



Take the Green Route

End of Project Evaluation Report



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York Bike Belles



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Wildlife Trust**

Executive Summary

- Take the Green Route! (TTGR!) was a project led by York Bike Belles and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund from 2024 to 2026.
- TTGR! delivered a programme of accessible, nature-based walking and cycling activities and workshops.
- Through these, it aimed to connect people from all walks of life with nature, develop their nature-related skills and knowledge, increase their wellbeing, and enhance biodiversity.
- Our project evaluation, combining surveys, interviews and ad hoc feedback, has revealed the positive and sometimes transformational impact TTGR! has had on people's lives.
- Everyone who completed a participant survey said the project had positively impacted their wellbeing, with 77.4% reporting a major positive impact.
- 96.8% of survey respondents said the project had a positive impact on their relationship with nature and 58.1% said they felt more part of their community.
- 96.8% of survey respondents also reported an increase in nature-related skills.
- We have enhanced biodiversity in three community green spaces in York and nearly half of survey respondents said they had been doing more to care for nature.
- More than a third of survey respondents said they had been walking and cycling more, and some told us they had been using their car less as a result of the project.
- The project leaves a legacy of digital resources, including nature maps and an audio trail, to support people to connect to nature and explore York's green spaces in their own time, as well as training materials for anyone wanting to deliver similar activities.
- York Bike Belles is a more resilient, highly-skilled and better known organisation as a result of the project.
- We continue to find ways to sustainably deliver the nature-based activities that are so valued by our participants.

Gill's story



Gill (left) on a nature walk

Gill, a regular participant in a wide range of TTGR! activities, said, "It's been invaluable in so many ways. I feel healthier, both physically and mentally. Following several quite serious health challenges, I'd somehow lost myself.

"I've made friends, learned new skills, proved you're never too old, started using the car less, and begun to really enjoy and value my time. In a world of ever-increasing complexity, it's a joy to

reconnect with the simple things we so often overlook."

[Learn more about Gill's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Introduction from Project Manager Sheridan Piggott



Sheridan discovering silverweed

We are so proud of what we at York Bike Belles have achieved over the past two years through Take The Green Route! (TTGR!) thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Developed over several years in consultation with local people and organisations, we had ambitious aims for TTGR! to improve people's health and wellbeing by getting them active outdoors, connecting them with nature and other people, and developing their nature-related skills. Our mission was to be inclusive, to enable anyone to experience nature and York's beautiful green spaces, regardless of age or ability.

Our programme of friendly, accessible, group nature walking and cycling activities and workshops has allowed us to do just that. As detailed in this report, these activities have been hugely valued by people from all walks of life. Our participants have told us of the impact TTGR! has had on their lives, improving their mood, building their confidence, helping them get to know new people and places, and sparking new interests. In some cases, the impact has been truly transformative.

Not only that, but through TTGR! we have also contributed to climate and nature recovery in York by enhancing biodiversity along walking and cycling routes, giving people the skills and inspiration to make space for wildlife in their own outdoor areas, and encouraging people to move to low carbon forms of transport.

TTGR! leaves a strong legacy on our organisation, participants, volunteers and staff, as well as a fantastic suite of resources which will support people to continue to get outdoors and into nature. We hope you enjoy reading more about what we have achieved in this report.

TTGR! Staff and Volunteers

York Bike Belles was founded in 2013, emerging from residents' needs for more inclusive, everyday walking and cycling opportunities and became a not-for-profit Community Interest Company in 2020. Our aim is to enable residents of all ages and abilities to walk, wheel and ride as the natural way to get around York, while improving wellbeing, community life, green spaces, and tackling inequalities and the climate and nature crises. TTGR! was delivered by:

Sheridan Piggott, Project Manager: Sheridan loves to inspire others to explore cycling and walking as a way of moving more, connecting with nature, meeting new people, and leading a low carbon lifestyle. Sheridan is also responsible for managing York Bike Belles' wider programme of work.

Sarah Wilson, Project Officer: Sarah has worked in teaching and communications. She loves being outdoors in the fresh air and being close to nature. She believes active travel can be life changing and loves to watch people grow their confidence in cycling and walking.

Elizabeth Elwell, Activity Leader: Liz has a background in healthcare, specialising in palliative care. She is passionate about wellbeing at all points in people's lives and believes engaging with nature while walking and cycling is the perfect way to do that.

The expertise and warmth of TTGR! staff was highly valued by our project participants, as evidenced through their feedback to us:

"The team's enthusiasm is contagious, encouraging us to see the world with fresh eyes." Gill.

"I found the leaders ... extremely welcoming and friendly." Anon.

"It has been great listening to the York Bike Belles team share their knowledge in a very accessible way. By acknowledging that they are still learning and not experts, it feels like you can do this too, that you can learn." David.

Our **volunteers** have also played a crucial part in delivering TTGR!, from being pedallers on our Cycling Without Age rides, to supporting our Nature Rides and Walks. We could not deliver our programme of activities without them!

Introduction to the Evaluation Report

In this report, we showcase what we have achieved through TTGR! and reflect on what delivering the project has taught us. We first provide an overview of our activities, then describe our achievements against our four target outcomes: increasing and diversifying engagement, improving wellbeing, developing skills, and enhancing biodiversity. We then reflect on our programme design, its success and challenges, the legacy of the project, and how it has informed what we do next. We have drawn on numerous resources to generate this report:

- **Online surveys:** participants were invited to complete a 'baseline' survey when they first engaged with the project (completed by 76 people) and 'follow up' surveys at the mid-point and end of the project (completed by 31 people). These used a combination of tick box and open text responses to capture the impact the project had on people. Full survey details and results are in Annex 1.
- **Stories:** these were gathered throughout the project and are [detailed in full on our website](#). In them, participants describe their experiences with the project and its impact on their lives.
- **Activity logs:** these were records we kept of events, including participant numbers and any immediate feedback.
- **Ad hoc feedback:** such as emails from participants and partners to the project team.
- **Reflections:** from the project team about the project and key lessons learnt.

TTGR! Activities

At the core of TTGR! was a programme of in person nature-based group activities led by project staff, volunteers and partners. These free events were open to all and delivered in seasonal 10-week blocks. Outside of these, we supported people to connect with nature and each other through our [York Bike Belles Facebook page](#), a new WhatsApp group, and a suite of new digital resources (see the Legacy section of this report for details of these).

Group Nature Rides and Walks



A nature pause by the river

These group sessions helped people explore York's green spaces on foot or by bike. Intended to be accessible, they covered a short distance at an easy pace with regular opportunities for breaks, taking around an hour to complete. They supported people to notice, enjoy and talk about the natural world, taking in riversides, parks, meadows and woods. 'Nature pauses' encouraged people to stop and connect with nature by looking at, smelling, listening and feeling what was around them. Some sessions ended with an extra 'social' at a local café.

"It was so lovely. So many gorgeous green spaces and such lovely people to talk to. Plus amazing cake. I look forward to another event." Group Nature Walk and Social participant.

Cycling Without Age Nature Rides



Enjoying a Triobike ride

York Bike Belles has been offering Cycling Without Age Rides since 2013. These supported rides on a Triobike or rickshaw allow people to explore and enjoy York by bike regardless of age, ability or mobility level. In TTGR!, the focus was on taking people for [rides along green routes and into green spaces](#). Riding up front in a seat for two, people can enjoy the sights, sounds, smells and feel of nature. Rides are open to all, and we have worked closely with local care homes to support their residents to take part. These rides have proved to be a fantastic and popular way for people to explore nature and parts of the city they don't normally have access to.

"You don't really get to do the cycle paths and those kind of spaces around York much when your mobility's poor, so it's ... really nice to be able to get out there again. ... It's fun, uplifting, just a very enjoyable experience." Claire ([hear more about Claire's story on the York Bike Belles YouTube channel](#)).

Nature Workshops



Nature art and journalling workshop

Throughout TTGR! we ran a programme of workshops designed to build participants' nature-related skills and knowledge. These workshops also provided opportunities to socialise and meet new people. Our workshops covered a range of topics including identifying plants and animals, wildlife gardening, getting started with citizen science, nature art and journalling, and wildlife photography.

"Absolutely lovely time being creative and mindful in a lovely nature-rich space." Outdoor Nature Art Workshop participant.

Wilder Spaces



Hedge planting volunteer group

Through TTGR!, and in partnership with City of York Council and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, we worked to improve the biodiversity of three [community spaces](#) along green routes in York. We ran regular volunteer sessions to enhance these spaces for nature. These also provided opportunities for people to socialise, and build skills and ideas to take home to their own outdoor space.

"I feel we built something to be proud of. People tell me that they've stopped to water it as they go past. I've even taken my parents to see it!" Emma, talking about the new nature-friendly hedge created in one of our Wilder Spaces.

Start Cycling and Walking Book Group

As well as these new group nature activities, we signposted TTGR! participants to York Bike Belles' existing programme of activities. This was a great way for people to continue their engagement between the delivery phases of the programme. These included our [Walking Book Group](#), where some of the book themes were nature-related, and [Start Cycling](#), our free, friendly and fun programme which supports people into cycling.

Engagement Events

We also ran outreach and engagement events to raise awareness of the project and reach new people, particularly those in our target groups: older and younger people, refugees, people on lower incomes, and people with mental and physical health challenges. Collaborating with organisations already working with these groups, including Refugee Action York and the Social Prescribing Team, we ran standalone events such as nature walks, rides, and workshops and encouraged people to attend our regular programme of activities.

Project Outcomes and Impact

Outcome 1: Increased Engagement



Autumn 2024 activity poster

Through TTGR! we wanted to expand our reach, with an ambitious aim to engage over 1000 people in nature activities. Our activity logs show we directly engaged 549 people, with a total of 1549 attendances across all our activities and events, including:

- 306 attendances on 38 Group Nature Rides
- 475 attendances on 47 Group Nature Walks
- 287 attendances on 53 Cycling Without Age Rides
- 97 attendances at 7 nature workshops
- 36 attendances at 16 Wilder Spaces sessions
- 262 attendances at 12 engagement events

We also recorded 814 unique visits to the Nature Wellbeing Calendar section of our website.

We particularly wanted to encourage participation from groups who are less likely to engage with nature and/or would benefit most from doing so: younger people, older people, refugees, people on lower incomes, and people with mental or physical health conditions. We achieved this through careful design of our activities, ensuring they were open and accessible to all, and through our approach to engagement, collaborating with York-based groups and organisations already working with these groups.

Of those who completed our participant survey:

- 46.1% were over 60 years old
- 31% were on a lower income
- 43.7% said they had a mental or physical health condition

We know not all our participants completed the survey - a significant number of our Cycling Without Age participants were unable to due to health conditions – and we are confident our engagement with older people and people with health conditions reached over 50%. Similarly, although we had direct engagement with refugees and asylum seekers through Refugee Action York, none completed the survey.

Feedback highlighted the impact of the project on our target groups. People on lower incomes, for example, told us how our free activities gave them opportunities they don't usually have to get out and socialise. Older people and people with health conditions reflected how our activities gave them access to places they would normally be able to get to, as exemplified in Len's story below.

Len's story



Len on a Cycling Without Age ride

Following his retirement, Len worked for 20 years as a Lollipop Man. A passionate cyclist and gardener, Len moved from Merseyside to York four years ago to be near his family. He now lives in supported accommodation. At 91, he and his family are always on the lookout for stimulating things he can do. Our Cycling Without Age Nature Rides combined his love of cycling, nature and being outside.

Len was accompanied by his daughter Di on his first ride. They both then felt confident that this was something he could do on his own. "The rides were very good, and sociable. I enjoyed getting out and watching the leaves falling off the trees". For Len and his family, the rides mean that he is able to get to see places that are now too far for him to walk to. They make a welcome change from his usual routines, and enable him to have an experience independent of his family or a carer.

[Find out more about Len's story on the York Bike Belles YouTube channel.](#)

Outcome 2: Improved Wellbeing

A key aim of TTGR! was to enhance the wellbeing of our participants, through nature connection, socialising, and being physically active outdoors.

- All our participants who responded to a follow up survey said the project had a positive impact on their wellbeing
- 77.4% reported a major positive impact
- We also saw improvements in feelings of anxiety, happiness, worth and life satisfaction from our baseline to follow up surveys

The impact of the project on people's wellbeing has also been evident from the stories they have told us (see Ian's below as an example) as well as from feedback after our events:

"That's helped my mental health today" Cycling Without Age Engagement Event participant.

"I feel refreshed and full of energy." Cycling Without Age Nature Ride participant.

"I feel so much better for getting out." Group Nature Ride participant.

"It's like mindfulness - you focus on what's in front of you and that's calming. And you take that approach... those skills.. away with you." Group Nature Walk participant.

Ian's story



Ian (third from right) on a Group Nature Walk

“It gives me my life back.” This is how Ian, who is registered blind, describes TTGR! activities.

After moving to York with his partner Fleur as a central base for their voluntary work assessing accessibility of NHS spaces, Ian was introduced to our Cycling Without Age Nature Rides at a community event. After meeting the team, feeling ‘Trixie’ our passenger Triobike, and going for a short introductory ride, Ian wanted to do more.

“They are the nicest days I have had for years.... Just to get outside, and then stop to smell the flowers and feel the leaves, it was great.” He enjoyed the experience so much, he felt confident enough to then join us on our weekly Nature Walks. “I love them... it’s like a bag of potatoes coming off your shoulders!” Getting outside in nature and socialising with a friendly group gives Ian a massive lift. In his words, “it gives me something to get up for.” Going to new places and finding new things also gives him a sense of adventure. “It has given me more confidence, more than you can imagine.”

[Find out more about Ian's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Enhanced nature connection

Improving wellbeing through connecting people with nature was a core aim of the project and our surveys have revealed how the project has achieved this:

- 96.8% of respondents to a follow up survey said the project had a positive impact on their relationship with nature, with 80.7% reporting a major positive impact
- 67.7% reported that because of TTGR! they felt more connected to nature
- 51.6% reported they were spending more time outdoors in nature
- 32.3% said they were more aware of green and blue spaces in York and 29% said they had been spending more time in green spaces and nature spots in York

Feedback from participants has also shown how much people have enjoyed and valued noticing and connecting with nature:

"I loved lying back with the blossom floating down on me!" Group Nature Ride participant.

"It was so nice to slow down and take mindful photos in nature." Nature Photography Workshop participant.

"It's brought me back to life, invigorated and inspired me to reconnect with nature and spend more time outside." Anon.

Increased social connection

Connecting with other people is another important route to increased wellbeing, which is why this forms a core part of the activities we offer. Our follow-up survey respondents reported that as a result of taking part in TTGR! activities:

- 51.6% said they felt more connected to other people
- 51.6% said they had more social contact
- 58.1% said they felt more part of their community
- 41.9% said they felt less isolated

Opportunities to socialise have been valued both by people who have lived in York for a long time, and those new to the city. Small groups and a chance to be with like-minded people have been particularly valued.

“To be out in nature, with like-minded people who are also keen to learn and discover and understand the natural world, has been invaluable.” Anon.

“The small groups were generally the same people each week so friendships were formed.” Anon.

“I have met a lot of very lovely people and it has been amazing to see friendships and support networks start and flourish within the groups.” Anon.

Increased activity

Increased physical activity outdoors can also enhance wellbeing, as well as improve physical health, and contribute to low carbon lifestyles.

In our follow-up surveys:

- 48.4% of respondents said they had been more active because of TTGR!
- 35.5% said they were more aware of walking, cycling and wheeling routes in York
- 35.5% reported they had been walking, cycling or wheeling more
- 19.4% said they had been using their car less

Feedback has also shown the lasting impact on participants, for example:

“It’s made a lot of changes to me because I now go on my bike at least 2 or 3 times a week, feeling more confident. So I’m using the car much less which is fantastic.” Gill.

“It has made me more confident on a bike and getting around York by bike. I am much more likely to cycle somewhere than I was before and will continue to do this now the project has finished.” Anon.

Fran’s story detailed below encapsulates how the physical activity, nature connection and opportunity to socialise that TTGR! activities offer have all contributed to improving her wellbeing.

Fran's story



A woodland nature pause

Following her retirement, and a trip cycling around the world, Fran moved to York. She was unwell for a while, and found herself looking for a way to help build herself back up again.

She then heard about TTGR! which combined her love of nature, cycling and walking. "I think it is just fabulous. I absolutely love the Nature Rides and Walks with York Bike Belles. The team are so amazing and it doesn't matter that we don't go too

far because there is so much to see and learn about".

There have been many benefits that Fran can see from TTGR!. She has built up her fitness levels and reconnected with nature and learning. She has gained lots of knowledge about nature around her, which she enjoys sharing with others. Perhaps most importantly to Fran, the group activities have connected her with other people with similar interests and she now meets up with new friends outside the programme.

[Learn more about Fran's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Outcome 3: Increased Nature Skills and Knowledge

Another key aim of TTGR! was to develop people's nature-related skills and knowledge. This was achieved through our workshops and wilder gardening sessions as well as informally through our nature walks and cycles. Our aims were to both use skills development as a way of enhancing wellbeing and to provide people with the tools and encouragement to care for nature in their own outdoor spaces. This fits with our ambition to foster nature-friendly behaviours in York residents and in turn support nature recovery in the city.

In our follow-up survey:

- 96.8% of participants said that being involved in TTGR! had increased their nature skills and knowledge
- 58.1% said their skills had increased a lot
- 74.2% of respondents said they had been learning more about nature
- Comparison between baseline and follow up surveys showed increases in familiarity with citizen science, creative nature activities and wildlife gardening skills.

In much of the feedback we received, people commented on how much they have learnt by attending our activities, how this learning journey has continued beyond our project, and how they have shared their new skills and knowledge with their friends and family.

"I feel like I am learning so much." Group Nature Walk participant.

“Sarah and Liz have passed on their knowledge of nature and I have learned such a lot from them. When I am out on a walk or cycle ride I take much more notice of the flora and fauna. I can identify more flowers, trees, butterflies etc than before attending TTGR.” Anon.

“The project has made me learn a lot more about nature. It is lovely to be able to share this with others, both within the activities but also with my friends and family.” Anon.

“I really look forward to the walk each week, learning about nature and I enjoy meeting all the different people who come along.” John ([read more about John’s story on the York Bike Belles website](#)).

Lynda’s story illustrates how TTGR! has sparked a love of learning about nature and the impact this has had on her.

Lynda’s story



Lynda (left) at one of our Wilder Spaces

“I just didn’t know I needed this.” Lynda has a background in science and nature but her love of the natural world had taken a back seat. Life was busy, supporting her children with additional needs and recovering from Long Covid. Lynda first started coming on weekly Nature Walks in July 2024 and was immediately hooked.

Lynda has been surprised by the joy she has found in learning about nature again, including at our workshops. “I have just loved learning about the nature around us, it is such a thrill. And learning it with people who care about the same things, who

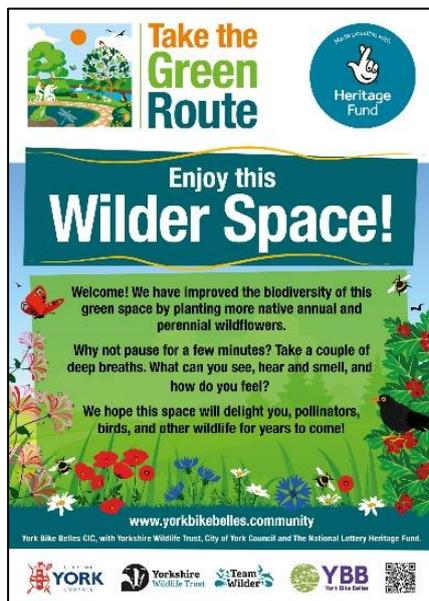
share that passion has made it more enjoyable and interesting. It’s great to have an excuse to be able to stop and look at things with the group, that perhaps you wouldn’t do on your own, or people would think you were a bit strange!”

TTGR! has encouraged Lynda to spend more time in nature. She finds herself noticing more and identifying as much as possible whenever she is out and about. Lynda has found that the nature connection really relaxes her and makes her feel happy.

[Learn more about Lynda’s story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Outcome 4: Enhanced biodiversity

Wilder Spaces



Sign used at our Wilder Spaces

As part of TTGR!, we worked with City of York Council and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to identify and improve three Wilder Spaces along green routes for biodiversity and the enjoyment of those passing by. Signs at these sites tell people what we have been doing and encourage them to stop and enjoy these new spaces. Consultations with representatives of local communities and environmental charities helped to inform plans for these sites.

Knavesmire Greenway: this was originally a grassy area along a popular walking and cycling route running south out of York. In November 2024, volunteers mowed, scarified and sowed a wildflower mix and we have agreed a sensitive mowing regime with the council to encourage a biodiverse meadow to develop. A baseline survey in September 2024 identified only nine plant species in this

area. This doubled to 18 species across follow up surveys in May and June 2025 where an abundance of insects including bees, butterflies, moths and ladybirds was also seen.



Knavesmire Greenway before seeding



Knavesmire Greenway after seeding

"We really love what you're doing. Everyone at the allotments has said how beautiful it is to walk past now." Allotment holder close to our Knavesmire Wilder Spaces.

Knavesmire Allotment Gate: a second grassy area with low biodiversity was identified adjacent to the Knavesmire cycling and walking route. In October 2025, volunteers again prepared the ground and sowed a native meadow seed mix in this area. We are excited to see the wildflowers emerge in 2026 and can't wait for this space to be buzzing with wildlife!

Terry Avenue Hedgerow: Terry Avenue runs along the River Ouse to the south of York, acting as both a major walking and cycling route and, with its grassy verges and hedgerows, an important wildlife corridor. A substantial gap in the hedgerow was identified and so, in April 2025, a group of volunteers worked to fill this by planting a biodiverse mix of native hedging trees, underplanted with shade tolerant native wildflowers.

Enhancing biodiversity at home

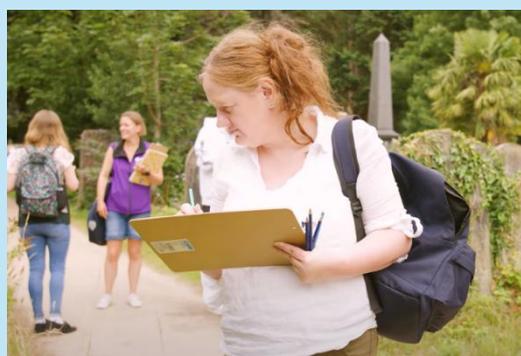
Through our wildlife gardening workshops, Wilder Spaces volunteer sessions, and informally through our nature walks and cycles, we have also supported people to think about how they can improve biodiversity in their own outdoor spaces. We have encouraged people to celebrate their successes through the Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts' Wildlife Gardening Award.

In our follow up surveys:

- 48.4% of respondents said they had been caring more for nature
- 38.7% said they felt like they're doing more for the environment

The role TTGR! has played in encouraging people to take action at home is illustrated by Emma's story below.

Emma's story



Emma trying nature journaling

“I’ve always wanted a little garden. Now I’m the Head Gardener!” laughs Emma about the communal wildlife garden she’s started. Inspired by our nature workshops, Emma has created a mini oasis for both the residents of her flats and wildlife. But it all started with a walk. “The York Bike Belles walk was just completely different to anything I had been on before, and I loved it! On other walks I found you had to race to keep up, or the aim was to walk really far. I am car-free and

would have to get up very early just to get to the meeting point. But these walks were really enjoyable and relaxing. We stopped to learn about nature along the way. Everyone was really lovely, there was such a good vibe.”

It was on the walks that she heard about our nature workshops, and decided to give them a try too. The workshops inspired Emma to make changes closer to home. This year, she has created a garden in the gated communal area of her block of flats. “I’ve got lots of containers full of plants. I’ve planted some of them with the seedballs that we made at the Wildflower Workshop and I’m waiting to see what flowers blossom. I’ve even made a composting area!” The changes she has made has in turn inspired some of the other residents to join in. Emma recently won [Wildlife Gardening Award from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust](#) for her gardening efforts.

[Find out more about Emma's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Programme design and delivery

TTGR! was based on existing York Bike Belles activities, with some brand-new approaches too. As such, we had a lot of existing knowledge and experience to base our programme design and delivery on. Nevertheless, we listened to and reflected with staff, partners and volunteers to continually and iteratively update and improve our programme design.

Early successes

While project setup took longer than anticipated - recruitment and training of the new team, developing partnerships and creating monitoring and promotional materials all took time - after delivery of the first programme in summer of 2024, it was clear the project was working! A wide range of people were attending activities, and many were highly enthusiastic and came along every week. We were overwhelmed by some of the feedback, and the first stories obtained at the end of the season showed the project was meeting its target outcomes. Many expressed how the experience had already been life changing. A colourful new logo, posters and weekly social media activity create a buzz and excitement around the activities. Our website was receiving thousands more monthly views than usual.

Listening to our participants



Social after a Group Nature Walk

We carefully listened to and logged feedback after every activity, sent out our mid-point follow up survey, and took every opportunity to have regular informal conversations about the project when out in the community. This feedback was discussed and at our monthly operational meetings and used to inform our activities, for example:

1. Feedback revealed some people were unable to attend our activities due to other commitments. This encouraged us to develop our Nature Wellbeing Calendars. These were made available online so people could enjoy 'DIY' nature connection activities each month in their own time.
2. Participants expressed a wish to share their experiences with each other in a more personal way than on social media. We therefore set up a Nature WhatsApp group. This group has over 50 active members and still continues with exchanges every week around nature.
3. Some workshops in the summer of 2024 were not well attended. Following review, we updated their names, for example, 'citizen science' became 'nature ID'. We also added more of our popular socials (above) and provided more one-to-one support for people to get to activities.

Assessing progress toward our target outcomes

Our surveys proved valuable for reviewing progress toward our intended outcomes. One thing these revealed was that we were not engaging as many young people or refugees and asylum seekers as we had hoped to. This led to us scheduling engagement activities for these groups, such as walks for Refugee Action York and taking part in the Make Space for Girls festival at Rowntree Park. Data from the first follow-up survey was also used to promote the project in the following year and helped secure a successful funding bid.

Partnership working

A real success was our partnership with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. We worked with them to develop two practical workshops on growing wildflowers and urban wildlife gardening, a number of original resources and practical guidance for participants. We also helped promote their Wildlife Gardening Award. It was delightful to see our first meadow wilder space in full flower in the summer of 2025!

Issues and responses

As with all projects, we have faced some challenges but we have worked together to develop sensible and effective responses to these. For example, despite best efforts over six months between ourselves and York St John University, we were unable to secure the interns we had hoped to as a way of engaging with younger people. As an alternative, we are making a special effort to promote all our project digital resources to both universities in York.

Toward the end of 2024, the number of activities, community demand and requirement to work on several delivery areas simultaneously, was putting a strain on the part time project team. Insecurity about future funding was also a concern for staff members and, in mid-2025, our Project officer resigned to go to another role. This meant we had to reduce activities for the remainder of the project, and requested a three-month extension from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to fully complete the project with reduced staff.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

The key lessons learned for ourselves and others running similar projects in the future are:

- 1. Keep listening to everyone involved in the project and adapting where necessary.** This means that project activities continue to respond to people's needs and to be effective.
- 2. Assess capacity and resources needed for delivery.** We will keep future projects simpler, with lower target numbers, and fewer target groups, activities and different work streams.
- 3. Allocate resources and project time for legacy planning earlier in the project.** We had high demand to continue all our nature activities. Factoring in time and resources to consider how this could be achieved (e.g. by securing future funding) would have helped with continuity for participants and is something we will do in future projects.

Legacy

Digital resources

A major achievement of the project has been the suite of [new digital resources](#) we have produced. These remain a legacy of the project which we will continue to use and promote.

TTGR! York Nature Maps: Working with participants, we identified six new nature-rich walking and cycling routes accessible to our target groups. We created these beautiful maps which detail the route, accessibility information, and nature to look out for.



One of our new Nature Maps

Nature wellbeing calendars: We developed [calendars for January to December](#) with 100+ activities for nature connection, learning, well-being, wildlife gardening and local walking and cycling. These are based on other resources produced for Nature on Prescription schemes around the country and are a fantastic resource.

Audio Trail: Our 'York: Avenue and Park Nature' audio trail is featured on the [Places and Trails app](#). Users can be guided by Sheridan, Liz and Sarah along this route and listen to our participants enjoying nature.

E-learning course: We have created an [e-learning course](#) hosted on the Open University's Open Create site. This draws on resources we developed for our nature workshops and helps others who are wanting to deliver similar activities.

Professional videos and images: Throughout the project we have also produced a range of high-quality videos and images, including a [short film](#) which showcases our successes.

Organisational legacy

TTGR! has had a lasting impact on York Bike Belles as an organisation. We are a more resilient, skilled and well-known organisation because of the project.

1. We have developed new and strengthened existing partnerships, including with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, City of York Council, disability and health support organisations like Primary Care Links, and refugee support organisations. This will facilitate the delivery of future projects we run.
2. We have increased awareness of York Bike Belles as an organisation, with more visits to our website, people on our database, and followers on social media.
3. Our staff and volunteers have received professional training and developed skills in citizen science, photography, outdoor art, wildlife gardening, cycle skills, first aid, and accessible walk and ride leading. We have improved our monitoring and evaluation skills by working with the University of York. Staff who have left us takes these skills into their new roles.
4. Through TTGR! we have recruited more volunteers and increased their capacity to run nature and Cycling Without Age activities in the future, making us more sustainable. Volunteering with us has also had a positive impact on the lives of our volunteers, as described in David's story below.

David's story



David volunteering on a bike ride

David, a recently retired GP and keen cyclist, started volunteering for us in Spring 2024. After a comprehensive training programme, he is now a volunteer pedaller on our Cycling Without Age Rides, and volunteers on our Nature Rides and Walks. David said, "I wanted to volunteer, to feel like I was contributing something, but I have found volunteering for York Bike Belles really rewarding in a very surprising way."

As someone used to being outside, David wasn't expecting the Nature Rides and Walks to have much effect on him. "It doesn't sound like much, in terms of distance travelled, or time taken. Or just standing under a tree and looking. But it has real benefits." Our Nature Rides and Walks encourage people to stop and pause, to connect to the natural world around them. Having been sceptical at first, David now does this in his life outside volunteering. He has found he notices nature more and enjoys passing on what he has learnt to others.

[Read more about David's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

Lasting impact on participants

Crucially, as evidenced in the stories and statistics presented in this report, TTGR! has had a lasting impact on our participants and our city. Our supportive, inclusive approach enabled a diverse range of people to come together to explore nature. We have equipped people to be mindful in nature to boost their wellbeing. We have increased people's familiarity with York's green spaces and given them the confidence to explore them in their own time. We have created social connections. We have improved the biodiversity of green spaces and given people the skills to act for nature in their own spaces. And we have moved people away from using cars to active, low carbon modes of travel. We are so proud of this legacy of this fabulous project which is exemplified through Elle's story.

Elle's story



Elle (second from left) on a Nature Bike Ride

“I can't tell you how much the rides have meant to me and the impact that they have had on my life.” When Elle started on our Nature Rides, her confidence in getting out and interacting with people was at an all-time low following a stroke and being new to the city. Starting in October 2024, Elle found her confidence in meeting and talking to people grew with each ride. “There was just so much out there that I wanted to do but didn't feel that I could. It took a long time to build my confidence to be able to do them. So just arriving and seeing smiling faces and people happy to see you. On a bad day... you just don't know the impact of that.”

As Elle's confidence grew, she began to feel she could try other things. “I would stop and think – no I did that with Bike Belles, I can do this. The rides were a really successful first step and now I do lots of other things too but I always come back to the rides. I owe them so much.”

The rides also helped her mentally map out York and get around the city. “It made me feel at home in a new place.” Her bike is now her main transport: “I barely use my car anymore.”

Another long-term change has been around mindfulness. “The first time that we did mindfulness I thought, this might be a bit weird! But it made me stop and take notice.” She soon found herself doing it whenever she cycled on her own. Now she and her son Seb practice mindful photography together at the weekend, sometimes revisiting nature we have noticed on the rides.

[Read more about Elle's story on the York Bike Belles website.](#)

