

# Hill Stories 2025 project report — Nick Fogg and Mike Smart

## Achievements

Building on Hill Stories 2024, we worked with the project partners, artists, and local experts to deliver Hill Stories 2025.

During the spring and summer of 2025 and the spring of 2026, we worked with four groups of young people — Long Mynd, Bedlam/Catherston Common, Stiperstones (3 days each location) and Poles Coppice (1 day).

Places were oversubscribed although not everyone who booked attended. We worked with 32 young people aged 11-22, including three young mentors. Several young people came to more than one group.

Participants had the opportunity to work with different artists and local experts, with support from South Shropshire Youth Forum, to explore some of the landscapes, wildlife, and heritage of the areas, to learn about conservation, and to capture and share their discoveries and ideas using images, words, and sound.

The young people worked with a variety of digital equipment, including iPads and cameras to capture still and moving images; and external microphones to record sound. They edited stills, audio, and video on the iPads. Two groups learnt about, curated and prepared a multi-camera broadcast to share some of their work. Another group prepared and recorded a podcast live.

The Long Mynd group worked with Cath Landles from Shropshire Hills National Landscape (SHNL) to learn about the landscape and wildlife of the Long Mynd, and with poet Jean Atkin. The Bedlam/Catherston Common group worked with Titterstone Clee commoner and member of The British Deer Society Alan Barrell, and with walking artist Emily Wilkinson. The Stiperstones group worked with storyteller Amy Douglas. The Poles Coppice group worked with Joe Penfold from SHNL and green woodworker Jacob Wood to learn about green woodworking, and make things themselves.

The physical and digital pieces created by young people included:

- diverse digital photographs of wildlife, landscapes, and heritage, both edited and unedited
- short video and audio pieces capturing or retelling their experiences and learning, as well as creative ideas
- a poet tree hung with snippets of poetry created by the group
- poetry films
- a collaborative poem
- woodland sculptures
- creative writing pieces
- digital artwork
- bound foraged bundles
- riddles
- a rap
- a poem set to a composed recorder piece
- a clapping rhyme
- green wood mug trees and coat hooks
- a series of introductory links to introduce curated pieces for the programmes and podcast

Much of the digital work created by the groups was shared on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/pieceofstringmedia/> and the Hill Stories YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@HillStories-live/videos>

The programmes on YouTube have had over 200 views to date, and the Instagram posts have had hundreds of interactions.

We also shared some of the young people's work at an exhibition event at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre. This was attended by some of the participants, parents, funders, and members

of the public. Although attendance at the event was small (it was the same day as Storm Amy), the feedback was very positive and constructive.

### **Lessons learned / differences in costs in budget subheadings**

As we delivered the project, the project team spent more time on marketing, addressing access needs, and post-production for the sharing event. Youth mentor/support costs were also higher. This means some of the costs are under different subheadings from the original budget.

### **Some feedback from the young people who took part:**

#### **What have you enjoyed most?**

Exploring the wild wilderness  
Writing poetry and meeting a local poet  
The stories  
Creating our final result  
Audio  
Creating woodland artwork

#### **What did you find most challenging?**

Writing an intro  
Setting up the programme  
Sound recording  
I didn't know anyone  
Live performance  
Writing the poetry  
Photography

#### **What are you most proud of?**

My photos  
Making riddles  
My digital art  
Making a friend  
Writing the script  
Making a video  
The piece that I recorded  
My poem, my role in the programme... and walking

*Often the thing young people found most challenging was also the thing they were most proud of.*

### **Artists / local experts / youth workers:**

#### **Highlights**

It was really exciting watching the group absorbed in their writing... really immersing themselves in place. And then seeing them explore their words with visual images via the use of iPads. (Artist)

I know there were a couple of young people there that either were studying creative/digital media or were hoping to in the future, and I think this was a really important stepping stone for them. (Volunteer youth worker)

Meeting enthusiastic young people who were keen to get involved. (Local expert)

#### **Learning**

Importance of having enough support for young people, think it worked well having 'young' volunteers. (Youth leader)

Just having time to 'be' without pressure or judgement seems very powerful for young people, to follow their creative ideas and intuition. (Artist)

I'm really impressed with Hill Stories, a dedicated and imaginative commitment to making site specific work with young people. (Artist)

**Audiences from online and in-person sharing:**

Lovely, fascinating — love way families have been engaged by their children's involvement.  
(Member of public)

I loved seeing and hearing the mix of stories about and within nature. The films captured the young people's creativity, interest and humour. (Funder)

I appreciate people watching my film. (Participant)

Enjoyed... Seeing the young people take an active/leading role in directing the outcomes and showing aspects of the sites through their own eyes/ideas (Artist)

Enjoyed... seeing the positivity the display has generated, and hearing about what young people gained from their involvement. (Trustee from Youth Forum)

Superb... brilliant for building confidence and skills. (parent)

Nature is important and getting young people to see it in different ways through media inspires them to learn more about it and how to protect it. (Youth mentor)

Very good. Very creative... giving youngsters a platform to be themselves. I have learnt how the scenery around us can be turned into an appealing product through media. (Parent and Imam)

**Developing the project further**

We're seeking funding to develop Hill Stories in a number of ways. We hope to explore different locations with more young people and adults, including working with more marginalised groups.

We'd like to thank the Shropshire Hills Landscape Trust for helping to fund the Hill Stories 2025 project and hope it will continue to support its further development.