 1 to 9 (Epping Forest District Council and Mansfield District Council), from 2 to 10); Halton Borough Council); from 0 to 6 (London Borough of Lewisham); from 1 to 6 (Sedgefield Borough Council) and from 2 to 7 (North Tyneside Council).

Of our sample of 77 returns, 24 were from bodies other than local authorities. Of the 53 local authorities, 11 said they had declared their first ones. This shows that 20% of our local authority respondents had declared their first LNRs but we cannot say whether this percentage would apply to all local authority grant recipients - if it did it would suggest that around 20 local authorities declared their first LNRs as a result of the Wildspace! scheme.

These figures also show that, for those local authorities who took advantage of Wildspace! grants, significant progress could be made in declaring and enhancing LNRs.

### 5.3.3 Projects that allow biodiversity gains to be realised

Of our sample of 77 Wildspace! grantees, 68 replied to this question: 87% confirmed that biodiversity gains had been realised through their projects and 13% said that they had not been realised. The full responses are shown in Appendix 2.

The table below provides a sample of projects that have realised biodiversity gains:

Species and habitats within the County Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) being managed appropriately. Species returning to LNRs as management better.	Three Rivers District Council
Plan developed for site has helped manage habitats which contribute to the LBAP targets eg promoting positive management for ancient woodland such as coppicing old hazel and providing suitable breeding habitats for key species such as Song Thrush.	Hertfordshire County Council
Desmoulins Whorl Snail found, otter holt constructed and stag beetle pyramid built. Contributed to Essex Biodiversity Action Plan	Harlow District Council
CLO had key role in production and delivery of the borough's BAP, initiating the BAP process, setting up working groups and writing BAP document - CLO had a particular focus around biodiversity in schools undertaking a wide range of projects - enabled NCT to deliver broader range of biodiversity projects across the borough.	London Borough of Islington
In line with Durham BAP - ongoing surveying and monitoring of management plans. National Vegetation Classification qualification recently obtained - officers now working with Planning Officers to ensure biodiversity considerations are being integrated into built development proposals.	Sedgefield Borough Council
Indirectly - BAP habitats benefited due to reduction in damage from illegal use of motorcycles on site - due to installation of anti-motorcycle barriers at priority accesses	British Waterways
works to Waters' Edge have increased area of reedbed, open water, wildflower meadow, water vole habitat etc - grazing and scrub clearance on Atkinsons Warren has increased area of lowland acid grassland - woodland ground flora increased in Brumby Wood due to sycamore thinning - improved mowing of Frodingham LNR has benefited common spotted orchids and other flora	North Lincolnshire Council

We also interviewed a selection of grantees, EN Conservation Officers and managers on this aspect of the grant scheme. A sample of abbreviated comments is shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National BAP gains – skylarks, meadow pipits, brimstone butterflies</li> <li>• Part of County BAP, especially heathland</li> <li>• Better recording identifies gains</li> <li>• Reedbed habitat action plan implemented</li> <li>• Management plans are aimed at biodiversity gains and local authority monitors and records</li> <li>• BAPs under review but stag beetle loggeries now being recorded</li> <li>• Gains made but hard to quantify (x3)</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local authorities tended to structure applications around BAPs and delivered what they said</li> <li>• Sometimes it takes time for gains to be realised even if the management process is underway</li> <li>• More volunteers meant more management leading to biodiversity gains</li> <li>• Increase in habitats</li> <li>• Better recording through BARs</li> <li>• Emphasis on people could diminish biodiversity – multifunctionality can be inimical to nature conservation</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most projects linked to BAPs, the focus of work in local authorities</li> <li>• Recording has raised profile of LNRs in local authorities</li> <li>• More than 300 new LNRs declared so clearly there are real gains</li> </ul>

It was clear throughout the evaluation that the management of LNRs was considerably improved through the scheme and that biodiversity gains would follow. In many cases community engagement with LNRs was the prime focus and for many CLOs there was a fairly relaxed attitude to specific biodiversity gains, along with confidence that these would happen and could be recorded in the future once improved management had taken hold. There was a lot of anecdotal evidence that biodiversity gains had been made and that the focus in LNR management on BAPs and better recording through the Biodiversity Action Reporting system (BARs) would eventually back this up. Recording by professionals and volunteers was a feature of some schemes but we cannot say that there was a universal and systematic approach to biodiversity recording in the projects we surveyed.

There is further information on the environmental impact of the scheme in section 9.2 below.

## 6 Research findings – to realise the potential of LNRs for wildlife and the community by enhancing the quality of experience for users

### 6.1 Targets and priorities

**Target:** To give grants towards the ‘visitor friendly’ enhancement of two LNRs per region that can be used as examples of best practice from which others will learn.

**Priorities:**

- Projects that enable ‘friends of’ groups to be established
- Enable new community groups/individuals to enjoy LNRs, their management and development work
- Projects that show innovation in their approach to LNR interpretation and community involvement
- Projects that make LNRs safe, accessible and enjoyable places to visit

### 6.2 Achievements compared to original targets

Two projects per region included the enhancement of LNRs as ‘visitor friendly’ exemplars (see 5.2.2 above).

### 6.3 Achievements compared to priorities

#### 6.3.1 Projects that enable ‘friends of’ groups to be established

In our survey we asked if projects had enabled the establishment of ‘friends of’ groups: 71 of 77 respondents answered and 77% of our respondents said yes and 23% said no. Details of the Friends of Groups appear in Appendix 3.

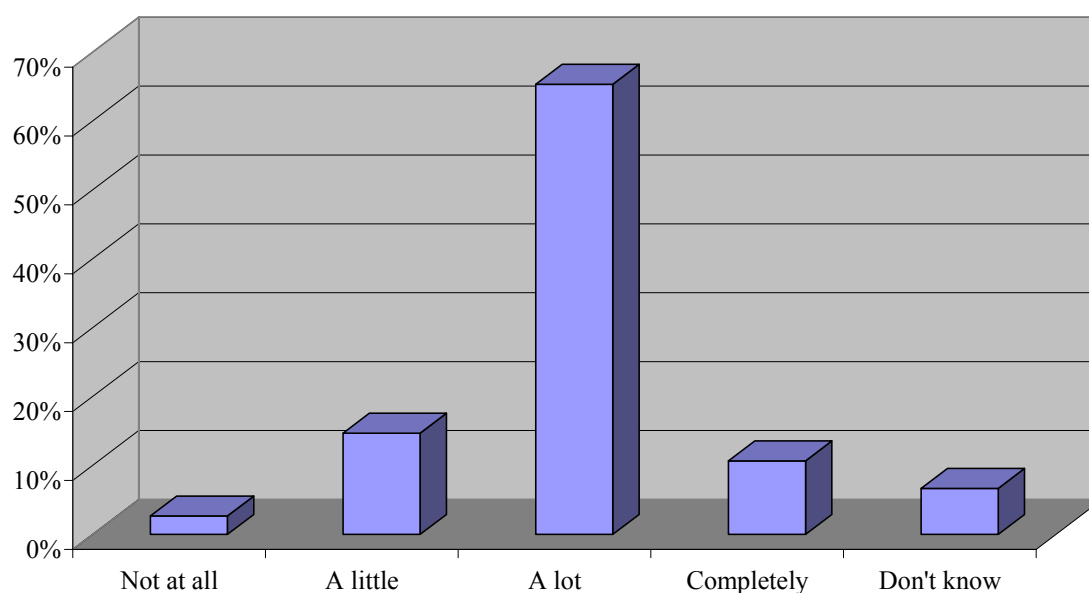
A selection of typical responses is shown in the table below:

Response	Organisation
Friends of Group established in various forms, very time consuming and reliant on public enthusiasm	Cambridge City Council
Friends of The Withey Beds currently have almost 200 household memberships.	Three Rivers District Council
A Friends of The Wick group has been established, consisting of over 70 local residents	Hertfordshire County Council
Yes but was difficult and time consuming - also attracted already established groups to become actively engaged in the project.	Gateshead Council
Four of the LNRs have established successful Friends of Groups - the other two are managed in partnership - town and parish councils	Sedgefield Borough Council
3 Friends of Groups established and an additional group is currently getting started.	Salford City Council
The Friends of Murdishaw Valley and were established. Other formative groups were boosted e.g. Friends of Wigg Island. However, establishment was not easy on 3 other reserves and, as a result, we have a more generic role for a borough-wide community group called the Halton Environment Roundtable. This community group receives regular reports on all community activities on LNRs. This is probably the weakest Aspect of Wild About Halton	Halton Borough Council
Already established - now with 1700 members	Rye Nature Reserve

Response	Organisation
Unable to get enough community support	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Set up voluntary groups at Worcester Woods and Waseley Hills Country Parks. Friends of Groups attend weekly meetings with site staff to undertake tasks and receive training.	Worcestershire County Council

We asked how involved friends groups and/or volunteers had become in the longer term management and sustainability of LNRs. Our respondents answered as follows:

**How involved have Friends Groups and/or volunteers become in the longer term management and sustainability of the LNRs?**



Asked to comment and give examples, 58 respondents supplied a wide range of observations on this topic. The full responses are shown in Appendix 4 but the table below shows the *principal* contributions to LNRs made by Friends of Groups as identified by an analysis of keywords.

Principal contributions to LNRs by Friends of Groups	Number of mentions	Frequency of mentions
Physical management and maintenance	45	76%
Fund-raising and grant applications	18	31%
Work parties	15	26%
Attend steering meetings	11	19%
Organise events, activities and open days	11	19%
Contribute to management plans	9	16%
Promotion, newsletters, interpretation and lobbying	8	14%

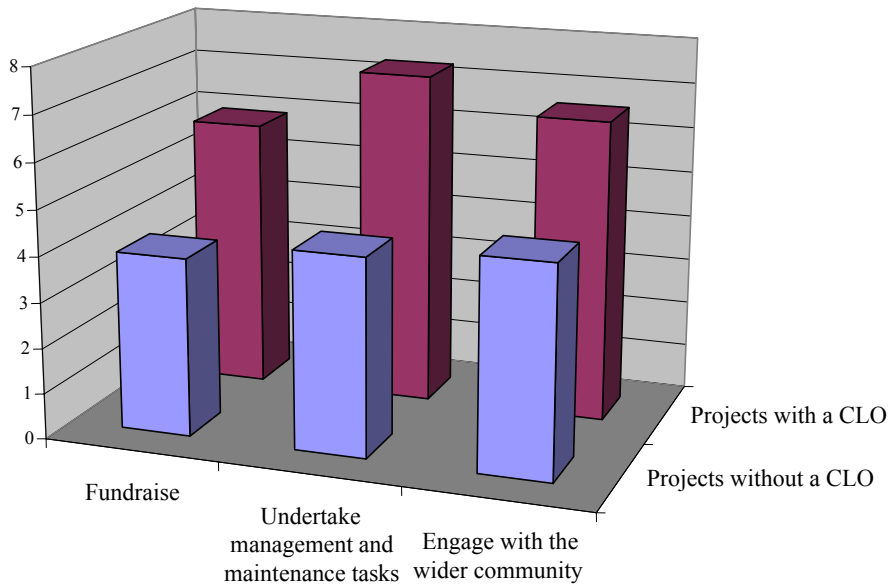
<b>Principal contributions to LNRs by Friends of Groups</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>	<b>Frequency of mentions</b>
Wardening, training, surveying and organising contractors	7	12%
Recruit new members	5	9%
Litter picking	5	9%
Take ownership	1	2%

We also asked grantees in our survey to score how much ability they thought friends groups and voluntary groups had to fundraise, undertake management and maintenance tasks and engage with the wider community. We asked respondents to distinguish between projects with and without CLOs. The average scores for each were as follows:

<b>Ability of voluntary groups to:</b>	<b>Projects with CLO</b>	<b>Projects without CLO</b>
Fundraise	59%	39%
Undertake management and maintenance	73%	43%
Engage with wider community	66%	46%

Shown as a graphic, these results show the importance of voluntary groups to the sustainable management of LNRs and underline the importance of CLOs to their effectiveness.

**Q10). Ability of volunteer/friends groups with and without a CLO**



### 6.3.2 Projects that enable new community groups/individuals to enjoy LNRs, their management and development work

The responses received from 71 grantees show that 96% of projects did enable new community groups and/or individuals to benefit from the grants in this way. Full responses are shown in Appendix 5 and a selection of comments from grantees is shown below:

Comment	Organisation
Thousands of individuals have visited their LNRs through organised events for the first time and are now visiting independently - 10 local schools using LNRs for study - disabled groups and individuals now visit due to improved access.....	The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough
New groups and individuals continue to be made aware of LNRs and hence will visit the sites - many groups and individuals visit LNRs through organised activities/guided walks - the CLO ( now Projects Officer Environment) continues to organise events and activities.....	Three Rivers District Council
Local artist group - local Herts Moth Group ran a moth trapping day with CMS where over 60 people attended - new members of local community continue to join Friends of Group after seeing improvements carried out by organised conservation tasks.....	Hertfordshire County Council
2 types of group users - 'issue based' who want to change something and 'social' who enjoy helping out.....	Nottingham City Council
LNRs linked through the district by trails so are used by walkers and cyclists and tourists - has increased since publication of leaflet - CLO continues to organise events and work days for Friends of Groups, local community and schools.....	Mansfield District Council
Schools now visit independently after teacher training event and initial supervised visits. Education packs were produced to enable them to do that.	Groundwork Erewash Valley
Training events run by CLOs have enabled schools to use sites independently - locked LNRs have a booking system to enable this.	London Borough of Lewisham
Leaflet and promotional work have attracted more users - locals and tourists - schools continue to utilise sites (some as part of curriculum) - some visits organised in conjunction with education staff based at sites.....	North Tyneside Council
Special needs groups continue to visit sites they have worked on to fulfil fitness / healthy living agendas - organised visits from sixth form colleges for case studies eg areas of lowland heath and natural grassland at the River Darwen Parkway - studies by Myerscough College.....	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Increased number of individual users on site following LNR project - rise in profile (both of sites and officer) has increased demand for activities - Friends of Groups continue to develop and gain confidence in running new events.....	Salford City Council
The education project remains very popular, hosting on average 3500 children per year. Spring and Summer have been full for the past 3 years with schools booking sessions months in advance.....	Elmbridge Borough Council
Groups of adults with learning difficulties visits have increased due to work by community ranger - groups from day centre / social services actively take part in practical/monitoring work on site.....	Lewes District Council

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
New schools visiting - people in wheelchairs.....	South Somerset District Council
Barnwood Arboretum - local schools make regular visits, botanical illustration Group has weekly lessons, tree warden training through CLO, new website. Green Farm Orchard and Saintbridge will cont if CLO is in post. ....	Gloucester City Council
Production of teachers pack has seen an increase in schools using the site.....	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Adults with learning disabilities have visited Kingsford to view their artwork and have picnics - they are also visiting other sites with their helpers assistance. The tailored walks led by the Countryside staff have encouraged these adults to initiate their own visits and venture to sites further a field. ....	Worcestershire County Council
Health walks - conservation activities - guided walks - community group visits with CLO. The LNRs with a visitor centre nearby attract more people and are easy to persuade community groups to visit .....	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
BH Cons Group continues to play leading role in management of LNRs - organises educational visits for schools, cubs, brownies and guides - regularly visited by adults with learning disabilities.....	British Waterways
Increased independent visitor numbers to most LNRs, guided walks increased over project period.....	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
CLO organised numerous visits - improved local involvement - small groups undertake practical tasks with limited support from CLO ( Potter Holes Plantation ) -other sites community have not taken initiative and rely heavily on CLO support (which will cease once the project finishes) so organised visits will probably not continue.....	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Ongoing new visitors at some sites - more remote sites need events to foster interest .....	East Riding Council
We accommodate vast variety of groups including RSPB, Women's Institutes, Natural History Societies, Baden Powell Groups, Health and Walking Groups, Art Classes, Beekeeping Groups	Foxglove Covert LNR

We also asked grantees for their comments on whether new groups and/or individuals *continued* to use LNRs and for examples of how this had been achieved. From the comments was possible to identify the main new users and how interest was maintained. We received 57 sets of comments on these questions and the main findings are shown below:

<b>New users of LNRs</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>	<b>Frequency of mentions</b>
New visiting groups (unspecified)	42	74%
Schools and colleges	22	39%
Unspecified groups	16	28%
Special needs groups	7	12%
Healthy walks groups	7	12%
Other specified groups	6	11%

<b>New users of LNRs</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>	<b>Frequency of mentions</b>
Artists and photographers	5	9%
Scouts, Cubs, Guides, Brownies	3	5%
<b>Means of attracting and retaining users</b>		
Events	23	40%
Guided walks, tours and talks	18	32%
Promotion, leaflets, website, education packs and outreach	15	26%
Activities, work days, work experience and training	14	25%

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13,000 children from 25 schools were introduced to LNRs in one project</li> <li>• Involvement was offered to university and colleges but, unlike schools, there was no take-up</li> <li>• New groups attracted – on one LNR this was mostly ethnic groups</li> <li>• Existing Friends of Groups re-energised</li> <li>• Meetings were advertised and mail drops used to invite people to activities with children, food was provided – turnout was surprisingly high</li> <li>• New Friends of Groups created (x7)</li> <li>• Sure Start and youth groups have joined in</li> <li>• 6 new High Schools pulled in</li> <li>• Brownies and Guides now run their own events</li> <li>• Events have brought in new people (x4)</li> <li>• Attended visits attracted new community and school groups and elderly people</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of both existing and new groups increased</li> <li>• This is stand-out aspect of the scheme – all have benefited</li> <li>• Established groups have been refreshed</li> <li>• A lot of the work by CLOs was in forming new Friends of Groups from interested parties</li> <li>• Many individuals come for the odd day but long-term volunteers need more nurturing</li> <li>• Seen as a good way of getting fresh air and exercise and getting hands dirty</li> <li>• LNRs must have the right tasks arranged for volunteers – this requires more management</li> <li>• Outreach work and art projects successful in attracting new people</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work of CLOs has engaged with a wide range of groups</li> <li>• High incidence of repeat school visits leading to repeat visits with parents</li> <li>• Success in attracting new groups was recorded in regular reports</li> </ul>

### **6.3.3 Projects that show innovation in their approach to LNR interpretation and community involvement**

In our survey we asked grantees if projects had shown innovation in their approach to LNR interpretation and community involvement: 69 of 77 respondents answered and 86% said yes and 14% said no. The full responses are shown in Appendix 6. Below are some of the most interesting comments which give a flavour of the range of approaches adopted in different projects.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Particular success achieved finding alternative ways to encourage hard-to-reach groups (especially BME groups) into the reserves - through consultation specific events were set up eg Diwali multi-faith events, elderly peoples growing group and health walks programme.	London Borough of Islington
A unique sculpture and conservation project involving local school children that won a good design award.	South Tyneside Council
Innovative solutions to interpreting special interest of LNRs - production of panel with audio unit for Kittiwake Tower LNR - sensory zone, arts features.	Gateshead Council
Enabled link with international exchange charity - young people from across the globe come and work on sites for 2 weeks - encouraging local people to join in. Youth for Christ's international NEI project involved in similar way - youth offenders, the army, HM prisons, fire brigade, TV location filming, involved in site management and interpretation. Gateway art feature doubles as height restriction barrier - carved gate detailing leaves in the wood - self led walks packs designed by volunteers - site signage - walking festival.	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
Use of web cams on LNRs and production of mini movies that are down loadable from the Halton BC web page.	Halton Borough Council
Touch screen in local shop (now used in our local info centre)	Rye Nature Reserve
The Poetry Trail is an example of interpretative innovation - only one in the country - bus stop enhancement scheme, nesting bank and habitat (marsh) enhancement scheme involved special needs groups and volunteers from local community.	Devon County Council
Successful projects include Peregrine Web Cam , Beer Mats for Wildtracks, BatBeat!, CD project for Youth Clubs, Wild about Wapley calendar with youth clubs and young carers, Chinese year of the Monkey celebrations. Details on website <a href="http://www.southglos.gov.uk/wildspaces">www.southglos.gov.uk/wildspaces</a>	South Gloucestershire Council
In association with Coversands Heathland Project Atkinsons Warren LNR have been interpreted through interactive CD-ROMs and website - in association with other funders Waters Edge has sustainably built visitor centre which includes displays and live footage of wildlife - in one of the most deprived areas of Scunthorpe CLO has managed to recruit and motivate an active group of voluntary sheep wardens to enable sustained grazing of heathland.	North Lincolnshire Council

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worksheets for schools, specific to each class, to link with national curriculum</li> <li>• National Grid funded new entrance and interpretation boards</li> <li>• Stories of each site compiled</li> <li>• Friends of Group wash signs regularly – no vandalism so far</li> <li>• ‘Art in the Countryside’ enabled young people to use a forge and sculpt steel and stone</li> <li>• Website and Visitor Centre set up and run by Friends of Group</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording wildlife is a good way of achieving interpretation and involvement</li> <li>• Links made with other groups with similar and different sites and interests</li> <li>• Websites new and unfamiliar to a lot of people</li> <li>• Sponsored bird-boxes and bird ringing effective in increasing involvement</li> <li>• Community art exhibitions</li> </ul>

<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a great variety – mostly traditional notice-boards, panels, leaflets, newsletters and waymarkers</li> <li>• Gateways and artworks were successful</li> <li>• Mosaics and exhibitions of local art</li> <li>• Roadshows around libraries and public buildings</li> </ul>
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### 6.3.4 Projects that make LNRs safe, accessible and enjoyable places to visit

In our survey we asked grantees if projects had made LNRs safe, accessible and enjoyable places to visit: 69 of 77 respondents answered and 94% said yes and 4% said no. The full responses are shown in Appendix 7. Virtually all projects increased accessibility and, therefore, use and this in turn brought dividends in terms of personal safety. In addition many project used the grants to address safety issues arising from risk assessments. The comments below typify the range of responses we received.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Improved accessibility has increased usage which makes the site safer and more enjoyable	Draycott Parish Council
Photographic evidence shows major access/safety improvements and the joy of children exploring LNRs	London Borough of Lewisham
Repaired paths, bridges, steps and handrails - vegetation clearance on paths added to core management task for Grounds Maintenance dept - funding sought and awarded to resurface car parks and install signage in some sites.	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
Volunteers' hard work has made LNRs cleaner, more enjoyable places to visit - improvements to footpaths, boardwalks, dipping platforms, gates, fences and stiles to help access and safety	North Tyneside Council
All sites have full annual risk assessments and maintenance programme as part of site management plans	Lewes District Council
Gorse Covert LNR received additional street lighting following planning for real exercise. Access audits and improvements/ highway improvements undertaken on many sites.	South Gloucestershire Council
Yes but not to the extent we would have liked due to limited financial and staff resources.	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Under represented groups enabled to visit LNRs - physical access improvement projects developed - improved visitor information and interpretation at each site.	Worcestershire County Council
LNRs more accessible and safe - increased usage - West Haigh Wood continues to suffer misuse and further long-term work is required for significant improvements	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of improvements to footpaths and boardwalks (x5)</li> <li>• Tree surgery to improve site safety (x2)</li> <li>• Problems with burnt out cars solved with barriers and gates and provision of car parks (x2)</li> <li>• New design of anti-motorcycle gates with radar key for disabled was successful</li> <li>• All 10 LNRs have council risk assessments and accessibility audits carried out</li> <li>• LNRs managed to maintain sight-lines, paths kept clear 1m either side</li> <li>• Sites had been neglected for years and had bad reputations</li> <li>• Clearance of vegetation around entrances (x2) and entrance features well maintained</li> <li>• Restricted sites now open more often and attended to reduce ASB</li> <li>• Circular routes created and handrails provided on some routes</li> <li>• On-site presence has increased safety (x3)</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better interpretation (x2)</li> <li>• Lots of improvements to footpaths and boardwalks (x3)</li> <li>• On-site presence in some LNRs made a difference to personal safety</li> <li>• Progress made on tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) by involving more people</li> <li>• Specialist advice on access needs of special needs groups obtained from Fieldfare Trust</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grantees tried hard – a lot of work done on clearing and widening pathways</li> <li>• Projects put on a lot of group walks, including group dog walking</li> <li>• Many different events held</li> <li>• Friends of Groups have encouraged a sense of ownership and pride and a desire to keep LNRs nice</li> </ul>

## 7. Research findings - to enable the employment of community liaison officers to facilitate community participation in the management and development of LNRs

### 7.1 Targets and priorities

**Target:** to give grants towards the employment of 46 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) throughout the life of the scheme.

**Priorities:**

- Benefit areas of urban and rural deprivation
- Enable long-term community ownership of LNRs
- Facilitate projects which will benefit those with mobility or learning difficulties
- Encourage new communities and groups to experience LNRs

### 7.2 Achievements compared to original targets

We have noted above that the importance of employing CLOs was emphasised by applicants and recognised by the grants award team and panel. The funds allocated to this aspect of the grants was increased from an anticipated 50% of the available monies to 63%, with the result that, overall, 89 CLOs were employed, 43 above the original target of 46. The employing organisation was responsible for overseeing the work and managing priorities with the CLO, in line with the Wildspace! contract.

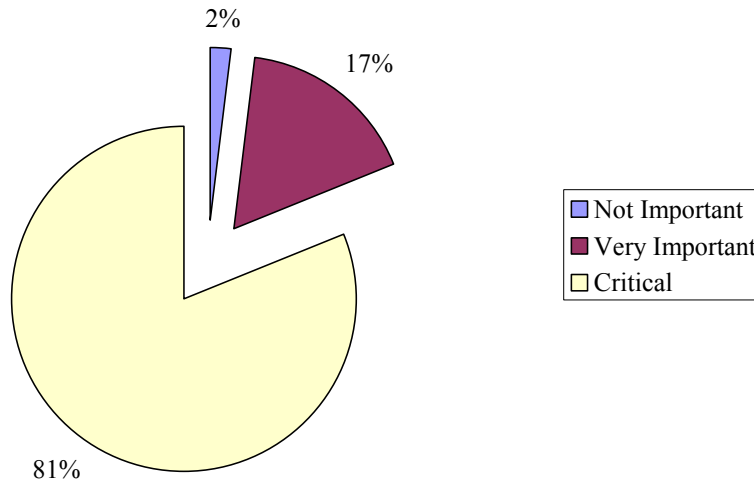
It became clear in the responses to our questionnaires and interviews that this aspect of the Wildspace! scheme was the one most appreciated by grantees. It is still quite unusual for grant schemes to emphasise the creation of posts and this was identified as the scheme's unique selling point. The success of this approach is shown and discussed below.

### 7.3 Achievements compared to priorities

In our questionnaire to all grantees, we asked how important to the success of their projects the employment of a CLO was. Of 49 responses from projects with a CLO, seven did not answer this question. Of the 42 who did, the responses were as follows:

	<b>Not important</b>	<b>Fairly important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Critical</b>
<b>In your opinion how important to the success of your project was the employment of a CLO?</b>	1 (2%)	0	7 (17%)	34 (81%)

**Importance of a CLO to a project's success**



We asked respondents to comment on why this was, or was not, important. Their comments appear in full in Appendix 8 and a representative selection appears below:

Comment	Organisation
Post allowed an officer to concentrate full time on the LNR project which raised their profile within the council and local communities - able to produce detailed management plans by raising internal and external funding - forming Friends of Groups - encouraging use by schools.	Mansfield District Council
Without CLO employment funding the CC would not have considered taking on Wildspace! Scheme - due largely to lack of staff to implement capital only project.	Lincolnshire County Council
Financially it allowed time to be spent developing and delivering education on our LNRs - goes hand in hand with management of urban nature reserves as they are as much about people as wildlife	Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire (formally Environ)
Renaissance of nature reserves in Lewisham would not have been possible without CLO involvement - ongoing impetus to support volunteers and user groups	London Borough of Lewisham
Current staff levels could not have carried out the amount of community development and running of events.	London Borough of Camden
Work outlined in grant could not have been achieved without CLO to implement it - engage with local people and be point of contact for the reserves - useful as neutral arbitrator between divided opinions in a reserve. The number of reserves and volume of work needed to bring reserves to a good accessible standard is such that it is unlikely a capital or smaller revenue grant alone would have been effective.	Castle Morpeth Borough Council

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
CLO very important as no resources available before to have someone concentrating solely on LNRs - able to engage with local communities , enable habitat enhancement and increase awareness about the sites	North Tyneside Council
Existing staff did not have time to pursue the declaration of LNRs	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Liverpool CC had no funding to develop LNRs, therefore funding for CLO made project possible -also able to attract other sources of funding to get things going - bringing external money into the city made the project more attractive to the council.	The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside / Liverpool
Work that the project began and ran over 3 years became very high profile within the local authority - succeeded in raising profile of nature reserves and facilitating community involvement in site management - had positive effect on council's decision re continuation of community ranger post at end of project	Lewes District Council

This is very convincing demonstration of the importance of CLOs to the success of projects. It should be borne in mind, though, that many of the responses were from people initially, or still, employed as CLOs and it is probable that this would have influenced perceptions and the responses given.

We asked interviewees if there were ways in which the effectiveness of CLOs could have been improved. In the context of the role being regarded as successful, the following points were made:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No security in job – this was distracting towards the end of grant</li> <li>• Longer period of funding would have been better (x3)</li> <li>• Induction pack would have helped giving details of scheme and project</li> <li>• Wildspace! email group was very helpful in reducing isolation – could have been there from the start</li> <li>• More could have been done to reduce isolation (x2)</li> <li>• External support was slow coming</li> <li>• Training from EN about LNRs and engaging communities (x3)</li> <li>• More capital funding so time not wasted in securing other funding (x3)</li> <li>• More support in practical matters – funding, education, marketing, promotion – any of these could have been full-time</li> <li>• Being full-time rather than part-time</li> <li>• Lower reporting requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term funding – can take two years to get rolling (x2)</li> <li>• Some projects over-ambitious</li> <li>• Ideally five or six years' funding</li> <li>• Welcome pack</li> <li>• Replacement staff need help</li> <li>• Better networks to nurture young and inexperienced staff</li> <li>• Move agenda on to green infrastructure and PPG17 quality issues</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer-term funding</li> <li>• More resources to deliver capital items</li> <li>• Conference held once, perhaps should have been annual</li> <li>• Start-up pack</li> <li>• Better networks</li> </ul>

We also asked in interviews whether respondents thought the local authority was the right organisation to employ and administer the work of CLOs. The responses were mostly in favour, although there were some mixed feelings, as follows:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council owns enough land and in key areas to make it worthwhile</li> <li>• Local authorities know how to make bids</li> <li>• Lots of political support within local authority</li> <li>• Employment conditions are better in local authorities (x2)</li> <li>• Have to overcome some communities' hostility to the council (x2)</li> <li>• Worked well (x4)</li> <li>• Local authorities tend to push people onto other work – other organisations more focused on wildlife</li> <li>• Local authorities have economies of scale and offer support in nature conservation sections and other facilities</li> <li>• CLOs well placed in local authorities alongside understaffed ranger services</li> <li>• Pros outweigh the cons</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly local authorities are appropriate but sometimes other groups like Groundwork or BTCV can lead – but their quality varies from place to place</li> <li>• Local authorities vary in their capacity and ability – CLOs better housed with organisation with nature conservation as its focus if they have the admin capacity</li> <li>• Local authority have the community role central to their responsibilities but funding is too affected by national government and capping</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLOs in other organisations have benefited from independence but LNRs harder to get designated</li> <li>• Wildlife trusts are strong on community involvement</li> <li>• Background of CLO has a big impact – two different approaches, from community development and nature conservation backgrounds and this might affect where they should be employed</li> <li>• Where the CLO fits within local government is important and this varies around the country</li> <li>• CLOs experienced easier networking in local authorities</li> </ul>

We wanted to know if local authority reorganisation, restructuring or budget cuts had affected projects. Generally Wildspace! funding was viewed as external and untouchable but there were a few reported difficulties from interviewees, as follows:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive effects only – when 23 months ended the lead person was promoted and the temporary CLO post was made permanent</li> <li>• Council is reorganising but short of resources – CLO post has been retained through temporary extensions – it is hoped resources will be found to make it permanent</li> <li>• Wildspace! budget can't be cut because it is external funding</li> <li>• At the start staff movements created difficulties</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local authorities did not have to find too much match-funding for the grant</li> <li>• One local authority had designated lots of LNRs without following the guidelines and therefore had to do them all again</li> <li>• One post was made difficult through reorganisation which led to budget problems</li> <li>• Other than officer time the local authority made little input</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There has been uncertainty for some projects but as money has been committed upfront there is little threat</li> <li>• Majority of CLO posts have been secured through alternative funding</li> </ul>

We asked grantees whose projects had employed CLOs whether their roles would continue after the grant period expired. Of 60 respondents who employed CLOs, 37 (62%) said they would and 23 (38%) said they would not. In interviews we asked people's views on what would become of CLOs after grants have expired. Their comments were generalised but suggested that for the most part the role of CLO would continue:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now permanent officer with wider responsibilities (x4)</li> <li>• Temporary extensions of post</li> <li>• New external funding secured for post</li> <li>• On secondment from wildlife trust and will return when funding expires</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About half will be subsumed into countryside or greenspace management (x4)</li> <li>• Some stop-gapped, some stop dead (x2)</li> <li>• Controlling anti-social behaviour work will cease</li> <li>• Offers a way into conservation work even if temporary</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some will be absorbed into departments, some will find additional funding, and some will leave</li> <li>• Majority of CLO posts have been secured through alternative funding</li> </ul>

We asked grantees in what capacity the CLO role would continue after the grant expired. Again it was clear that often the posts were brought into the mainstream work of the host organisation, usually with a wider remit than under the Wildspace! scheme. The full responses are shown in Appendix 9. Some examples of how the CLO post has developed are shown below:

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Building on success of Wildspace! - taking principles of community involvement in LNRs and other green spaces across Cambs and Peterborough - assisting community groups to set up wildlife rich green spaces	The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough
Work with local people and groups on the designation, development, management and promotion of existing and potential LNRs	Cambridge County Council
As CLO role (managing and designating LNRs, educational activities, community involvement etc) plus added responsibility representing the Council at County and District Environmental Forums, organising the Council side of the annual Canal, Community and Environment Fair, as the main contact for the County Wildlife Sites, etc	Three Rivers District Council
CLO chose to leave of own accord. Hope to appoint a Biodiversity Officer - similar role	Harlow District Council
Working with Friends of Groups, raising profile of LNR sites, events programme and subsequent PR, encourage greater responsible use of sites, educational and recreational use, LNR management, raise internal council and external funding to increase biodiversity and deliver management plans.	Mansfield District Council
Job share with co-ordinator in order to stay working for the Trust.	London Borough of Hackney
Responsible for Nature conservation across the borough	London Borough of Lewisham

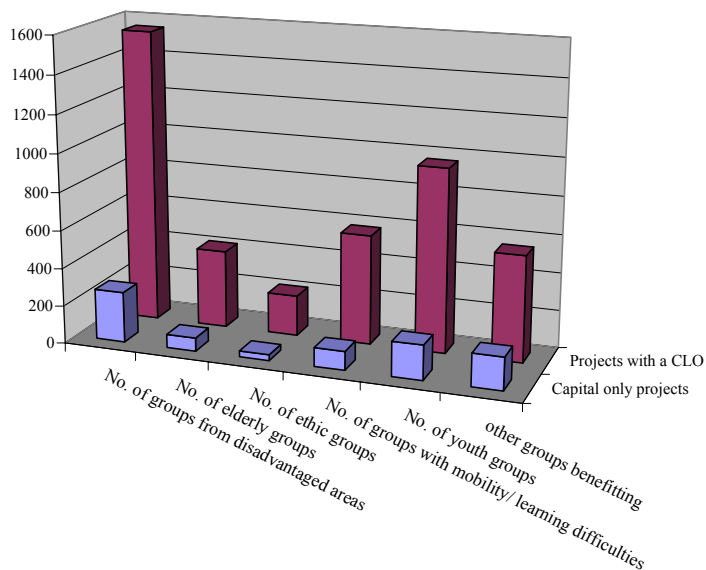
Comment	Organisation
Manage council owned countryside sites inc LNRs for people and wildlife, provide biodiversity and protected species advice to colleagues and public, develop and deliver events programme, countryside projects, develop and maintain the LNR network.	South Tyneside Council
Build upon the successes of the Wildspace! Funded Next to Nature Project in engaging local communities, particularly those in areas of social deprivation and/or who lack access to the countryside, in the care, management and appreciation of LNRs.	Gateshead Council
Continuation of Wildspace! Role - same contract and aims - enhancement of LNR sites, involvement of volunteers, working with friends groups etc. Present funding until Mar 07 but further 3 year bids submitted	The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside / Liverpool City Council
Support the management and development of 4 existing LNRs - co-ordinate designation of 5th site - work with Salford Ranger Team to support local groups, develop opportunities for voluntary involvement, events, activities, education programme.	Salford City Council
Same job description but with new funders – Heritage Lottery Fund and Wren Landfill tax credits	Halton Borough Council
Full time, permanent role managing Link Up with Nature - the environmental education project set up during the Wildspace! Scheme.	Elmbridge Borough Council
Nature in the city project - 2 yr project funded by Your Heritage (HLF) and Neighbourhood Renewal. Focus on engaging communities with 6 sites of natural heritage in Bristol , all are or will be LNRs	Bristol City Council
The role has been funded for a further year by the County Council whilst we seek grant funding to continue the post on a longer term basis. We have widened the remit of the CLO to cover all Countryside service sites.	Worcestershire County Council
Development Ranger for the Shire Brook Valley and 4 other woodland sites in the area.	Sheffield City Council
Lead on facilitating community involvement helping to deliver site management with specific reference to LNRs - identifying and developing new target audiences with specific reference to Council's core priority target groups - work with Education Officer to deliver schools environmental education workshops - work with team leader, sites and access in recruiting and development of voluntary ranger service.	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

It can be seen from the responses received that not only was the work of CLOs valued in respect of the Wildspace! scheme there was also a marked raised awareness of the wider gains to be made in respect of community engagement and nature conservation gains. In a way it could be said that the Wildspace! scheme helped generate new or increased activities in host organisations, resulting in a higher profile for the work and the creation of new staff establishment. However, some of the new posts created still depend on the availability of external funding to enable activity to continue.

### 7.3.1 The role of CLOs in facilitating community participation in the management and development of LNRs

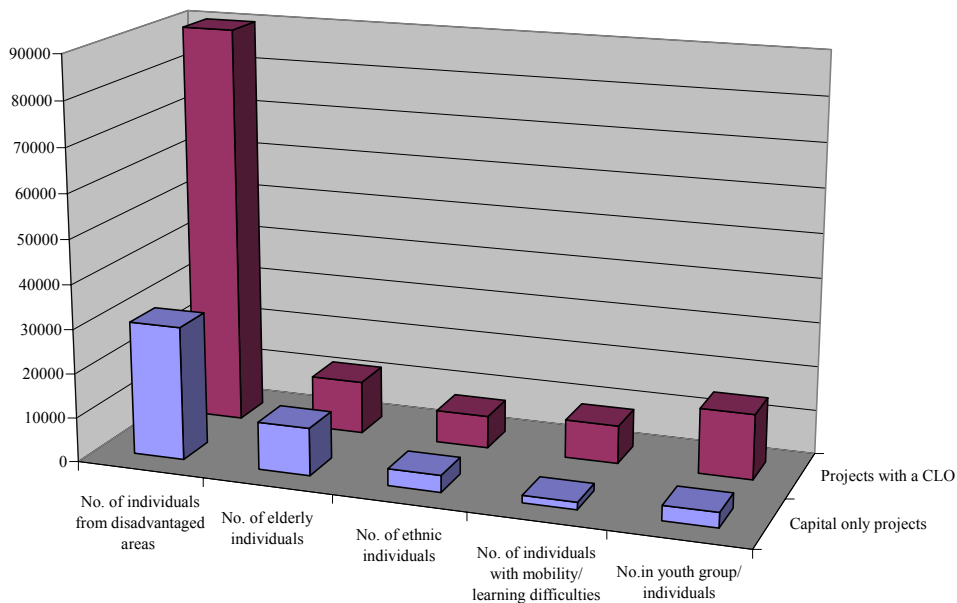
Figures from English Nature's 'Beneficiaries Spreadsheet', which was compiled from the regular reports of grantees, support the view that CLOs made a measurable and decisive difference in encouraging groups to visit LNRs, as below.

**Visits by groups to projects**



The effect was evident across all groups, especially those from disadvantaged areas, but was particularly marked in the cases of traditionally hard-to-reach groups: the elderly, ethnic minorities, people with mobility and/or learning difficulties and young people.

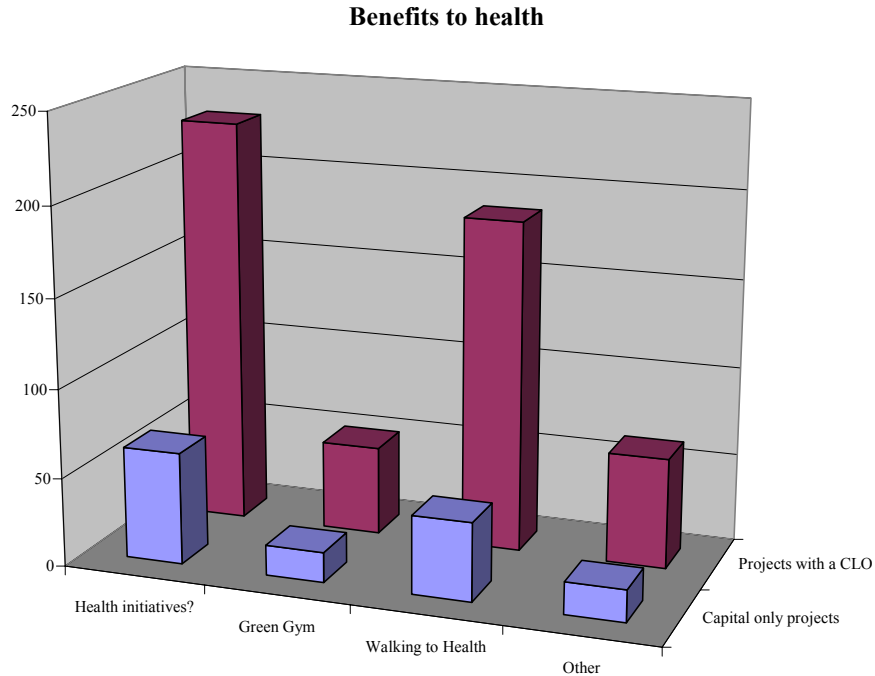
**Visits by individuals to projects**



The benefits of CLOs also were also demonstrated in attracting hard-to-reach individuals but a comparison with the previous chart shows clearly that disproportionately more disadvantaged

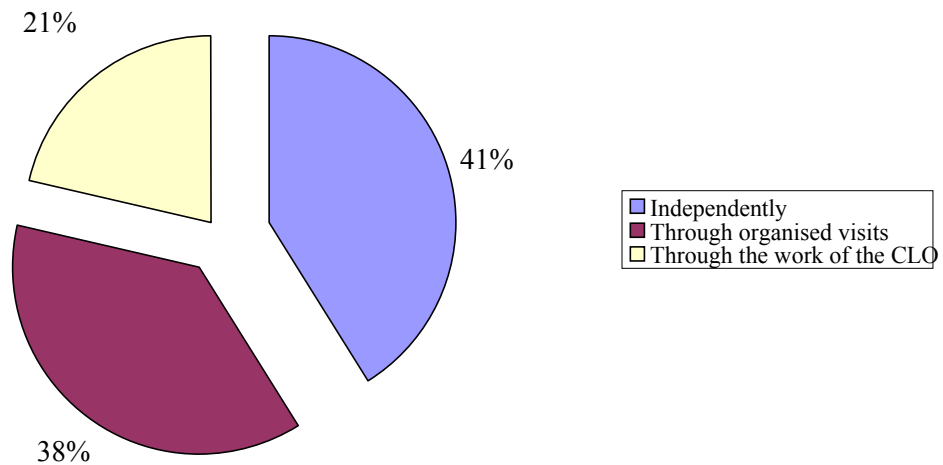
members of communities are encouraged to visit if they come in groups. This is particularly true of people with mobility and/or learning difficulties and young people.

Similarly the health benefits of LNRs were more fully exploited in projects with CLOs than those without, as shown below, with health walks being the most popular benefit:



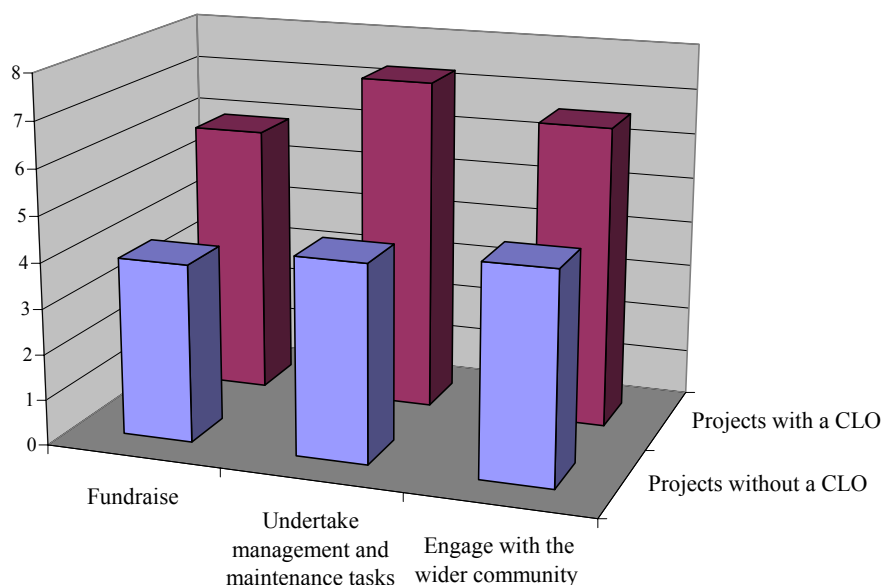
We asked if new visitor groups and/or individuals continued to use the LNRs after the completion of the Wildspace! grant project, and to distinguish whether this occurred independently, through organised visits or through the work of CLOs. All replied that they did and the most common response was that they continued to do so through all the mechanisms specified, the results being as below:

**Do new visitor groups/individuals continue to use the LNRs?**



We have already shown the importance of CLOs to the continuing success of Friends Groups and voluntary groups in sustaining LNRs. As a reminder, this is what our research showed:

**Q10). Ability of volunteer/friends groups with and without a CLO**



As well as the clear benefits of CLOs in encouraging groups and individuals to visit, enjoy and participate in LNRs we asked a range of questions aimed at determining how successful CLOs had been in facilitating various LNR improvements. The results are shown below:

How successful CLOs have been in facilitating these improvements?		
a	physical access (paths, entrances etc.)	75.6%
b	intellectual access (interpretation, leaflets, events, guided tours etc)	80.2%
c	educational opportunities for local schools	75.0%
d	educational opportunities for the public	76.9%
e	improved friends/volunteer groups	78.7%
f	inter-departmental working within local authorities	66.0%
g	partnership working with other organisations	73.9%

### 7.3.2 The effectiveness of CLOs in fostering inter-departmental working within local authorities

We asked grantees to supply details of **inter-departmental working within local authorities**. Respondents noted working with colleagues in a wide range of local authority services and departments as follows:

- Leisure, Legal, Communications and Properties and Facilities
- Community and Museums
- Drainage, Education, Highways, Legal, Property
- Parks, Cleansing, Housing, Urban Regeneration, Planning and Development Control, Community Safety (ASB Unit), Environmental Health.
- Various County Council departments, district, town and parish councils
- Lewisham Parks Dept, Green Scene, Lewisham Healthy Walks co-ordinator – London Borough of Greenwich rangers and Parks and Open Spaces Dept
- Housing, Street Environment
- Engineering, Development Control, Asset Management, Building Control, Forward Planning, Grounds Maintenance, Cleansing, Community Safety, Youth Service, Youth Offending Service.
- Development Control, Property Services, Community Based Services, Local Environmental Services, Finance, Legal and Corporate.
- Engineering Services, Regeneration, Leisure, Housing
- Regeneration, Environmental Protection Unit, Development Control.
- Grounds Maintenance, Wagon Ways, Rights of Way, Education, Cleansing, Park Wardens and neighbourhood wardens
- Parks and Countryside
- Leisure and Culture, Planning
- Parks and Countryside, Highways, Estates
- Streetscene
- Environmental Quality, Community Development, Planning, Young People
- Community Open Spaces, Family Learning, community facilitation with other ethnic groups (South Gloucestershire Asian Project, South Gloucestershire Chinese Community Project), Highways, Public Rights of Way Dept, Young Offenders Team, Youth Clubs and Youth Workers.
- Parks, Arts Development, Rights of Way, Sport and Active Leisure, Education.
- Planning, Leisure, Community, Museums
- Corporate Equalities Board, Youth Service, Arts and Events Service, Local Education Authority, Social Services, Bromsgrove District Council
- Boroughs of Telford and Wrekin
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Streetscene, Events Team
- Environmental Maintenance Services, Planning, Tourism

- Press Dept, Planning, Printing, Grounds Maintenance
- Planning Dept, Street Scene
- Planning Dept, Regeneration, Parks and Streetscene, Legal Services, Schools and Children's Services, Highways (Rights of Way), Waste Management, Chief Executive, Press Office
- Parks, Legal, Committee Services, Community Outreach, Countryside, Forestry, Street Cleansing
- Neighbourhood Services, Transportation, Legal and Democratic, Community Safety
- Neighbourhood Pride, Countryside
- Sports Development, Social Services, Education
- Commercial Service, IT, Events Officer, Countryside, Sports

### 7.3.3 The effectiveness of CLOs in attracting and working with a wide range of partners

CLOs also proved their value in attracting and working with a wide range of partners, including the organisations below, as specified by our respondents:

- **Local Authorities:** Unitary Councils, County Councils, District Councils, Town Councils, Parish Councils
- **Local Authority Functions:** Development Trusts, Countryside Management Services, Social Services
- **Government and Non-Government Agencies:** English Nature, Environment Agency, New Deal, Forestry Commission, Countryside Agency, English Heritage Local Strategic Partnerships, Sure Start
- **Environmental groups:** BTCV, RSPB, Groundwork, Wildlife Trusts, Biodiversity Partnership, Biodiversity Action Plan Partnerships, Community Forests, Greenwood, Jurassic Coast Team River Projects, Froglife, Buglife, Badger Groups, Hawk & Owl Trust Bat Groups, Butterfly Conservation, Magical Meadows, City Farms, Woodland Trust
- **Health groups:** National Health Service, Health Walks, Green Gym, Primary Care Trusts, Disability Groups, Local Care Centres, Mental Health Support Groups
- **Community Groups:** residents & tenants associations, conservation volunteers, community development associations, Millennium Volunteers
- **Educational bodies:** schools, colleges, agricultural colleges
- **Young people's groups:** youth groups, play workers
- **Private sector:** Elveden Estates, Business in the Community, Lafarge, Voda, Orange, Proctor & Gamble, Prudential, Cemex Aggregates
- **Charities:** Richmond Fellowship, Rotary Club, Lions, Sherwood Forest Trust, National Trust, Britain in Bloom, Princes Trust, Halifax Scientific Society
- **Offender's groups:** Probation & Community Service, Phoenix House, Prison Service
- **Funders:** Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund
- **Others:** Sustrans, National Farmers Union, Police

### 7.3.4 Projects which benefit areas of urban and rural deprivation

This is discussed in 5.3.1 above. The main points were:

- The Wildspace! scheme comfortably exceeded its 70% targets (awards to deprived areas), awarding grants totalling £5,721,375 to 124 projects (150% of priority).
- There was a consequent under-provision for the 30% targets (awards outside deprived areas), £1,271,900 being awarded to 45 projects (79% of proposal).

### 7.3.5 Projects that enable long-term community ownership or adoption of LNRs

In our survey we asked grantees if projects had enabled long-term community ownership or adoption of LNRs: 68 of 77 respondents answered and 75% said yes and 25% said no. The full responses are shown in Appendix 10. Below is a selection of respondents’ comments which illustrate the impact of the Wildspace! scheme in this respect:

Comment	Organisation
While the Woodland Trust continues to own the sites the voluntary groups are heavily involved in the management of them – this has brought about a sense of community ownership.	The Woodland Trust
Local communities able to develop a sense of ownership and Gateshead Young Carers were able to adopt their site.	Gateshead Council
Byerley Road Friends of Group has active, committed membership demonstrating a strong sense of ownership - led to development of management plan with CLO - seeking further funding to enhance project further.	Sedgefield Borough Council
Helped further reinforce the legitimacy of the group - lease from the council has been significantly extended from 10 to 25 yrs	Clara Vale Conservation Group
Friends of Holywell Dene and Rising Sun have set up annual membership fees to raise money and help perpetuate their work	North Tyneside Council
All LNRs remain primarily under the control of Local Authority with community groups participation	Bury Metropolitan Bury Council
Long term security of site ensured through parish council ownership - plans underway for neighbouring site in separate ownership, to be established as an informal extension to LNR	Sonning Parish Council
Community groups to continue after CLO with some support from council	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Lots of enthusiasm but no cash	Foxglove Covert LNR

It is clear from the responses received that the concept of “ownership” is generally understood to mean “a sense of ownership” rather than any legal entitlement.

### 7.3.6 Projects which benefit those with mobility or learning difficulties

In our survey we asked grantees if their grant had facilitated projects which benefited people with mobility or learning difficulties: 70 of 77 respondents answered and 77% said they had and 23% said they had not. The full responses are shown in Appendix 11. Below are some typical comments which give an insight into the range of benefits projects produced.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Sites subject to thorough access audit and recommendations acted upon where possible to provide access for all including provision of surfaced paths, removal of barriers, installation of wheelchair accessible dipping platforms and tactile arts features. Diverse programme of activities including practical conservation management, formal recreation and education provided for people with learning difficulties, special needs, and emotional / behavioural difficulties.	Gateshead Council
Installation of new footpath at Ferryhill Carrs has enabled people less mobile to access most areas of the reserve.	Sedgefield Borough Council
Riverside path widened and resurfaced in Scotch Gill woods for wheelchair access - worked with special needs schools and other mobility or learning difficulties groups come to Cresswell Dunes and Scotch Gill without CLO help - accessible car parks and paths.	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
Project facilitated people with learning difficulties as regular volunteers carrying out management tasks. An orienteering course for individuals with mobility/learning difficulties installed at swallow pond - 'Trail-O' and 'Makaton'	North Tyneside Council
Several groups of children with special needs have taken part in outdoor lessons on LNRs.	Elmbridge Borough Council
Many sites benefited from improved access eg stiles replaced by kissing gates, access audits in conjunction with South Gloucestershire Disabled Action Group. Events have included working with adults with learning difficulties.	South Gloucestershire Council
New bridges and boardwalks created all ability route	South Somerset District Council
Access improvements - access audit should help lever funds in the future	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Sixpower Countryside Project enabled people with leaning difficulties to use the reserve as a fun way to learn, understand and enjoy nature and along with Selworthy Special Needs School helped to develop a nature trail at Children's Wood LNR using 'Total Community Posts'. Benches provided on some sites to assist visitors with limited mobility.	Taunton Deane Borough Council
All abilities access paths created in Atkinsons Warren through Countryside Stewardship Scheme - new boardwalk bid for Frodingham – Friends of Sawcliffe (young people with autism) - students with learning difficulties from Grimsby College helped with reed planting at Waters' Edge	North Lincolnshire Council
Creation of accessible routes - good quality footpaths.	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
All sites have hard surface paths allowing access to all - Green Works (working with people with learning difficulties) assist on all sites doing different management tasks. St Nicholas Fields is equipped with facilities for regular volunteers with learning difficulties.	City of York Council

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 special needs schools targeted for practical conservation work</li> <li>• Many children with Downs Syndrome enjoyed hard physical work</li> <li>• Targeted groups working with people with learning difficulties and behavioural problems – hard work, but rewarding</li> <li>• Worked with “Greenwork” for groups with learning and mobility difficulties</li> <li>• Special needs group engaged in moth trapping and charcoal burning – have to stay on LNR overnight</li> <li>• Group of people with autism undertook photography project</li> <li>• Accessibility audits carried out for all LNRs to comply with DDA</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special needs groups targeted (x2)</li> <li>• Access trails created (x2)</li> <li>• Projects generally now more aware of the issues</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of work done with these groups</li> <li>• Regular half-morning sessions held in some projects</li> <li>• One group produced a CD of sounds in the LNR</li> </ul>

It has been a marked feature of the scheme that there has been a great deal of involvement with special needs groups and a heightened awareness of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Interviews have confirmed that there is considerable demand from groups working with people with mobility and learning difficulties and the success of Wildspace! in engaging with them and offering opportunities to become actively involved cannot be overstated.

## 8 Research findings - to promote the use of LNRs for environmental education

### 8.1 Targets and priorities

**Target:** to give grants towards the development of two LNRs per region as centres of excellence for environmental education from which others will learn.

**Priorities:**

- Provide for young people disadvantaged by lack of access to natural open space
- Show innovation and good practice
- Provide for those with mobility or learning difficulties
- Offer training, learning and personal development opportunities

### 8.2 Achievements compared to original targets

Two projects per region included the development of LNRs as centres of excellence for environmental education (see 5.2.4 above).

### 8.3 Achievements compared to priorities

Environmental education has been integral to Wildspace! projects in the sense of offering and enabling individuals and groups to become involved in nature conservation activity. Data from grantees show that the most highly rated social benefit (60% frequency in responses) arising from the scheme was *greater awareness and understanding; opportunities for education, learning, training and developing skills, increased interest* (see 9.1). Various aspects of lifelong learning and other educational opportunities were successfully facilitated by CLOs. Grantees scored these aspects as follows:

How successful CLOs have been in facilitating these improvements	
intellectual access (interpretation, leaflets, events, guided tours etc)	80.2%
educational opportunities for local schools	75.0%
educational opportunities for the public	76.9%

#### 8.3.1 Projects that promoted environmental education to the public

In our survey we asked grantees if projects had promoted environmental education to the public: 68 of 77 respondents answered and 97% said yes and only 3% said no. The full responses are shown in Appendix 12. Below is a selection of comments which give a flavour of the range of educational events and activities offered in different projects.

Comment	Organisation
Family events (walks, bat and moth nights, open days etc), school activities and out of school educational activities have all been run at the LNRs	Three Rivers District Council

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Annual regular scavenger hunts organised during LNR week with children in the local community using Wildspace resources packs - Easter egg hunt run by volunteers where over 50 children participated	Hertfordshire County Council
Through education events on sites - working with Friends of Groups - production of education and awareness raising material eg leaflets.	Mansfield District Council
Designing new leaflets and a green envelope to advertise free sessions to schools.	London Borough of Hackney
Successful launch event on 14th Aug 2002 promoted sites - self guided leaflet produced - way marked trail installed - interpretations panel ensured to educate the public and give information about the woods.	The Woodland Trust
CLO responsibility for furthering Islington Ecology Centres environmental education programme - developed a number of site specific educational packs - educational workshops on species ID etc were also organised - projects set up in training around particular aspects of conservation eg horticulture and habitat management - interpretative leaflets produced to improve visitors learning experience.	London Borough of Islington
Through conservation workdays and other events including guided walks, bat walks, river surveys. Users were educated in the significance of LNRs and wildlife	London Borough of Lewisham
In addition to outreach work with schools, CLO undertook a range of events which enabled the local public to understand, appreciate and participate in wildlife conservation.	RSPB
Over 250 public walks, talks and events run on LNRs	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Education packs written, printed and distributed for each LNR - CLO organised and ran many educational events for schools, community groups and the general public	North Lincolnshire Council

### **8.3.2 Projects that provided for young people disadvantaged by lack of access to natural open space**

A particular social benefit of the Wildspace! scheme arose from prioritising projects that provided for young people disadvantaged by lack of access to natural open space. Of our 77 respondents, 69 of whom responded to this area of enquiry, 78% said their projects did meet this need and 22% said theirs did not. The responses are shown in full in Appendix 12 and a representative selection appears below:

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Site regularly used by young people to play and explore in	Hertfordshire CC Countryside Management Service
Young people involved in the events - main aspect of the grants	Epping Forest District Council
Working with schools and encouraging those in deprived areas to visit the sites - working with excluded pupils.	Mansfield District Council
The whole basis of project was focussed on Leicester's lack of access to natural open space and on getting urban children onto green spaces	Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire (formally Environ)

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ruffet and Big Wood is on the edge of large working class housing estate and provides valuable public amenity for local residents including young people - used by school children for going to and from school - both sides had paths cut to enhance natural open space and facilitate access for all pedestrians whilst keeping horses and motor cycles out - local community have a safe LNR within walking distance.	The Woodland Trust
CLO worked with children on particular features to be incorporated into the reserves such as seating areas - an after schools programme, 'the green team' was run to develop the idea of junior warden with primary school children in the upper years.	London Borough of Islington
Gateshead Youth Offending Team - Gateshead Young Carers Group - Teenagers 2 Work - all actively engaged in project.	Gateshead Council
LNRs sited in areas within the 'indices of multiple deprivation' -educational / awareness raising events encouraged access by young people eg carrot club, scouts, cubs and primary schools - millennium volunteers.	Sedgefield Borough Council
Local 'watch' groups, youth offenders, Scouts, Brownies and other youth groups benefited from provision of dedicated green space through events, practical tasks and training run through Wildspace	North Tyneside Council
Up to 20 school visits a year were conducted by the Wildspace Officer, averaging 400 pupils a year. Generally speaking, most pupils had not visited LNRs or similar areas of natural open space.	Halton Borough Council
Schools in socially deprived areas were successfully targeted	Elmbridge Borough Council

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful in a wealthy area with socially deprived parts</li> <li>• Activities linked to Play Scheme and school holidays – 15 children for whole day</li> <li>• New LNR in deprived area with educational activities</li> <li>• Young people targeted in flyers for activities in Easter and summer holidays</li> <li>• Special days for teenagers and youth clubs</li> <li>• Teenagers like doing manual work as they can show off</li> <li>• Boys Clubs and Army Cadets – like rough work and slashing and burning</li> <li>• Younger children like planting</li> <li>• Work on LNRs give young people confidence and awareness of personal safety</li> <li>• Targeted local schools to bring in children from neighbouring housing estates</li> <li>• Events and activities best way to attract young people</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graffiti removal project aimed at young people</li> <li>• Area team targeted areas of deprivation as these areas tend to be under-resourced</li> <li>• Green Gym and Youth Groups participated in practical work parties</li> <li>• Continued with Youth Offenders Programme</li> <li>• Junior Management Groups set up</li> <li>• Children on housing estates provided for</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very successful with younger groups to age 11</li> <li>• Teenagers more difficult but some success</li> <li>• Strong Friends of Groups help get young people involved</li> <li>• Some projects have regular groups for different ages and some have Youth Committees</li> <li>• Duke of Edinburgh Awards have linked to some LNRs</li> </ul>

As well as the expected successes from targeting school groups, there have been considerable efforts in engaging with less captive youth groups. Responses indicate that the easiest way to attract young people is through activities and events but the difficulties of attracting older children of 11 years old and above seem to remain. The greatest success with the older ages have come from targeting organised groups like the Scouts, Guides, Army Cadets and Boys’ Clubs – the more disaffected youths tend not to be ‘joiners-in’ but there seem to be opportunities for exploiting fitness and strength, particularly amongst males, and this area of activity could benefit from a coordinated approach.

**8.3.3 Projects that show innovation and good practice**

This topic is discussed in section 6.3.3 above.

**8.3.4 Provide for those with mobility or learning difficulties**

This topic is discussed in section 7.3.4 above.

**8.3.5 Projects that offer training, learning and personal development opportunities**

In our survey we asked grantees if projects had offered training, learning and personal development opportunities: 69 of 77 respondents answered and 87% said yes and only 13% said no. The full responses are shown in Appendix 13. Below is a selection of comments illustrating the range of training, learning and personal development opportunities provided.

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Volunteers received training ranging from first aid to strimmer use. Courses on wetland, woodland and grassland management organised and practical days such as hedge laying tech and wildflower ID	Three Rivers District Council
Training, learning and personal development ops organised for Friends of Group by CMS including practical skills such as removing sycamore saplings and improving path surfacing with woodchip - health and safety	Hertfordshire County Council
Training in environmental management provided for volunteers - BCTV involved in access improvements - 'Envirowork Lewisham' social enterprise for local unemployed, involved in remedial repair to sites and installation of interpretative signage	London Borough of Lewisham
Training opportunities on butterfly transect, survey for water voles, lay a hedge, pond management etc	South Tyneside Council
Training opportunities in practical conservation management for wide range of volunteers, students and work placements- 'weaving with wood' provided opportunities for personal development.	Gateshead Council
The project offered around 4-6 training sessions a year, on some aspect of species identification e.g. moths, beetles, birds etc	Halton Borough Council
First aid course for volunteers	Rye Nature Reserve
Forum allows people to post pictures of unrecognised species and ask for help - species recording generally through the website has promoted understanding and awareness amongst nature wardens	Brighton and Hove
Extensive work carried out with Youth Offending Teams to help rehabilitate young offenders.	Walsall MBC

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Members of voluntary groups are entitled to training. 'Woodlands Alive' event users able to try or learn something new e.g. woodland management techniques and crafts-art workshops were available at our multi-cultural picnic.	Worcestershire County Council
Butterfly recording	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Training in hedge laying, heathland management and coppicing for Friends of Groups	Stoke-on-Trent CC
Work experience for volunteers, some of which went on to gain employment in conservation sector.	Staffordshire Moorlands DC

Some additional comments from interviewees on this topic are shown below:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for volunteers – brush-cutters, grassland management, first aid, hedge-laying, fencing, path building (x5)</li> <li>• Modern apprenticeships</li> <li>• Task Force for young unemployed</li> <li>• BTCV helped with training – use of tools, tree identification, health and safety, machinery, pond management etc (x3)</li> <li>• CLO supported by Countryside Management Services who offered training</li> <li>• Opportunity to help write management plans</li> <li>• Work days with employees of local companies</li> <li>• No formal training courses but much ad hoc training in surveying and monitoring</li> <li>• Low uptake of IT and Office Management training – people preferred practical training</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in practice and theory was widespread (x4)</li> <li>• Encouragement of local art</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training in practical tasks and talks about habitat management</li> <li>• Voluntary groups taken to others sites to exchange skills and experience</li> <li>• Skills database set up</li> <li>• Green Gyms led to greater involvement</li> </ul>

By their very nature, LNRs offer a wide range of training, perhaps the most frequent but most understated of which is the increased confidence that comes from physical work and learning how to handle tools and machinery and be responsible for personal and group safety. Many respondents referred to this as being more important than the more structured training identified above.

## 9 The social and environmental impacts of Wildspace!

The evaluation was designed to examine two main effects:

- The social impact – including the benefits to local communities, increased community coherence and involvement in local environmental projects, educational opportunities, and the opportunity to partake in healthy volunteering pursuits
- The environmental impact – including the benefits to biodiversity, sustainability, land management and local environmental enhancements

### 9.1 The social impact of the Wildspace! scheme

We asked grantees what were, in their view, the greatest social benefits of LNRs arising from designation and grant support. Of the 77 responses to our survey, 68 grantees answered this question, three of which were not relevant. All 65 in this sample were very positive about the social benefits of the projects.

Because we wanted grantees to tell us *in their own words* what they considered to be the greatest social benefits of LNRs arising from designation we did not provide prompts in the form of tick boxes. A wide range of responses was received and, in order to analyse these, we used a keywords approach to identify the most and least commonly recognised benefits as shown below. It is important to note that these were identified by the grantees themselves as the *most important* – therefore the identification of certain benefits in particular projects does not mean that other benefits were not also realised.

Their comments are shown in full in Appendix 14.

<b>Greatest social benefits arising from LNR designation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Information from 65 grantees</b>		
Greater awareness and understanding; opportunities for education, learning, training and developing skills, increased interest	39	60%
Improved community cohesion; sense of ownership; pride	24	37%
Community involvement, engagement and volunteering	21	32%
Participating in events, activities and practical work parties	15	23%
Establishment and strengthening of Friends and other community groups	15	23%
More use of LNRs by local community	15	23%
Opportunities to improve health; exercise, recreation, green gym, well-being, enjoyment	12	18%
Improved access, accessibility and interpretation	12	18%
Greater social inclusion	12	18%
Better publicity and promotion; raised profile of LNRs	10	15%
Better communication and increased tolerance; making new friends	8	12%
Involvement of young people	7	11%

<b>Greatest social benefits arising from LNR designation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Information from 65 grantees</b>		
Improvements to local area and quality of life	6	9%
Increased individual self-esteem and confidence; sense of achievement	6	9%
Opportunity to develop partnerships	5	8%
Involving people with special needs	3	5%
Providing a safe public environment	3	5%

The comments above demonstrate convincingly that the benefits to local communities, increased community cohesion and involvement in local environmental projects, educational opportunities, and the opportunity for personal development through participating in healthy volunteering pursuits were fully realised.

## 9.2 The environmental impact of the Wildspace! scheme

We asked grantees what were, in their view, the greatest environmental benefits of LNRs arising from designation and grant support. Of the 77 responses to our survey, 60 grantees answered this question. All were very positive about the environmental benefits of the projects.

Because we wanted grantees to tell us *in their own words* what they considered to be the greatest environmental benefits of LNRs arising from designation we did not provide prompts in the form of tick boxes. As with the social benefits of the scheme, a wide range of responses was received and, in order to analyse these, we again used a keywords approach to identify the most and least commonly recognised benefits as shown below. It is important to note that these were identified by the grantees themselves as the *most important* – therefore the identification of certain benefits in particular projects does not mean that other benefits were not also realised.

Their comments are shown in full in Appendix 15.

<b>Greatest environmental benefits arising from LNR designation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Information from 60 grantees</b>		
Introduction of active management, improved management and maintenance	35	58%
Statutory protection from development of wildlife sites	21	35%
Biodiversity gains and habitat creation	20	33%
Increased local authority commitment and support for the wildlife agenda	9	15%
Increased funding opportunities	6	10%
Capital improvements to LNRs	4	7%
Staff freed up to improve other sites	3	5%
Increased area of wildlife rich green space	3	5%
Encouraged more walking and cycling, reducing car use	1	2%

The comments above demonstrate convincingly that, in the view of grantees and in their own words, the benefits to biodiversity, land management and local environmental enhancement were fully realised.

### 9.2.1 Projects that improved the long-term future and/or sustainability of LNRs

We asked grantees whether projects had improved the long-term future and/or sustainability of LNRs. 66 grantees answered this question: 89% saying their projects had and 11% saying they had not. The full responses are shown in Appendix 16. Below is a selection of comments illustrating views of grantees on this topic:

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
LNRs better used by wider range of public - need to keep them in good condition has increased - profile raised	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
Community groups set up continue to play an active role in managing and promoting LNRs in the future - immediate future secured with the habitat and other improvements made.	North Tyneside Council
No real commitment to LNRs prior to appointment of CLO	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Sites previously unmanaged - now with 10 year management plans with council and community support - council undertaking maintenance work	The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside / Liverpool City Council
Long term management plans and policies combined with active management and partnerships with community through Friends of Groups and trusts have led to a sustainable long term future for LNRs	Lewes District Council
Improves our understanding of the quality of selected habitats (habitat monitoring) which will be used to effect management prescriptions	Brighton and Hove City Council
Undoubtedly the injection of Wildspace! Funds set the site up nicely for long-term sustainability - making it a cherished area for the local community	Sonning Parish Council
Helped kick start sustainable educational use of LNR sites by schools nearby.	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Increased profile of LNRs - involvement of local people will help achieve sustainability	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Increase in visitor numbers due to promotion of LNRs - visitor centre takings increased revenue for the BH Cons Group	British Waterways
Friends of Groups have adopted sites and raised awareness of importance to local authority	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

In interviews we asked what people thought would happen to the management of LNRs after the grants had expired. The responses were mostly positive, the feeling being that community groups would continue to manage sites with or without CLOs, but that those with continuing support and guidance from an officer would fare best.

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not affected – schools programme will continue</li> <li>• Pump-priming has resulted in new post being created so work will continue</li> <li>• If CLO post ended work would revert to Parks Dept and LNRs would decline</li> <li>• Other grants have been secured to maintain work – HLF ‘Your Heritage’ and Landfill Tax</li> <li>• LNRs will decline as council does not have the budget or expertise</li> <li>• Council is laying people off to save money and Friends of Groups can’t manage LNRs on their own</li> <li>• LNRs will be kept at improved standard</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some LNRs will continue to be managed from own resources of local authorities</li> <li>• One will decline, one at risk from uncertain local authority management and two safe in county council management</li> <li>• No source of future revenue funding is a problem but in effect volunteers will keep sites going, helped by management committees and plans</li> <li>• Depends on strength of local support</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority have a commitment from local authorities but priorities can change</li> <li>• Strong Friends of Groups are important but even these are subject to the loss of key individuals</li> <li>• Local authorities are not tied to future funding but management plans and management agreements help</li> <li>• They now have legal designations as LNRs and/or SSSIs so will continue to be maintained</li> </ul>

### 9.3 Contribution of Wildspace! to local and national policies and strategies

We wanted to know how the achievements of the Wildspace! scheme fitted within existing strategic and policy frameworks. 88% of our respondents said their projects had contributed and 12% said they had not. The full responses are shown in Appendix 17. Below is a selection of comments illustrating views of grantees on this topic.

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
BAP - Green Flag - walking the way to health - Greenwood community Forest	Nottingham City Council
Project has contributed to the local community (Local Strategic Partnership) strategy, Mansfield Nature Conservation Strategy, Nottinghamshire BAP.	Mansfield District Council
Production and implementation of BAP and other policies - enabled Nature Conservation Team to establish wider links locally and nationally by sitting on forums involved in policy making.	London Borough of Islington
Lewisham’s Biodiversity Action Plans, Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, Community, neighbourhood renewal, and cultural strategies.	London Borough of Lewisham
S Tyneside Environment Strategy, Durham BAP, Strategic Water Vole Recovery Plan etc.	South Tyneside Council
UK strategies including Sustainable Development, climate change, health, transport, economy, green space development, cleaner, greener, safer, planning guidance notes and open space needs assessments for Local Development Forums - local policies and strategies including country environment, Sedgfield BC green space, Durham BAP and Sedgfield BC local development framework.	Sedgfield Borough Council

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
National BAP and BAP UK - targets and objectives for habitats such as dune and lowland grassland, pond creations and species targets for harvest mouse, barn owl, red squirrel and bats	Castle Morpeth Borough Council
EN guidance of 1 LNR per 1000 people is now council policy.	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Contribution towards several local and national BAPs and Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)	Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Helped at local level and now sites are including in Unitary Development Plan	Salford City Council
Halton has reached the English Nature target on people per LNR hectare. Our figure is 1 hectare per 831 people.	Halton Borough Council
Site has become a valued good-practice example for community led small nature reserve establishment in the Berkshire area - project won Dorothy Morley Conservation Award for Community Projects in Berkshire in 2004 - described by judges as 'very inspirational' - visited by environmental professionals and volunteers from other projects to find out more about establishment and management of small community sites for nature conservation.	Sonning Parish Council
Bournemouth's Community Plan and Leisure Strategy, Dorset Biodiversity Strategy	Bournemouth Borough Council
Contributed to local Community strategies and influenced Council policy - eg new LAA targets.	South Gloucestershire Council
Element in the decision by the council to rearrange the street care portfolio - Liveability agenda and Tree Strategy	Gloucester City Council
LNRs are new to the agenda of the council	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
Designation and involvement of community in LNRs is a Stoke-on-Trent City Community and Natural Heritage Strategy policy. Staffordshire BAP	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Contributed to local policies on sustainability with regard to education provision.	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Has met local policies on improving access to greenspace and providing opportunities for physical activity eg health walks	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Tamworth's Local Strategic Partnership	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

#### **9.4 Additional points on the Wildspace! scheme**

In interviews we invited people to make any other points they wished about the scheme. The main points made were:

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should have been an exit strategy that enabled spare money to be fed back into topping up existing projects</li> <li>• Without it there would not have been more LNRs – now even more are in the pipeline</li> <li>• Email contacts and networks would have been welcomed earlier</li> <li>• Was a worthwhile scheme – would be no LNRs in city without it</li> <li>• Effective scheme – especially revenue funding element which made it easier to lever in capital funds</li> <li>• Timescale was too short (x4)</li> <li>• Needed more money, more time – so much to do</li> <li>• Allowed (London Borough) to come on in leaps and bounds – very successful in so many ways - people and wildlife</li> <li>• Very positive scheme, ran smoothly even though EN were ‘hands-off’</li> <li>• Very successful scheme has brought this into mainstream council work</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be continued – very successful scheme</li> <li>• Could have been more coordinated across other BIG/NOF schemes – eg Doorstep Greens, BTCV etc – one-stop shop might have been better – perhaps Natural England could do this</li> <li>• CLOs conference very useful and feedback was tremendous – CLOs liked feeling part of a bigger team – conference should have been an annual event</li> <li>• Scheme really made projects happen – was well thought out with clear parameters and targets which made decision-making easy</li> <li>• Limited pot meant some moderating of awards to get as many good projects as possible</li> <li>• Funding of posts was wholly appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong sense that the scheme had run well</li> <li>• Bureaucracy could have been better – reporting requirements felt to be onerous by some</li> </ul>

## 9.5 Impressions from site visits

We conducted site visits to twelve projects, two from each region, randomly selected in order to further validate the research. Many projects involved visits to more than one site and some were accompanied by CLOs and some conducted as “mystery shopper” visits. Our observations from the site visits are summarised below but it should be noted that some of the facets of good LNR management cannot easily be judged from a visit.

<b>Site visit reports – main points</b>	<b>Good practice</b>	<b>Poor practice</b>
<b>Quality of access and welcome</b>	Welcome boards and interpretation at entrances Vehicle barriers which permit disabled and pram access Well made level and clear paths Maintenance of sight-lines Waymarking within sites Good quality maps on boards Circular walks	No welcome signs Steps at one entrance to a potential cut-through site restricted access. Few directional or brown signs on highways. Small car-parks Concrete defenders at entrances to stop vehicles Overgrown sites inhibit some visitors Security issues around car-crime
<b>Quality of interpretation</b>	Disabled-friendly signs at low height and with large lettering Off-site interpretation including leaflets and websites Imaginative use of webcams Availability of DVDs	No on-site interpretation Information in English only in diverse multicultural area No interpretation of key site features

<b>Quality of implementation of capital works</b>	Paths, bridges, decking and fencing well constructed in robust but sympathetic and materials	
<b>Quality of management</b>	Sites clean and conspicuously cared for CLOs enthusiastic and knowledgeable Provision of hides Regular litter picking by volunteers	Fly-tipping on adjacent land not addressed
<b>Evidence of community involvement including hard-to-reach groups</b>	Leaflets in local facilities (leisure centres, libraries, tourist information centres etc) Posters advertising events and activities at entrances	
<b>Evidence of educational involvement and training</b>	Outdoor classrooms Webcams and websites for recording	
<b>Evidence of biodiversity gains</b>	Much standing and fallen dead timber Bird and bat nesting and roosting boxes Wide range of habitats and ecological niches Creation of habitat, eg reedbeds, ponds and wetlands	
<b>Good practice and innovation</b>		
<b>Any negative impressions</b>		Unwelcoming entrances Difficulties with travellers

## 10 Conclusions and recommendations

The Wildspace! scheme was an **outstanding success**, not only in comfortably meeting or exceeding its targets while consistently advancing its priorities, but also in realising wider social and environmental gains. It also realised these benefits, in our view, comparatively inexpensively and provided great value for money. Gains were made in the designation of LNRs, in biodiversity, in community engagement and volunteering, in promoting social coherence, in providing opportunities for environmental education, in training and personal development and for improved health and managed to do all these things in urban and rural areas of relative deprivation, while explicitly targeting hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups.

Our view that the scheme was a great success was amply borne out by everyone who responded to our questionnaire and participated in in-depth interviews. Criticisms of the scheme were very few and minor in character, being focused mainly on the scheme's immutable constraints: the timescale for funding (three years) being too short and insufficient funds to meet all capital needs; or on matters of process, principally some exasperation at the levels of reporting required. This view was expressed most forcefully by a grantee who had received a relatively small, capital-only grant, and it is possible that reporting requirements did not necessarily reflect the size of projects.

The principal mechanism of delivery, and critical to the scheme's success was the widespread employment of Community Liaison Officers to engage with communities, build capacity, arrange events and activities and to maintain support. This was the outstanding feature of the success of Wildspace! and was a particularly cost-effective way of realising the scheme's considerable gains.

### 10.1 Biggest challenges in delivering projects

We did ask respondents in interviews what were the biggest challenges they faced in delivering projects. Their views are shown below.

<b>Grantees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal issues, including staff changes</li> <li>• Poor inter-departmental communication in local authority</li> <li>• Difficult for new officer to come up to speed (x2)</li> <li>• Line management of CLO (2 part-time posts) was difficult because of existing pressures on manager</li> <li>• Lack of CLO continuity because of maternity leave</li> <li>• CLO job insecurity because of short-term funding</li> <li>• Many partners needed a lot of time for liaison</li> <li>• Hard to get schools on board initially despite brochures and presentation, finally cracked by approaching science departments direct</li> <li>• Funding for school transport was a problem after grant ran out</li> <li>• Trying to get interested people to actually come out – not many willing to actually do work</li> <li>• Lack of widespread support</li> <li>• Selling “nature” to 13-16 year olds</li> <li>• Tailoring project to National Curriculum</li> <li>• Cap on capital funding made it hard to make an impact early on and much time was wasted raising money from other sources for materials and tools</li> <li>• Too much work to run 3 LNR projects and maintain momentum (part-time post)</li> <li>• Too much work for a part-time post</li> <li>• Requirement for designation before funds available made it hard to bring sites to a high enough quality for designation</li> <li>• Generating community involvement and engaging hard-to-reach groups (x8)</li> <li>• Fund-raising difficulties (x2)</li> <li>• Project was already running so we had to tailor activities to meet the need of the Wildspace! scheme</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with a controversial industry (quarrying) meant we were seen as tied in with the “enemy” – local political issues meant it was hard to win over local communities</li> <li>• Very bureaucratic compared to relatively small capital-only grant</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match-funding difficult for local authorities</li> <li>• Setting up Friends of Groups and engaging with communities where no active group existed was very time consuming (x2)</li> <li>• Working with local authorities without dedicated officers was difficult</li> <li>• CLOs could be isolated within local authorities</li> <li>• Difficult for some projects to tick all the right boxes</li> <li>• Difficult to ensure applications from small groups were of sufficient quality</li> <li>• Short educational courses in school holidays were sometimes cancelled because of other competing activities</li> <li>• Timescale of grant too short for some projects</li> <li>• Difficulties in getting the hard-to-reach groups to come forward and tempting to go with middle class groups</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with extremely high demand – this meant some applications were trimmed to ensure targets were met</li> <li>• Conditions of scheme were hard to enforce in all projects</li> <li>• Difficult for a new manager to come up to speed</li> <li>• Ensuring claims were made on time</li> <li>• Ensuring all the required information was supplied</li> <li>• Transport and Health &amp; Safety issues biggest obstacles for schools</li> </ul>

Most of the difficulties encountered were beyond the scope of the grant-awarding bodies to affect but they do tend to highlight the relatively low level of capacity that exists in the green space and nature conservation sectors: many relate to structural pressures within host organisations and a general paucity of available resources, both human and financial, to support the Wildspace! projects and officers. Those that could be addressed are discussed below.

## 10.2 Recommendations for any future scheme

These recommendations are offered in the spirit of making positive amendments should any future, similar, scheme be considered. By far the most common comment was that, because the scheme was so successful, it should have been continued or seamlessly replaced to enable the momentum to continue and the gains to be consolidated. In short, most people felt that it did not run for long enough.

- Reduce reporting requirements – too many requests for information can send out an unintended message of distrust and can be regarded as onerous by applicants. There would also seem to be case for reduced reporting requirements on smaller projects, especially those that were capital only grants.
- Consider carefully capping capital grants – this was called ‘moderating’ by the Panel and was done in the interests of securing as many supportable projects as possible. However, to some applicants it created difficulties in generating momentum and meant that considerable time was wasted in implementation as other sources of funding were sought.
- Extend the life of revenue support in projects which target hard-to-reach communities. Engaging people with little initial awareness or interest was frequently reported as very time consuming and some CLOs felt that funding expired just as projects were about to really take off.

- Adding a taper to the period of revenue grants might make it more likely that cash-strapped local authorities and other bodies would find the necessary additional funding for posts to continue. This might also buy time for exploring other sources of external funding.
- Consider producing a ‘welcome pack’ and/or offering induction to people employed through the scheme – some felt they were thrown in at the deep end with little initial support and guidance. This pack could usefully contain guidance on how to engage schools and involve local communities, especially in deprived areas. There is probably enough experience generated by the Wildspace! scheme to produce a series of guidance notes on all the topics researched in this report: access and interpretation improvements; enhancing and recording biodiversity; organising activities and events; involving young people; engaging with people with physical and learning difficulties; innovation in interpretation; offering training and educational opportunities; and working across local authority departments and with external partners.
- Consider establishing a support network (website or email forum) at the outset – this was done eventually but many CLOs felt isolated to begin with.
- Consider holding conferences annually and perhaps one at the end of the scheme to allow people to feed back their experiences: the conference was widely appreciated and helped engender a sense of being part of a family.
- Consider designing any future schemes as a one-stop shop so that the whole range of improvements to local environments desired by local communities may be included. This would include funding of posts and capital grants for infrastructure repair and improvement and habitat enhancement, but could also extend to community facilities such as play areas, cafes, visitor centres and meeting rooms, secure storage areas, toilets and anything else that would help put LNRs at the centre of community activity.

### **10.3 Note on possible bias in the research findings**

Some caution must be exercised in the interpretation of these findings as it is clear to us that the 54% of grantees who responded to the questionnaire, while forming a respectable and statistically valid sample, were probably a self-selecting majority whose projects had been successful and whose guiding lights, principally CLOs, had been very active and effective individuals. This is not to disparage the validity of the findings or the achievements of the scheme, but it should be noted that our sample declared a disproportionately high number of new LNRs and our respondents were from a disproportionate number of projects employing CLOs. Moreover, respondents also included a disproportionately high number of projects who were retaining their CLOs in mainstream employment. This is all perfectly understandable but tends to suggest that the results recorded in this report may not be fully applicable to all 149 projects, particularly those from which we could not obtain a response, despite repeated efforts. It should also be noted that a high proportion of respondents were CLOs or former CLOs who, understandably, would be keen to promote the scheme’s good qualities.