

# South Shropshire Youth Forum

## Conservation Fund report 2021-22

### - Craven Arms Young Rangers



#### What we said we'd deliver in 2021/22

We will be delivering a range of free activities; engaging local youths aged 10-18 from the Craven Arms – Church Stretton area using local woodlands as a base for our activities. **We will actively aim to engage with the local Muslim youth in this project.** The project will be delivered over 6 full days (or equivalent 42 hours)

The project will include elements such as:

- Education elements will include learning about the historical context of the landscape, the impact of social and business use on the landscape and the work that is involved to protect and conserve it. We will do this by working with the landowners (Forestry England) and other organisations.
- Encouraging young people to play an active part in the development of each programme and help to design and choose future activities that continue to help them and others, appreciate their local landscape.
- Work with local partners to deliver a flexible, adaptable programme of activity that responds to the needs and interests of young people and enhances the woodland where the activities are based. (important - we are not just there to use the land, we want our groups to enhance it!)
- Promote the Conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, landscape, wildlife or heritage of the Shropshire Hills AONB.

## **What happened?**

Covid hit the project start and affected delivery of sessions beyond 2002-21 year. SSYF were also awarded a Heritage Lottery grant in partnership with SHOANB partnership so we used the Conservation Fund to specifically look at engaging the local **Muslim youth community** in heritage based activities. In fact the first session was delivered in February 2021 as it took so long for the group to feel comfortable about coming out of Covid restrictions and the various lockdowns. Covid still continues to effect this and other groups we are working with and even if the young people are directly unaffected their family life and their priorities (such as taking holidays) has still had an impact with number attending and some sessions had to be cancelled altogether.

A total of 14 children participated (aged 11-15) and 4 adult volunteers supported the project. Because one of the Young Rangers projects was based in Craven Arms this group also accessed some of their sessions including a coppice/woodland management day and a climbing trip.

In total the group did 5 practical days sessions (7 if you include their participation on the Heritage Lottery funded Young Rangers project) plus 2 half days planning and evaluation. A total of 42 hours were spent on this project.

Sessions included:

December 20 – Coppice/woodland management at Onny meadows (as part of Heritage Lottery YR project)

Feb 21 – day walk to Flounders Folly

April 21 – walking/tracking to Sallows Coppice and Sibdon

June 21 – bushcraft day at Knowle Wood and walk to summit of Titterstone Clee

August 21 – Climbing (as part of Heritage Lottery YR project)

August 21 – Games and activities to develop youth activities on Onny meadows

Dec 21 – night walk

Feb 22 - planning/evaluation

Feb 22 – cancelled session with National Trust Rangers at Cardingmill Valley

## **Feedback from participants**

We discussed the project with 6 participants and 1 of the volunteers and we had 7 forms back.

We asked the group to rate each session out of 5: (5 being high)

Average score results were:

Coppicing	Average score 4
Walks	Average score 3.5
Woodland bushcraft	Average score 4.5
Tracking/walking	Average 3.6

We asked the group to rate the transport for the project

Average score: 3.2

The group were asked to give scores to the following:

Support was provided when asked for: Score 3.8

The right support was given when asked for. Score: 3.8

The organisation of sessions/project. Score:3.5

Participants were asked to say **what was the best thing about the project:**

Feedback include:

- The walks and the woods because I love walking into woods and fields
- Learning new skills, opportunities
- Archery, treework
- The best thing was the walking because it was fun and it was interesting exploring the nature. I also learnt many new things
- Tree work, bushcraft
- 

**What was the worst thing about the project?**

- Nothing was worst because I enjoyed everything
- People not joining in
- Walk
- I think that the tree work I wasn't that interesting for me as I have done it before
- Walks

**Were the activities you have done new experience for you?**

4 replied yes, 1 no, 2 didn't reply

What are the barriers that have prevented you from doing them before?

- I haven't done it before
- I have done a few things before but I haven't done a few things of the activities like rock climbing because of the cost
- I've done some but I haven't done others because of school and never get time
- I didn't have enough free time and I didn't have the right equipment.
- - yes that was new because I haven't done it before

What else would you have liked to have done during the project?

- Fishing - mentioned 6 times
- Archery - mentioned 4 times
- Horse riding – mentioned 3 times
- Abseiling 2
- Hunting 2
- Rafting/canoeing 2
- Also mentioned: bushcraft, going to a farm, swimming, rock climbing, camping

Any other comments?

- It was fun, would like to do it again
- Rich is very cool
- If we could organise during term time rather

### **Discussion of results**

Lots of activities were new to the group. We did encourage young people to create their own project based on their interests. Obviously there were limited funds available. It was good to tap into the wider Heritage Lottery Young Rangers grant to activities such as rockclimbing.

Bushcraft was a popular activity, the group liked the idea that they had exclusive use of a woodland and loved exploring and trying new activities at their pace.

Walking did score lower than the other activities on average but there was a huge difference between its popularity between boys and girls – further analysis of the results shows that the boys average score was 2.6, while the girls was 4.25. The

only time the whole group seemed to enjoy a walk as a group activity was when we visited the Titterstone Clee.

### **Proposing a way forward**

We spent quite some time discussing the outcomes of the project and looking at practical ways to move forward. Time seems to be a factor and families seem to be adversely effected as we steadily climb out of the pandemic. Their priorities are as such that it would make it difficult at present to continue trying to plan sessions. There is too much onus being put on the volunteers, such as the Imam and his wife who are very much the 'gatekeepers' to this group.

We have suggested that the participants join the wider Young Rangers group and we'd prefer for them to integrate with a bigger group. We will monitor the situation and may be able to still offer a few activities exclusive to this group.

It would still be valuable to work with this group and further explore the barriers to them feeling as if outdoor/heritage based activities are not accessible. Youth workers supporting/leading the team did witness two incidents during separate walks where members of the public stopped the group from accessing public rights of way.

### **Pictures Top L to R – coppicing activity, rockclimbing on Ippikins Rock, first walk during third lockdown**

