
Natural Childhood Summit

25 September, 2012
A Platform for Nature, by Ethicore

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1. BACKGROUND:

The Natural Childhood Summit was convened by the National Trust and partners; BritDoc, Arla, Play England, NHS Sustainable Development Unit and Green Lions. Professionals from the worlds of education, health, childcare, planning, conservation and play among many others, came together to share learning and ideas for change. Attending were representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Our task: to find solutions that will reconnect our children with the outdoors and nature.

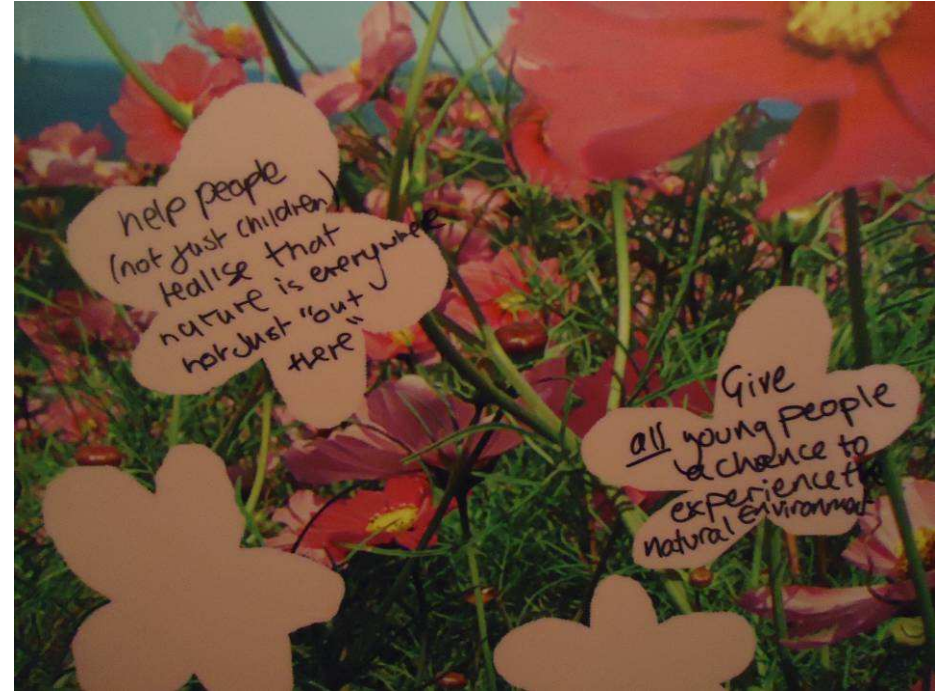
A growing and credible body of evidence shows this disconnect is real and it matters. Natural England estimate equitable access to green space would create an estimated saving to the health service of £2.1bn per annum. There are many organisations working on the issue, some with decades of experience. But we recognise that there is a bigger challenge. Much of this work is great but at too small a scale. Activity is fragmented, and the statistics show things are getting worse – for example the area a child is able to roam unsupervised has shrunk by an astonishing 90% in just one generation - ours. Yet there is almost a universal desire to get our children outdoors again, playing naturally and enjoying the benefits contact with the natural world can bring.*

“The need of quiet, the need of air, the need of exercise... the sight of sky and of things growing, seem human needs common to all” – Octavia Hill

This is a summary of key output from the day.

* From Fiona Reynold's Guardian article.

2. SHARED VISIONS



The Natural Childhood Summit shared visions of children outdoors, with opportunities to experience nature. Nature is inspiring both young and old, with its wonder. We envisaged parents who are confident and kids that are safe, where making a mess is good. The vision is fun and playful. Nature is everywhere from a windowsill to a green space. And at the very heart of nature is a child centred approach. The individual visions included:

OPPORTUNITY Get children outdoors, loving the fresh air, rolling in the mud, feeling totally free, and inspiring the parents to do it too! Put nature back in to childhood. Give children opportunities to do what they do best – play with and in nature. Make nature more accessible.	CONFIDENCE Help parents feel confident about their kids outdoors. Take that fear away. Ensure kids can play outside safely and without being told off. Make making a mess a good thing!	FUN Lighten up! Explore, create and have fun. PLAY!
NATURE IS EVERYWHERE Nature can be found in non-green space too. Nature is everywhere, not just 'out there'. Show children and adults the nature in their own garden or even the flower pot on the windowsill!	INSPIRATION Inspire the current generation of children and adults. Inspire young minds! Show kids the wonder of nature. Help people fall in love with wildlife and fight to save it.	CHILD CENTRED Ask Children what they want and respond to it!

3. LEARNING

This Manifesto is drawn from the learnings shared at the Natural Childhood Summit. To deliver our ambition of connecting children to nature we need to:

GIVE OUR CHILDREN FREEDOM TO EXPLORE (32)

For our children we'll create a leadership free environment, where they are trusted to look after themselves, to find their own 'thing', to use their own imagination. It's a world full of exploration and discovery, where their natural curiosity is indulged, and never underestimated. We'll empower them to simply be natural, giving them permission to get messy. Where they have the freedom to touch, smell, taste and learn about their world independently and without structure. Where they have time to just experience nature for themselves, leading to an independent, bold and confident generation.

BE AMBASSADORS FOR NATURE IN OUR OWN LIVES (22)

As adults we'll use our own enthusiasm to enthuse children and to show them the beauty we see in nature. We'll be creative, spontaneous and brave, exploring new ideas and ways to engage our children. We'll start simple - switch off gadgets and just get them outdoors - and we'll get out there with them. We'll learn to keep quiet and stand back so the child can decide what they want to do. We'll let them get bored sometimes so they have to use their own imagination. We'll let our children touch it, feel it, get scratched, stung, slimed, and bitten. We'll share the scary stuff about nature, and give them the freedom to explore without intervention. When they ask 'why' we'll tell them and when they come in muddy we'll not tell them off.

WORK HARD AT BEING INSIGHTFUL, INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS IN THIS AREA (8)

As key stakeholders we will value the role of understanding behaviour change and place it at the heart of campaigns. We will work together to promote the 'brand' of nature, which will inspire not bore. We will keep it simple. We will look to grow our influence by linking areas of work already underway and support the development of better education around nature and natural sciences.

GIVE CHILDREN AND PARENTS THE CHANCE TO SHAPE THEIR OWN ACTIVITIES (12)

The views of those looking after children will be listened to and used to shape activities. We'll use children to develop our ideas and to test them out. We'll find out what excites and motivates children and work out the best ways to engage their imagination. We'll use the things children love to get them outside.



3. LEARNING (continued)

HELP GROW PARENTS AND CARERS CONNECTION TO NATURE (8)

Parents and carers will rediscover their love of nature through activities with their children. They will make nature part of their everyday life, as their confidence grows around their own relationship with nature. Parents will feel good about themselves, about their parenting and their child's future because a greater engagement with nature is increasingly desirable and a slower pace is established for family life.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO SPACES FOR UNSUPERVISED PLAY AND EXPLORATION (8)

To enable children to play in relative safety, in a self led way, free access will be given to spaces of all sorts, providing inspiring places for children to explore freely. Children will have the right to remain unsupervised.

BUILD A SENSE OF FUN, EXCITEMENT, HUMOUR AND WONDER INTO OUR ACTIVITIES (6)

Activities will be fun, exciting, humorous and driven by insight into how a child will see it. They will instill a sense of wonder, awe and amazement with the natural world.

SEE NATURE AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING (5)

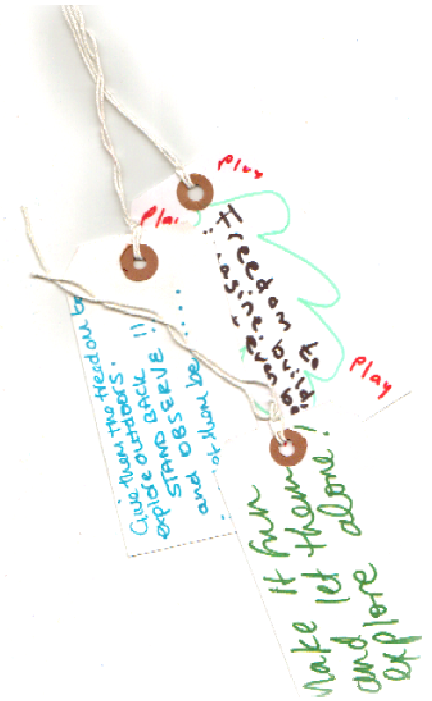
We will look to build the role of nature in other learning such as practical skills like building and physical activity. Outdoor classrooms are encouraged and children have a better understanding of nature and what they have. Experience is the key to all learning.

MAKE EVERYDAY JOURNEYS INTO NATURE TRAILS (4)

We will work to make the everyday journeys that people take become walk friendly, enabling people to experience nature far more readily. More is done to point out what people pass on a regular basis without looking, to show them the magic lies in every corner and crevice. Children will be challenged to see what's going on in their world, all around them.

SUPPORT THOSE THAT NEED SOME HELP (2)

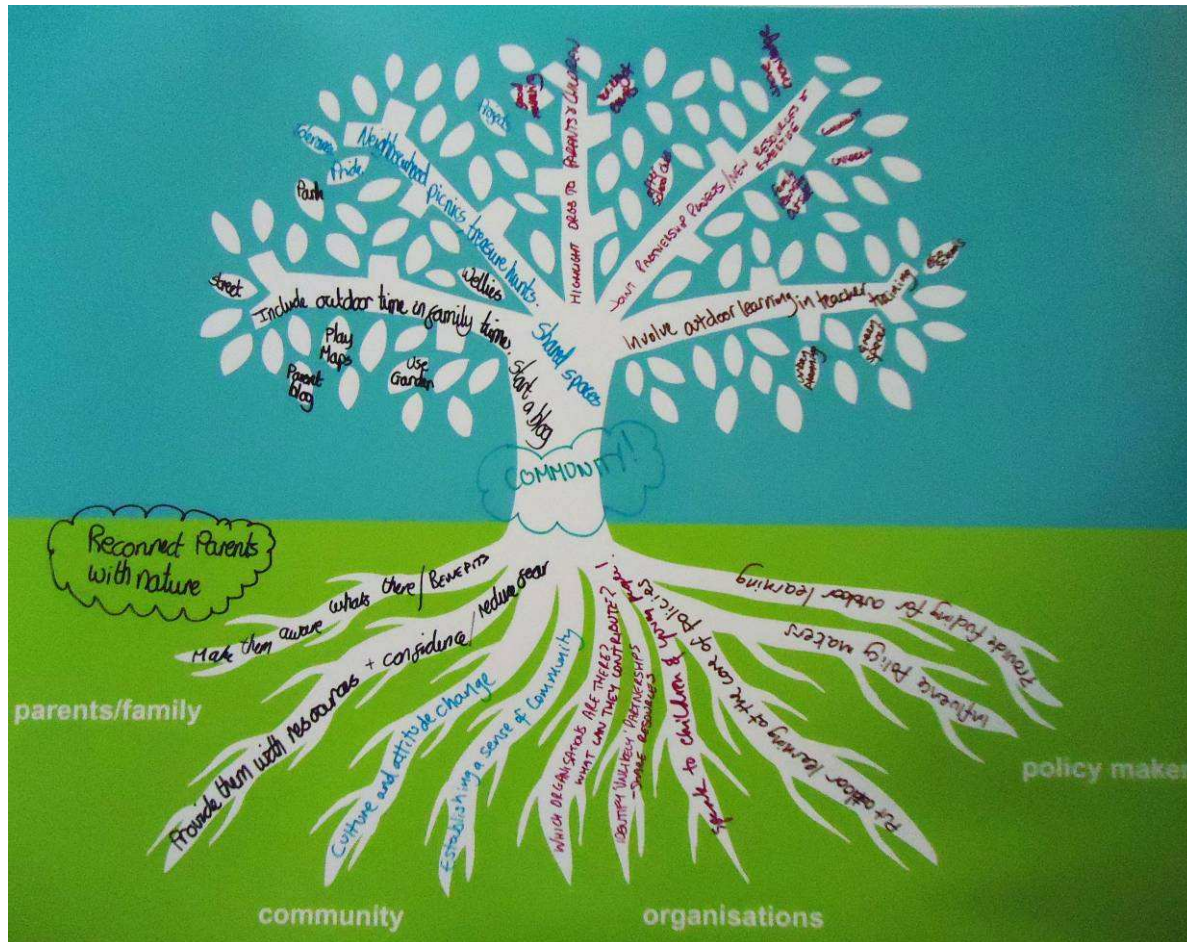
We will consider ways to break down barriers such as providing free wellies and waterproofs, and the right clothes to help people get stuck in.



4. THE ROOTS OF OUR CONNECTION WITH NATURE

The following key themes emerged from a discussion of the roots required to support this connection with nature.

People, their attitudes and beliefs, were at the core of discussions around connecting children with nature. Parents, grandparents, community and professionals can all enable children to connect with nature if they have the right tools and support. Long-term, we need the kind of behaviour change that is beyond any single partner in the room. And so a coordinated and concerted effort to shift behaviours is required, under an umbrella that everyone can contribute to. This needs to tap in to the benefits, joy and inspiration of nature to redefine what it means to be a good parent, citizen, leader and learner.



Organisations connecting the richness of their grassroots programmes together in cooptation is important in enabling this change to reach scale.

Places and proximity are critical roots to our connection with nature. It's not just making more use of schools and playgrounds, and thinking about opportunities closer to home, such as routes to school. It is also about opening up public spaces, creating safe (semi-supervised) places, reclaiming our spaces (such as the street) and consciously planning.

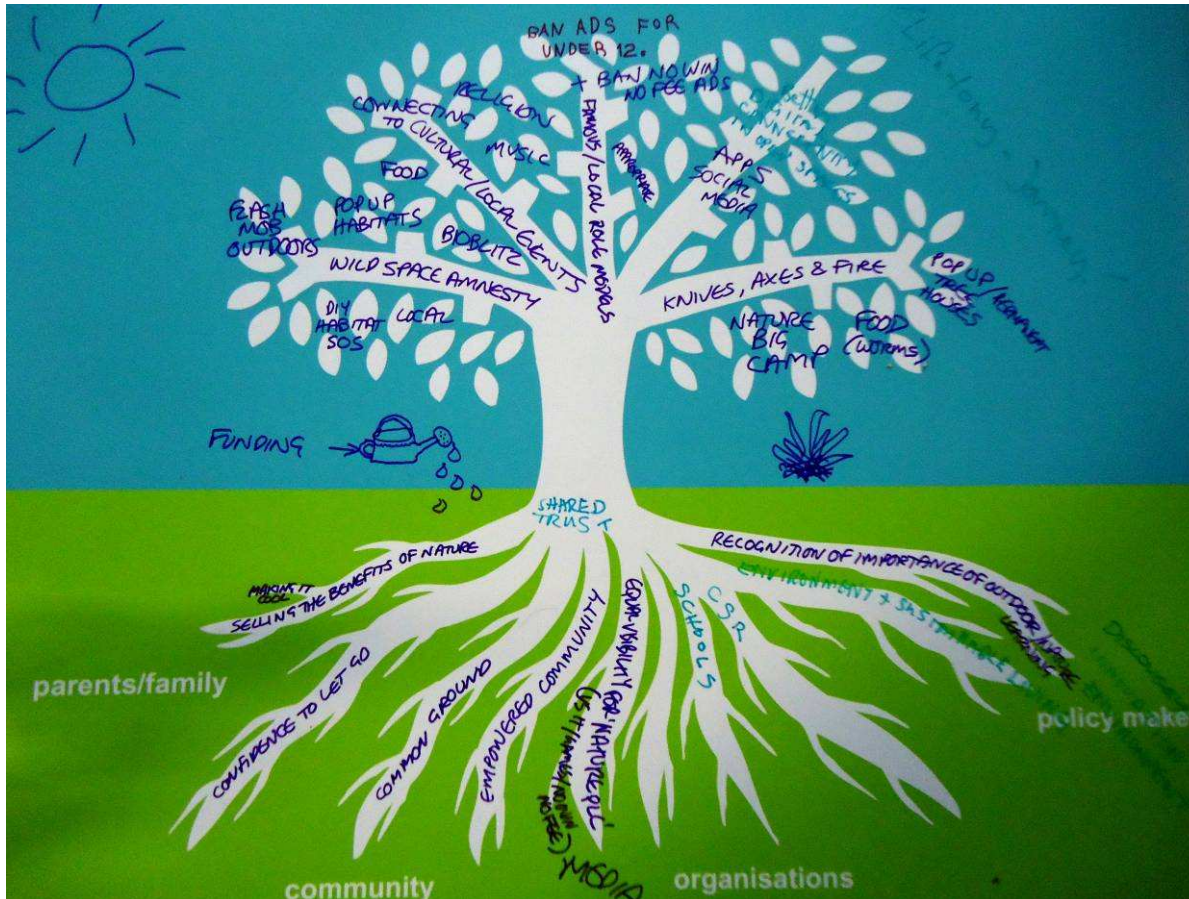
Policy and practice in health and safety, insurance, planning, education and health are key to shifting to a benefit-risk culture and recognizing the social benefits of getting children outdoors.

The reconnection tree, annotated by a breakout group.

5. THE EXPERIENCE OF NATURE

Innovative, engaging and child-centered ideas were developed to get children outdoors. They delivered:

Behaviour change communications are key, but they are also about the long-term. This is a journey that requires different steps along the way. There is a consistent call for a communications plan that builds the benefits of the brand for nature and the outdoors. See 'Dirty Hands', 'Outdoor Time'.



Child-centered ideas focused on fun and incentives for kids to interact with nature. This includes apps, awards, and information/inspiration. See 'Fun for Free', 'Free Range Kids'.

A route to every child encompasses ideas to mobilize custodians of nature as simple actions to get nature in to the hands of every child. See 'Custodians', 'Jam Jar'.

The network is about connecting the infrastructure and support network of trained people to create these opportunities at scale. See 'Network', "Train Trainers".

Tangible actions are the ideas that make this visible and real to children and their communities as well as policy makers. See 'Wildspace Amnesty', 'The Nature Games'.

Commercial scale is about partnerships that take the message and incentives out to the general public at scale. See 'Supermarkets', 'Nature Bonds'.

The reconnection tree, annotated by a breakout group.

6. THE BIG IDEAS

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: Umbrella communications to get kids outdoors.

THE DIRTY HANDS CAMPAIGN

The dirty hands campaign gets children to get their hands dirty at least once a day whilst connecting with nature. The campaign would be sponsored by a soap brand such as Fairy.



THE OUTDOOR TIME

Families would pledge to include 'outdoor time' in family time. The campaign would make families aware of the benefits of getting outdoors as well as changing the culture around risk, and include community support and events.



CHILD-CENTRED ideas to inspire kids to get outdoors and interact with nature

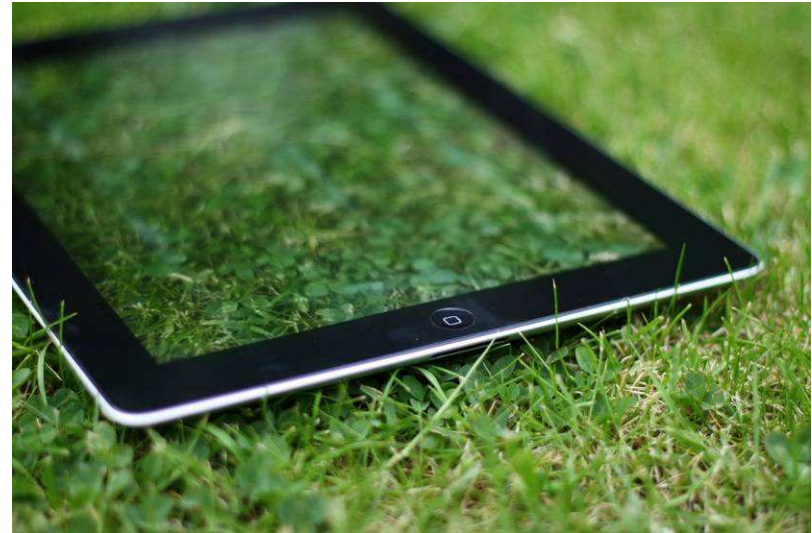
FREE RANGE KIDS

'Open the front door and let your children be 'Free Range Kids''. This campaign would have 'Play Rangers' to inspire engagement and play with nature, and involve local lobbying to calm traffic. It will give support for parents and local people to close streets and create a time bank for communities to look after children.



FUN FOR FREE APPS

Using technology to enable a connection with nature. At the core is an ideas bank for children and parents, including interactive tasks such as finding specific plants and animals to incentivise kids to explore nature. This can link to an award for achieving tasks, from a menu (like the NT 50 things). Maps would identify and link outdoor areas and encouraging a bigger right to roam. There would be updates on organised 'happenings'.



ROUTE TO EVERY CHILD: Making nature accessible to everyone

CUSTODIANS OF NATURE

This is a call for people to act as the Custodians/ Mentors/ Grandmas and Granddads of Nature. It is about passing on their experiences and wisdom, inspired by nature, and through organised events in their community.



JAM JAR OF LIFE/ MEMORY COLLECTION

"It takes a jam jar with life in it to start a lifelong interest," says Chris Packham. Get every child to start their own memory collections of nature including a jam jar on the dining table with life inside. Encourage children to share their natural treasures. Tell their stories through some form of sharing platform.



THE NETWORK: Connecting the infrastructure and the network of support and resources to achieve scale.

NETWORK

'www.TheresNoReasonNotTo.com'

Build a nature network that links all stakeholders together and provides a space for sharing resources, inspiration, ideas and myth busting ideas on nature for different stakeholders. Helping grassroots movements and individuals to build connections that make larger scale change.



TRAIN THE TRAINER AND RUSTY THE SQUIRREL

This is not only about organisations providing learning opportunities in schools. It is also linking and scaling up the training programmes of organisations for Nature Rangers/ Outdoor Learning coordinators. In the long-term, integrate nature, the possibilities and the benefits, in to teaching qualifications. Use nature to creates new learning opportunities, in curriculum subjects, but also in itself. And maybe with the help of a furry mascot!



TANGIBLE ACTION: Making real and tangible experiences

WILDSpace AMNESTY

'Reclaim the redundant wild local areas'

Target legislation to free up redundant land and open up access. Create some noise and experiences for children by using redundant local areas for 'pop-up habitats', 'flash mobs' outdoors, gardening, camping, and fires. Such community led initiatives create something real and a tangible demonstration of demand.



THE NATURE GAMES

The Woodland Games and The National Hide and Seek Championships are designed to follow in the wake of the Olympic games. Like Comic relief, The Nature Games would be a 2 week-long event, endorsed by celebrities, and show cased on television. The games would provide tool kits to help individuals, organisations and communities to organise 'games' in addition to a platform where people can share their own ideas for activities.



COMMERCIAL SCALE is about extending the reach of our activity

SUPERMARKETS

Nature for Schools. A voucher scheme where by parents, pupils and communities collect vouchers for schools to turn in to school trips/ nature for school grounds/ nature resources. Specific items could even give schools specific resources, e.g. bread vouchers earning points for a picnic.



NATURE BONDS

The nature ISA accrues 'interest' for future generations. The interest could be interest in nature of children, the amount of nature accessible for children etc. The shareholders would become a nature community.



7. CONTACT

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