The Acorn Awards 2011

*Using nature to improve and enhance the lives of vulnerable and socially excluded people*

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Describe your project in one sentence:
By listening to the people who live with us, we have provided a positive, meaningful, therapeutic and supportive exterior environment where residents are enabled to encounter the natural world and increase their social interactions and well-being.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Adult Social Care – Residential Care home with specialist Dementia Unit.

What are the project’s objectives?
To provide inclusive environments that give a sense of identity and belonging and areas that would allow self-expression, evoke fun and laughter and would be used all year round. We wanted an environment where residents, families co-exist in a collaborative and autonomous community as well as play a part in the wider community. Our objective was also a project where personalisation is evident and the environment is tailored to the individual characters and preferences. And a project that encourages increased activity, mobility and discovery.

What are the project’s activities?
The activities are many and varied. Our very own seaside complete with beach hut, promenade, sand, sea and boat, transport the residents in time and memory to times they remember as well as give new experiences. So many activities can be themed round its use; picnic days, big band days, barbeque days, sport days. The list is endless whatever the season. A sunny day just lazing around reliving the memories. A balmy evening where the bands strike up or the sounds of waves and seagulls emit from hidden speakers. A windy day on the beach when some wrap up and wander along the shore or the promenade and then enjoy a warm drink or soup in the chalet.

We have a ‘Walk of Hollywood’ that brings a sense of peacefulness as they walk round the piano seeing the great artists of their day. In another area, a beautiful copper tree that is a water feature with water coming out of every leaf where residents can stop a while and absorb the soothing effect of nature. The project encourages working with nature by growing things like grapes and then picking them so all can share or feed to the pet pigs as a treat! Growing flowers and picking them so they can be used in their flower arrangements that proudly decorate the home.

We back on to a forest so have much wild-life and residents preserve nature by feeding the wild birds and the peacocks, peahens and chicks. The flowers they pick on their forest walks, whether freely or in a wheelchair are then used for their activities. Some residents help with the feeding and care of the cat and two kittens whilst others are happy to just cuddle them or watch their antics.
Because of the positive effect the animals and wildlife had on everyone, it was decided we would look at different animals and, when put to the residents, they voted for...pigs! So we became home to two mini-pigs recently who the residents have named, ‘Bonnie and Clyde’. The residents helped prepare the area and house and are always very eager to go out and see these tame and friendly animals several times a day and feed them.

Next to Bonnie and Clyde’s area is a windmill complete inside with nesting boxes and perches and recently we incubated eggs so we now have four young chicks. They have been very much handled and are very domesticated and are about to move into their deluxe coop and run. In time the residents will be able to collect the eggs. Residents and volunteers helped with all this from the planning to completion, from choosing names to anything that would enhance and improve their lives and give them a sense of belonging.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
These inclusive environments attracted, not just the residents but also, their families as well as the local community. No longer were we that place ‘at the end of the road’, but a place that people could visit and find a vibrant community. And of course the residents could enjoy the visitors, too. The children who visit from the local schools and the grandchildren who are excited about visiting. Families who now visit more often because conversations became easier as there are things to be involved in and talk about. We have seen a huge increase in well-being and increase in mobility and use of the outside space and a sense of belonging and purpose. Cunningham house has a residential unit and a dementia unit and this project has strengthened relationships so the person is seen first and not the frailty and the resident is seen first not the dementia as all these areas promote free expression. For our residents living with dementia, it has helped to greatly reduce challenging behaviour as it offers a diversion and something with meaning and no-one has the need for any psychotropic medication which can only enhance their quality of life. For our frail elderly, the varied areas and stimulation and their engagement in them distracts them from their physical limitations.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
Because the animals have had such a positive effect on the whole community, we plan to develop this area more. Goats and ducks appear the favourites at the moment so there is much discussion going on about the next arrival. Activities around the seaside are endless and we will add anything that will give positive outcomes or develop it to incorporate new ideas. We want to increase the variety of areas as there are lots of inlets of garden areas that can be enjoyed separately so there will be a surprise around every corner and something that will support and increase the personhood of everyone living here and make everyday matter.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
To further develop areas that are person centred and that will enhance and improve the lives of the residents living with us. We would like to develop an allotment with raised beds and a raised greenhouse and an outside workshop where residents can make or repair items. And have a little shop that residents can walk out to or be wheeled to if needed. But of course they would get the vote which the money would be spent on.
Describe your project in one sentence:
A charity which focuses on the therapeutic benefits of horticultural and nature activities

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
A half acre walled garden in the community of Faversham

What are the project’s objectives?
The three principal aims of the project are: firstly to use horticultural and nature activities to help relieve the needs of people with mental health problems and to provide relief to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged; secondly to be inclusive of everybody and promote non-segregation, so that people from all different backgrounds can benefit from working at the garden; thirdly to help people to develop life skills and coping strategies, undertake training, achieve qualifications, pursue employment opportunities, gain independence and take responsibility for themselves.

What are the project’s activities?
The project members work directly with nature through helping to manage the different parts of the garden. It is divided up into the following areas in order to maximise biodiversity and incorporate everyone’s interests: a forest garden, cottage garden, wildlife area with pond and bug palaces, shaded borders, as well as fruiting trees and bushes scattered around the site. In these areas, a wide range of organic fruit and vegetables are grown using permaculture principles which are then offered to the public for donations.

We provide activities to suit the individual needs of all people, and for the less physically able there are opportunities to get involved in crafts like woodworking and pottery. We are a registered ASDAN Centre and deliver CVQ Community Volunteering Qualifications Level 1-3. We are also a Permaculture LAND Learning Centre, and teach groups of visitors about designing sustainable human habitats. The garden acts as a community hub where people can just drop in for a chat and a cup of tea and be surrounded by nature.

We participate in local community events such as Gardens for Wildlife, Open House, Secret Gardens, South and South East in Bloom. We also act as a venue for various community events and work in partnership with organisations such as Transition Town Faversham, Oxfam, the Kent Childrens Fund Network and the Permaculture Association. Local schools use the garden as a learning tool for such things as healthy eating, wildlife activities, and growing wheat to make bread.
**What has been the impact / achievement of the project?**

We provide a safe and secure environment for people to reintegrate into society after being socially isolated or having barriers to participation. We have referrals from Doctors, Community Health teams and through word of mouth, and our membership list continues to grow. We currently have approximately 50 members who regularly use the garden. Being able to connect with nature and learning how to grow food has a very tangible positive effect on the people who use the garden. We have recently received a Certificate of Excellence from the South and South East in Bloom competition, and have also been awarded a Gold in the Kent Wildlife Trust’s Gardening for Wildlife 2011 competition. We were featured in an article in the Life section of the Sunday Telegraph on 23rd October 2011, and are regularly written about in the local press. We have been very successful in securing funding from many organisations including Ecominds, Co-Op Community Fund, the Phillips Fund and the Henry Smith Charity.

**What are your plans for developing the project further?**

We are aiming to become more financially self sufficient through the increased sale of vegetables, fruit and crafts. We also plan to implement a programme of workshops to generate more income and want to encourage garden members to facilitate these. The workshops will include horticulture skills, wildlife garden design, green woodworking, pottery and introduction to permaculture.

We are looking into becoming more environmentally sustainable through the use of renewable energy such as solar and wind. We will be planting new trees and fruiting bushes, and looking at encouraging more wildlife in to the garden. We also want to do more companion planting and seed saving. We also have plans to introduce bee hives to the garden to produce our own honey. We want to develop new partnerships with other community groups and encourage as diverse a range of people to use the garden as possible. We will be looking at running more community events at the garden.

**How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?**

Past training and courses have proved incredibly popular and resulted in increased demand for more opportunities. We would use the award to offer more experiences with the aim being that our members would then be able to pass on the skills/knowledge learnt to other members and the general public. The training and courses would include healthy eating, cooking with seasonal foods, plant propagation, willow basketry, green woodworking, pottery, wreath making and introduction to permaculture.
Describe your project in one sentence:
The About Turn Angling Academy was developed to introduce former armed forces veterans living in the North of England to an outdoor activity that was accessible to both disabled veterans and able bodied personnel and especially those subject to Court imposed community supervision/probation orders.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
The project is delivered in a rural/outdoor settings dependent upon the type of fishing the participants are involved in, For example sea fishing (shore/boat) River/Lake Course or fly fishing. The majority of the participants have involvement with the CJS, drug and alcohol services, mental and physical health support networks and the homelessness sector.

What are the project’s objectives?
The aim of the project is to provide former armed forces personnel with the basic skills in a variety of angling settings. These include fly fishing, fly casting, fly tying and are in addition to the About Turn ‘peer led’ support groups that operate in Newcastle, Sunderland and Northumberland. The mutual interest groups include members which range from beginners to those with prior fly fishing and tying experience who are adapting their skills to their new abilities. All the angling equipment is provided to the participants at no cost and with the support of the Northumberland Angling Development Board who have identified ex forces members to work alongside and coach the About Turn group members. Fishing trips, both one day and multi-day are also provided at no cost to the participants at a variety of venues across the North East.

About Turn CIC is unique in that our volunteers are teaching classes on an on-going, long term basis. It is much more than a one day fishing trip. For many participants, particularly disabled veterans and those involved with the Criminal justice system, the socialization and camaraderie of the classes are just as important as the fishing outings, and provide them a new activity that helps them positively structure their time and in doing so comply with their community based Court Orders.

The Project relies on the generosity of other charities such as Fishing for Heroes and the local Angling Development Board and the donation of equipment by angling equipment manufacturers. The volunteer staff and outings leaders include appropriately qualified and experienced anglers /fly fishers and guides, all of whom donate their time and knowledge to support the Project participants. The long term aim is to enable the participants to gain coaching qualifications so that they can then offer this type of intervention to other veterans whilst also improving their future job prospects.
What are the project’s activities?
As indicated earlier these activities are part of a much bigger intervention that is aimed at addressing the wider social issues that impede social integration following discharge from the military or prison system. The ex service community should be viewed as ‘vulnerable’ and at increased risk of offending or reoffending if the basic support networks fail to meet the needs of this distinct group. About Turns ‘peer led’ support groups provide a much needed forum that facilitates the opportunity to meet and associate with other veterans on a daily or weekly basis. The group assists individuals to navigate and access the multitude of organizations and services available to them in the civilian community. It also offers a safe environment and a chance to meet and be with others who understand the multiple and complex issues facing individuals that have served in today’s Modern day Armed forces.

The aim of the group is to empower and give group members the skills and experience and opportunity to run and facilitate groups themselves and provide mutual support and mentoring to those less well settled Veterans who have not yet reached a level of stability. About Turn’s Social work qualified and registered staff members encourage group members to utilize the numerous transferable and existing skills they gained whilst serving in the Armed Forces and the About Turn group projects and activities allow them the opportunity to ‘do good’ in the civilian community.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The main successes have been around the fact that as of October 2011 none of the veterans referred to the About turn project have reoffended. Whilst it is impossible to attribute this phenomena to this project alone it would appear to be a significant factor in the way the group members have complied with the requirements of their court orders. Several of the angling academy group members have also successfully completed an 8 week, 30 hour ‘veteran specific’ alcohol awareness course that has now being accredited with the Open college network (OCN Level 2). For many this was the first qualification that they had gained since leaving the Armed Forces.

We have had considerable newspaper coverage and this again went along way to raise awareness of issues veterans faced whilst making the transition back to the civilian community but indirectly it also raised the self esteem of all those involved. This was especially the case for those members subject to Probation orders as the article was promoted within the Northumbria Probation Service’s intranet as a good news story. It has also led to About Turn CIC being commissioned to run a short demonstration project to engage and refer those Veterans involved with Northumbria Probation Trust to an Education and Training & Employment specialist (ex forces). We have also sent a team of veterans to an equine therapy centre in Scotland (Horseback UK) and discovered that one of the group members following his visit to had a natural affinity with horses and as a result he was invited back up to Scotland where he is now on a placement on the Balmoral Estate in Aberdeenshire learning rural skills whilst developing new skills that will enable him to pursue a career and that will enable him to live in the rural community.

We also have an allotment within the grounds of Seaton Delaval Hall in North Tyneside a listed building run by the National trust. We grow vegetables and the veterans are encouraged to use the produce in their everyday cooking.
What are your plans for developing the project further?
We would like to mainstream this provision during the next 2 years as its clearly an important route to possible employment but also a great catalyst for getting those subject to Probation Orders to positively structure their lives whilst acting as a therapeutic activity. We would like to employ a CPN to participate in these activities and utilise those former servicemen and women that have made the transition back to the civilian community and now work in a professional capacity as Probation officers, Social workers etc. Our aim is to get former servicemen and women: “....hooked on fishing, not on drugs and alcohol and self destructive behaviour”.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would spend the money on organising future trips for those veterans in need of this service. It would also go towards paying for entry level coaching qualifications for those veterans that want to support their peers by becoming qualified angling coaches.

Organisation: Brent Lodge Park Art Collective
Project Name: Brent Lodge Park Art Collective

Describe your project in one sentence:
The BLP Art Collective is a charity and social enterprise which aims to raise the profile of marginalised artists in Ealing, provides opportunities for them to work and learn as equals alongside local professional artists and creates, exhibits and sells artwork at the Animal Centre inspired by wildlife in Brent Lodge Park.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Brent Lodge Park Animal Centre, Hanwell, Ealing

What are the project’s objectives?
The BLP Art Collective’s main objective is to raise the profile and promote social inclusion of marginalised artists in Ealing including people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, people with mental health problems and people with autistic spectrum conditions through:

a) The provision of opportunities to work and learn as equals alongside local professional artists.
b) The provision of structured, creative sessions allowing artists to create and exhibit artwork at Brent Lodge Park and other locations in Ealing.
We hope to achieve these aims by offering a supportive and creative environment where art sessions are accessible to artists who have difficulty accessing mainstream arts resources.

- The Collective provides an alternative to traditional day services and functions using a model that is different to established practice.
- We aim to be inclusive and view all of the artists involved in the Collective as creative equals. Some artists may require practical support or assistance in areas of their lives, but their creative input and artwork has as much value as any other participant. Artists will work alongside one another, offer criticism and feedback and collaborate on projects regardless of their disability. We aim to offer a resource that is available to individuals based on their interests and talents rather than the ‘client group’ that they belong to.
- The Collective aims to involve participants in as much of the decision making about the running and direction of the social enterprise as possible.
- The Collective aims to hold regular nature-themed exhibitions in the gallery which will be open to the visiting public.
- The Collective aims to create and display signs in the animal centre providing visitors with information about the animals and birds that live there. Artists will learn about the subject of their artwork as part of the creative process. This would include learning about habitat, behaviour and food as well as appearance.
- The Collective aims to establish links with employers in art related fields and offer art related work experience, voluntary and paid employment.
- The Collective aims to function as a social enterprise and eventually become self-sustaining through the sale of merchandise, generation of commissions and the facilitation of paid art workshops.

**What are the project’s activities?**
The art collective has been providing supported art sessions for people with learning disabilities since April 2010. Initially the collective was set up as a pilot and offered free sessions, staffed by volunteers every Sunday. The materials and overheads to provide these sessions were funded by an Unltd grant. Recently we began providing weekday sessions and suggested that artists with individual budgets could purchase these instead of attending a traditional day centre, however the Sunday sessions remain free of charge for artists who do not have individual budgets. We opened the criteria for participating in the Art Collective to include any vulnerable adult who may have difficulty accessing mainstream arts resources and have an interest or skill in creating artwork.

The art collective offers the following services:
- Art sessions - each session is facilitated by a minimum of 2 local, professional artists who volunteer their time and share their skills and experience with participants. During sessions, artists with and without disabilities are encouraged to work together to create designs for commissions, merchandise or original pieces. Designs feature plants and wild animals that are found in the park and the nearby river Brent as well as more exotic animals that are looked after by the animal centre. The collective functions as a social enterprise and profit generated by sales and commissions are put back in to the collective to fund art materials and running costs. Emphasis is placed on producing high quality work with potential commercial value. Since the Art collective started it has developed a reciprocal relationship with the animal centre. In exchange for the use of studio space, artists have created interpretive artwork and signage to decorate the animal centre and inform visitors about the animals that live there.
Running the collective – the collective aims to be user-led and foster a sense of ownership among attendees. Participants are encouraged to make key decisions during sessions, such as creating rules for using the building, deciding on a theme for exhibitions and contributing to policies. Participants also sit on the board of trustees as co-chair, co-treasurer and co-secretary alongside supporting artists and stakeholders.

Work experience – the gallery space offers an opportunity for artists to gain retail experience, socialise with visitors to the park, plan and organise themed exhibitions and exhibit and sell their work. The collective has also arranged work experience invigilating for an art gallery and plans to expand this to other art related work environments.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

One big achievement for the art collective was finding the funds to renovate a building in the animal centre to convert it into an art studio/gallery. This was done with the assistance of a steering group which consisted of Ealing Council staff, members of local art groups, day services and art collective participants. The building was officially opened by the Deputy Mayor of Ealing in February and has been visited by the Executive Director of the council, the local MP and current mayor.

Since the project started, 35 artists with disabilities have accessed art sessions and worked alongside 10 local supporting artists. Local artists have volunteered their time to run sessions and in return they have had the opportunity to exhibit their own work in the gallery. The collective has also worked with Ealing’s Youth Offending Team including a joint session where young people were supported to teach the skills they had learnt to artists with disabilities.

The art collective has produced a number of commissions for the animal centre and visitors to the gallery. This has included signs for animal enclosures, banners, greetings and Christmas cards, paperweights and original paintings. Half of any money made from sales is put back into the collective to purchase materials and the artist is given the option of keeping the other half.

One of the aims of the Art Collective is to offer art related employment opportunities to participants. In March the collective arranged for 2 artists with disabilities to gain work experience in the Euston Crypt Gallery as curators where they also worked on creating new work alongside artists exhibiting at the gallery. Another artist who has a learning disability was recently offered a solo exhibition at the Open Gallery in Ealing.

The collective has a permanent exhibition in the gallery side of the building which always focuses on nature, with a theme chosen by the participants. Previous themes have been ‘Birds of Brent Lodge Park’, Landscapes and Butterflies.

Feedback from visitors and the animal centre about the signs that have been created by the collective has been very positive. The animal centre manager has shown signs to other animal parks and city farms who have expressed interest in commissioning their own signs. Visitors have commented on how clear and informative the descriptions of animals are and how the colourful signs and banners brighten up the animal centre.
What are your plans for developing the project further?
The Art Collective is planning to create merchandise which can be sold on site so more materials can be purchased including nature I-Spy books for children visiting the animal centre. The books will feature artwork depicting plants and animals in the animal centre and the surrounding park which will be ticked off by children as they spot them during their visit. The Art Collective has also been approached by other animal centres and parks who want to commission signs and in addition to signage, the collective would like to begin producing tactile sculptures.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would buy paper – following a flood in the studio 2 months ago, the Art Collective had to throw out damaged paper and materials. We would like to buy 15 packs of A4 @ 7.69 = £115.35, 10 packs of A3 @ 14.79 = £147.90, and 10 packs of A2 @ 17.89 = £178.90

We would buy mosaic tiles – we are turning some of the artist’s designs into tactile mosaics depicting animals, birds and plants from around the animal centre. We would like to buy 20 packs of green/blue mosaic tiles @ £6 = £120 and 15 packs of red/yellow mosaic tiles @ £8.30 = £124.50

We would create merchandise – As a social enterprise, we rely on designing and selling merchandise to purchase new art materials and be self-sustaining. We would print artist’s designs on the following items. 20 hats = £102, 10 shirts = £65, 100 I-Spy booklets = £130 which we could then sell to visitors.

Organisation: Community Support Initiatives
Project Name: Building Cohesive Families Using Nature

Describe your project in one sentence:
We take people suffering from depression and anxiety on a gentle exploration of local woodlands and parks, helping them to explore nature, overcome their anxieties, develop new friends and reduce their social isolation.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Community and council owned parks and woods, plus the local scout campsite, Rhydd Covert

What are the project’s objectives?
Our clients range from single mums and dads, grandparents looking after the kids while their parents are at work, to homeless young people and women who have suffered physical/sexual abuse from partners...but all share one thing in common. They have depression and/or anxiety problems, feel
isolated and alone, and have difficulty in socialising normally. This project uses a simple methodology. Exercise stimulates endorphin production in the brain, a natural ‘high’. So the project’s objectives are:

- Use gentle exercise to stimulate endorphin production and so counteract the effects of depression
- Using the Open Air Laboratory’s Surveys, stimulate the mind, discovering what lives in the local environment and why it is so important
- To teach people how to have fun with traditional exploration of nature, whether it is in the garden, at a local pond or a local woodland, allowing people to pass this knowledge onto their own children (remember the days when you brought sticklebacks back in a jar.)
- Developing social interactions by meeting new people and developing a team spirit
- Encouraging clients to interact, understand and appreciate the local environment on their doorstep
- To increase our clients practical skills through building the equipment needed for pond dipping and bug hunting, using equipment for coppicing and green woodworking, building shelters and camp fires, and using maps and compasses for developing simple orienteering skills.
- To increase their knowledge of how invertebrates affect the food chains
- To have some fun, away from the pressures of the world as a whole, by developing an appreciation of nature

What are the project’s activities?
The project is divided into six activities, delivered over two weeks, three per week, with sessions lasting from 2 to 5 ½ hours

- Activity 1: this was the paperwork day. All participants arrived at the main office and completed the paperwork to register for the course. The basic Health and safety rules were explained, along with our Safeguarding policy. The participants were then given an overview of the course, and shown how to build/use the equipment we would be using over the next five sessions.

- Activity 2: As an introduction to the countryside, the group was taken to Rhydd Covert, the local Scout camp site for a day of orienteering. The group were shown how to use an orienteering map and compass divided into teams and set off around the course, the winners being the team that completed the course in the shortest possible time. The group were also given an autumn treasure sheet where they had to collect a number of items found in and around the site (such as something spiky, a nut, a dried leaf etc,) and a prize was awarded for the teams who could identify the objects they had collected.

- Activity 3: Using the Open Air Laboratory’s Water, Hedgerow and ‘What’s in your back garden?’ surveys, the group was again split into teams, and completed the surveys, looking for plants and animals living in streams (the pond dipping was a huge success.) This activity gave the group the chance to look at species diversity in different habitats, as well as to work together as a team in order to identify the different species they have found.

- Activity 4: For this activity, we teamed up with the local council’s Ranger service and spent most of the day coppicing and thinning trees in the Rifle Range, an SSSI site. It was explained to the group that the Rifle Range was a natural acid-heath land, but due to secondary and tertiary succession, the heath land was in danger of being taken over by trees, losing the natural flora and fauna of the heath land. The day finished with the group cooking sausages over an open fire and chatting about what they had learned about heath land management.

- Activity 5: The group were taken off to Hurcott Woods, again with the local Ranger service, and spent the day learning basic outdoor survival skills. They were provided with some basic equipment and had to build a shelter, collect firewood and light a fire, before cooking their supper. The group
was again split into teams and the Ranger marked the quality of build of the shelter (by pouring water on it to see if it leaked.)

- Activity 6: For the last activity, the group were taken to an allotment. After a discussion about how plants grew, the group were tasked with designing a plot for themselves, and planting a mixture of fruit and vegetables, with a view to tending the plot and looking after the plants until the fruits and vegetables can be harvested.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The group as a whole have developed more confidence, developed their social skills and taken away a great sense of achievement. One person has now decided to undertake teacher training in the sciences; another two are looking at setting up their own gardening business, and one lady has overcome her shyness to the extent that she now volunteers for a local gardening centre and is taking a City & Guilds in horticulture.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
I would like to develop a cooking class, showing learners how to prepare, cook, bottle or pickle their produce, and then sell these items on a local market stall/car boot.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
I would use the prize to buy more tools for the allotment as well as to fund the cooking class (room hire, saucepans, bottles, labels etc.) The prize money would also fund a simple ‘running your own business’ course.

Organisation: Cwmbwrla Day Services
Project Name: Organic gardening/allotment and Beekeeping project

Describe your project in one sentence:
This project supports adults suffering with mental health problems to recovery through a natural hands-on approach.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Community allotment and day centre grounds/garden

What are the project’s objectives?
To assist and support our client group to recover from serious and enduring mental health problems through a variety of activities which encourage confidence, learning new skills and to take on responsibilities that can continue into the future.
What are the project’s activities?
This project offers practical and theoretical learning in organic gardening (vegetables and ornamental flowers), allotment management (utilising skills and experience learned on the gardening courses) and bee keeping (husbandry, honey production and next year; wax crafts)

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The primary impact on Service Users, besides the education opportunities are; having opportunities to take on responsibilities such as; moving onto a supportive (paid, or voluntary) role mentoring new service Users, taking the lead with bee keeping (production and additional learning through bee keeping associations etc) Maintaining garden and allotment out of hours (weekends and bank holidays)

Also an important impact has been that Service Users attending these projects have been accepted as equals in their separate fields and not as; people with disabilities who ‘garden’ and ‘keep bees’

In the first year of the allotment project the 2010 group won the; Swansea in bloom competition for this category.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
We would like to introduce more hives and have another allotment plot in 2012, with the prospect of having enough produce to introduce organic goods into our canteen.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would put this prize back into the projects and purchase what we would need to become self sustainable in the future.

Organisation: Dementia Adventure CIC
Project Name: Wandering in the Woods

Describe your project in one sentence:
Re-connecting people living with dementia in care homes with nature and in particular with woodlands.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Adult social care and community settings
What are the project’s objectives?
At the outset of this project the objectives were for Dementia Adventure to work in partnership with the Woodland Trust (via the Visit Woods project) and the Caring Homes Group to:

- Design and deliver an enjoyable day out in a woodland location for each of three participating pilot sites groups from Caring Homes
- Carry out venue specific risk/benefit assessments at each selected woodland location in discussion with Visit Woods
- Include residents, relatives and staff from Caring Homes in the planning and delivery of the woodland adventures – including time for walking, lunch and research discussion
- Lead the delivery of each day out in the woodland locations
- Carry out participatory appraisal action research to identify the benefits of activity out in woodlands for these individuals
- Capture the woodland adventures on film and video
- Develop multi-media case studies and written information products for national dissemination to encourage more people from ‘excluded groups’ to visit woods.

What are the project’s activities?
The following project activities took place:

- 21 people enjoyed a Woodland day out at Hylands park in Essex in May 2011, including 7 residents and 2 family carers from Caring Homes (Bradbury House) with Dementia Adventure
- 24 people enjoyed a woodland day out at Sheffield park National Trust in East Sussex in May 2011, including 9 residents and 5 family carers from Caring Homes (Heffle Court) with Dementia Adventure
- 17 people enjoyed a woodland day out in Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucestershire in June 2011, including 8 residents and 2 family carers from Caring Homes (Ferfoot) with Dementia Adventure
- Each woodland day out was supported by staff and volunteers (including children) from the Woodland trust, Dementia Adventure and Caring Homes.
- With support and advice from the University of Essex a participatory appraisal research study was conducted to learn about the benefits of visiting woods for the individuals concerned
- Three case studies with associated photo imagery and short films were produced and shared on-line and included in the written report

A final research report titled “Wandering in the Woods – A Visit Woods pilot project” was published and made available online in July 2011 as part of Alzheimer’s Awareness week. (www.dementiaadventure.co.uk – please see the “Visit Woods” page under “Latest research” to view the three Woodland films and read the report).

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The project had a profound impact on the individuals who took part in the woodland days out which were deeply emotional to witness. One lady with dementia upon entering the outdoor willow classroom burst into tears with joy. Below is a selection of quotes taken from different stakeholders further indicating the qualitative impact.
People with dementia said:
- “You start looking again, don’t you”
- “I don’t care how cold it is I like the fresh air”
- “Lovely wandering around together”
- “Listening to the birds was lovely”
- “I felt alive, a wonderful day”
- “The height of love and bliss getting out”
- “Got to come out into the world to see what is going on”
- “Part of the joy has been all ages... lovely to have the children along”
- “It is important to get out into the larger world and community so you don’t get shut away”

Family carers said:
- “I know she is taking it all in”
- “Mum always was an outdoors person, a country girl, and loves to get out”

Woodland trust staff said:
- “The delight on one lady’s face who couldn’t communicate much verbally was wonderful. She reached out and touched and for a short time was in control of what she wanted to do – she wanted to be among the flowers and delight in them”
- “One lady became more independent as she walked along requiring less input from her carer; another lady became less anxious and more relaxed as we wandered along the tree lined paths”

Caring Homes staff said:
- “She (Rosie) has not stopped smiling and talking about the day since she came home asking to go again”

We collected participatory appraisal data both before and after the woodland days out from 27 individuals. The most significant finding in our data collection was on the importance of the term exercise. As a result of the day out we found a 41% increase in participants scoring ‘exercise’ as something which is ‘very important’ to them. We interpreted this data to show that the day out helped re-frame what ‘exercise’ means for people living with dementia in care (traditional ‘exercise’ provision in care settings often taking place indoors and in a seated circle).

In the final report called “Wandering in the Woods” we identified the physical, emotional and social benefits for people living with dementia in care settings having contact and activity out in woodland settings. Benefits included for example, improved sleep and dietary intake, improvement in memory and verbal expression, stronger sense of self, mood enhancement, sense of belonging and friendship as well as community presence and activity. We also learnt that there is a real need for a larger more scientifically robust research in this area to examine the specific benefits of different nature locations and experiences for different groups. We were also left energised about the importance of activity and connection with nature for people living with dementia, it is critical and they want more of it, sooner rather than later. Much of our strength to push on with our work in recent times has been drawn from this project.

This work has also had an impact on the dementia care sector with two journals asking us to write up our learning to share this with the sector and we have recently seen a memory clinic including a green
exercise walk in their day hospital provision. This work is also impacting on the leisure and conservation sector with the National Trust now supporting our work as well as research institutions approaching us to do more work in this area.

**What are your plans for developing the project further?**

We are continuing to work in partnership with the Woodland trust to disseminate the findings of this work and have four articles being prepared for publication in mainstream conservation magazines as well as care and dementia specific journals aimed at older people. These are now being drafted and are due out in the spring 2012. In addition to spreading the word in writing we are also taking the lead in exploring a potential national network of organisations to collaborate together on a larger piece of practice based research which was one of the conclusions we drew from the ‘Wandering in the Woods’ report.

**How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?**

Dementia Adventure is developing a bursary pot from which it can draw finances to support people living with dementia to connect with nature and enjoy a sense of adventure, particularly those who have limited financial means. We would like to add the winner’s prize into this bursary pot so that we can spend it on enabling more people living with dementia to enjoy activity out in nature. Specifically we have two projects that could equally benefit from the prize money – our park walks programme which will resume in the spring and our second sailing holiday being planned for May 2012.

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**Organisation: Derbyshire Mind**  
**Project Name: Enjoying Derby - Walking for Wellbeing**

Describe your project in one sentence:  
A programme of guided walks in and around Derby to encourage people with mental health problems to be more physically active.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?  
The programme is within adult social care and is delivered in the community around the city of Derby and into Derbyshire.

What are the project’s objectives?  
Enjoying Derby is a walking for wellbeing programme which improves both the physical and mental health of its participants. It was set up by Derbyshire Mind to offer an opportunity for people with
mental health problems to increase their physical activity levels in a supportive environment of a guided walk. We include green space in all of our walks because it has proven benefits on mental health.

**What are the project’s activities?**
We currently offer organised walks twice per week. These are supplemented by special walks at other times, depending upon season and other activities taking place in Derby. We are accredited with the national initiative Walking for Health and have two walk leader trainers so we also offer all our walkers an opportunity to train as Assistant Walk Leaders; we have eight at this time. They help to plan and deliver the walks. Walks are categorised as Short – about a mile in length and taking about an hour, Medium – two miles and two hours or Long – three miles or three hours. We have 350 green spaces in Derby and 15 nature Reserves. Some walks involve a journey on public transport allowing us to travel further to walk whether to a local park in the suburbs of Derby or to one of Derby’s tourist attractions like Matlock Bath.

Although our walks were created for people with mental health problems in mind, the walks are open to everyone. This means no-one is identified as a person with mental health problems, thereby reducing stigma and encouraging integration.

**What has been the impact / achievement of the project?**
Enjoying Derby has had a positive impact on many of over 600 people who have attended walks. Some only come once, some attend regularly for a time then move on to other social activities, which we encourage. We usually have a core group of 60 regular walkers at any one time. This enables us to focus on the current needs of the group, who help to plan, design, risk assess and deliver walks and other activities that help them to gain confidence and improve their social activity. The title of the project is positive and although we talk about walking for wellbeing we don’t specifically talk about exercise because most people don’t see themselves as someone who does exercise. The focus is on interesting and varied walks which people look forward to.

The format of a safe health walk provided by Walking for Health is simple, with training and administration templates provided. This means that staff and volunteers are free to support walkers and ensure they enjoy the walk. Our walkers tell us the benefits of walking in an organised group itself include physical benefits, increased fitness, weight loss or maintaining weight, more energy. The effects on mental health include distraction from fears and worries and new evidence claims that walking in green spaces can be as effective a treatment for depression as taking antidepressants. Socially people can enjoy talking to others or just being with people without having to talk. They enjoy meeting up after the walk for coffee or a meal. Our walkers also enjoy being part of a group, meeting new people and going out together. They accept each other and are accepted. They like to develop new skills and improve their fitness. Through the walks they are learning about their city and taking pride in it.

Enjoying Derby walks take our walkers to places they have not visited before or points out the history behind familiar landmarks enabling them to see Derby in a new light. Walks are themed – natural history, history, art, quizzes and current developments. Natural history could be a bird walk with our resident ornithologist, a visit to a park or one of Derby’s 15 nature reserves. History walks include broad topics such as Roman Derby, Jacobean Derby and our Rail Heritage or focus on characters such as Florence Nightingale. Our art walks include public art, architecture, visiting exhibitions, or taking part in
creative workshops. Our quiz walks include a birds or trees. We also like to keep up with new developments in the city. We took part in the Big Draw last year and while we were drawing we learned about the council’s scheme to utilise empty shops in the city. This knowledge of what is happening in the city helps our walkers to have a stronger sense of citizenship and ownership of “their” city. We work with statutory organisations like Derby Museums and Wild Derby and voluntary sector groups like BCTV and the Wildlife Trust to create walks, giving us both new walks and new audiences. We have worked with over 30 different groups in this way. New opportunities for social involvement have arisen for our walkers through these partnerships, for example they have been invited to join Derby Tree Warden Network. This enables our walkers to gain confidence to move on into more mainstream social activities.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
Enjoying Derby is well established and has great potential for further development. We would like to expand the current programme, and include other physical activities like swimming. We want to provide regular walkers with journals for them to record their own progress and monitor how they are feeling as a result of increased activity and engaging in the project. We are currently setting up a ‘Friends of Enjoying Derby’ group to organise social and fundraising events. This could involve non-walkers who want to be involved in Enjoying Derby and would give further opportunities for volunteering and involvement.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would spend most of the money on transport to help us reach places that are difficult to access by public transport in the Peak District. Our walkers would also like to go further afield to somewhere like York. They would like to arrange a walk with a picnic in Derbyshire.

Organisation: East Kent Mencap
Project Name: Bird Diaries

Describe your project in one sentence:
East Kent Mencap’s Photography Group members with learning disabilities are monitoring bird activity at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust by taking photographs of the birds, which are used for the Trust’s records and are viewed by visitors to the Trust.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Adult Social Care
What are the project’s objectives?
The objectives of the project are:

- To teach adults with learning disabilities about wildlife and appreciating nature
- To engage these members by interacting with nature, expressing and capturing wildlife on camera
- To produce a Photographic ‘Bird Diary’ for the Trust to:
  a) Monitor bird activity
  b) Keep as a record
  c) Display for members of the public to study when visiting the Bird Observatory
- To improve the Photography Group’s photography skills and therefore improve coordination skills for members with learning disabilities
- To provide a meaningful experience for members with learning disabilities in a supported environment where they can intergrate, learn and work as part of a team

What are the project’s activities?
A group of at ten people with learning disabilities take part in the project which is based at the Scrape. This is a piece of land at the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust, with shallow waters and lots of little islands which is good for wading birds (and birds of prey). Each week members of the group take photographic and written records of the birds that they see there. This is the first time that the Trust has kept a regular photographic diary and is an important addition to the records already kept over 50 years. It allows the Trust to monitor the birds in a new way with photographs that are also available for the public to view.

A Support Worker accompanies the group and activities involve organising the camera equipment (cameras, batteries, tripods) and travelling to the Bird Observatory where they set up the equipment at the hide (a wooden shelter). The hide allows the group to take their photos in all weathers. Members of the public also use the hide so it is a great opportunity for members who have challenging communication needs to interact with members of the public and share experiences. With 8/10 people with a learning disability saying that they have been bullied, they often lack the confidence to interact with the local community. The project provides an environment to build this confidence back up and the project has received a lot of interest from the public who visit the observatory.

When the photos have been taken the group process the images and catalogue them by bird species into separate computer folders. The means that the Bird Observatory can find images quickly and easily. This project is funded by The Nicky and Eileen Barber Charitable Settlement.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The impact of the project has been that:

- 10 people with learning disabilities have learnt about wildlife through this project by compiling their records and enjoy expressing their love of wildlife through photography.
- 10 people with learning disabilities have benefitted from an increased sense of self-worth and self-confidence through this project, as they compile records for the Trust. 8/10 people with a learning disability say that they have been bullied, something which can affect their confidence greatly. By providing a service for the Trust our members tell us that they feel valued and needed.
• The Trust is a volunteer-run Centre and by working in partnership with staff and volunteers at the Trust, 10 people with learning disabilities have benefitted from the experience of teamwork and have forged working friendships.
• 10 people with learning disabilities have developed their photography skills and enjoy their hobby as a result of the project.
• The Trust has benefitted from new photographic records which help them to assess the work of the Trust.
• Members of the public who visit the Trust benefit from being able to look at photographic records during their visits, adding to their experience.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
The Photography Group get so much pleasure out of the project that they hope it can continue beyond the first year and it has a lot of scope for development. The Bird Observatory Trust plan to develop five acres of land to make the Scrape bigger, which will attract more wildlife meaning that the Bird Diaries project can also expand. The Observatory is beginning to study butterflies and so there is also the option to create a similar project, Butterfly Diaries.

The group are looking into setting up a website to display their photos and give information about the project and would work closely with Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory to do this, linking to the Bird Observatory’s website. The group also hope to get funding to turn some of their photographs into postcards.

One long term aim of the project is that hopefully some of our members will soon feel confident enough to volunteer at the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory, as it is a Volunteer-run Trust. One day it would be fantastic to have a member with a learning disability on the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Committee.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
The £1000 prize would be spent on organising an exhibition of the Photography Group’s work. The Photography Group have put on exhibitions in the past which have all been very successful, with a few pieces of photography being purchased by members of the public. The Photography Group love putting on exhibitions as they provide an opportunity for their achievements to be recognised and for their photography to be fully appreciated and admired.

Materials needed to put on an exhibition include memory sticks, mounting boards, prints and spray glue. The money would also help the group cover costs of hiring a venue. The Photography Group members all have learning disabilities and need extra support from Support Workers to prepare for an exhibition and so the money would cover the staff costs for this too. The group would also like to produce promotional postcards of their photographs to give to members of the public visiting the exhibition.
Organisation: **Framework Housing Association**  
**Project Name:** **Gateway to Nature**

**Describe your project in one sentence:**  
Gateway to Nature supports vulnerable and socially excluded people in overcoming the barriers they may face in accessing and enjoying natural places and spaces.

**Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?**  
We work with people in homeless, direct access services, supported housing, mental health services, substance misuse services, young people’s services, and many other services and projects for socially excluded people. We deliver the service in project gardens, community allotments, local parks, and wildlife and country parks.

**What are the project’s objectives?**  
A fundamental aspect of the work is supporting people to overcome the barriers which prevent them from accessing and enjoying green and natural spaces. We will work closely with groups and organisations which engage with, and support, vulnerable and socially excluded individuals and groups, as well as those which provide green spaces, and opportunities for people to engage in activities which bring them closer to nature, in the broadest sense.

The project objectives are to:
- Inspire and motivate people to get out and enjoy natural places and make a positive contribution to the environment.
- Offer the best opportunities to encourage people to try new activities and experiences in the natural world, and to promote the associated positive health messages.
- To offer on-going opportunities to people to develop new skills, get involved in voluntary work, and pursue possible employment opportunities.

**What are the project’s activities?**  
The project offers a wide range of activities and is open to developing ideas from everyone involved in the project. Activities to date include:
- Growing fruit and vegetables on our allotments.
- Developing a community orchard, including ponds and wildlife areas.
- Developing wildlife friendly gardens at some of our accommodation services.
- Exploring, understanding, and enjoying local parks and nature reserves.
- Friendly off road bike rides.
- Making 3 short nature-related films, with Nottingham Trent University students.
- Using photography to capture positive environmental and wildlife images.
• Creating pieces of environmental art and sculpture.
• Drumming sessions in woodland settings.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The project has achieved a wide range of things in its first 9 months:
• We had a successful launch of the project in May, with our patron, author Robert Macfarlane, in the Nottingham arboretum.
• We have developed excellent publicity materials including flyers, posters, banners, and bank-card sized nature prompts/ reminders (of the health benefits of natural spaces).
• We have developed the project from a strong research and evidence base, and distilled the essential messages into our work and practice.
• We have developed strong partnerships with a large number of external support and care organisations including the Healthcare Trust, the Dual Diagnosis Forum, and Roads to Recovery.
• We have respected the place and work of other organisations, and sought to add value to them, and work together in partnership rather than replicate or compete.
• We have supported over 350 vulnerably housed people in having a new nature-related experience, or doing a new activity.
• We contributed to two National Heritage Lottery Oral History seminars which have documented the history of the allotment and community garden movement in England.
• We have grown a wide range of vegetables including winning the biggest squash at the Windmill competition.
• We have contributed to the establishment of a community orchard including the planting of 18 apple trees.
• We are developing a wildlife friendly community garden at our Older Person’s Services.
• We have attracted 15 volunteers and 10 Green Champions in the project.

Some quotes from service users and partners:
• “I spent the day in a great environment and also learnt new things about conservation of wildlife and our green areas.”
• “It took me back to my childhood.” (Pond dipping).
• “Interaction with the group and beneficial for mental and physical health.”
• “I like the butterflies, moths, trees and the different kinds of flowers.”
• “It was peaceful and tranquil. Just about the right amount of walking.” (What has stopped you coming before? – “I suffer from acute anxiety.”)

Roger Robb (Whitemoor Community Allotment):
“Do not under-estimate the work you guys are doing. It is inspirational and it changes people’s lives. Keep up the good work.”

Mel Dickinson: Older Person’s Services.
“Gateway to Nature is a fantastic service which includes and involves people who have been forgotten by society. The response from our men when taking part is one of praise and enthusiasm for all your hard work. These activities provide a meaning to their day, give them fresh air and a feel good factor.”
What are your plans for developing the project further?
We need to consolidate the work and partnerships we have already developed. The project has a strong and well established value and practice base and we need to continue to recruit ‘green champions’ in our bid to spread the ‘word’, the enthusiasm, and the scope of the project. We need to continue to ensure that we offer a service across the whole of Nottinghamshire and offer opportunities to as wide a range of people and groups as possible. We are starting to work with Nottingham Trent University students on 3 short films about the project.

The project will look to develop partnerships which will support Gateway to Nature in becoming more sustainable in the medium to long term. We will be meeting with the Nottinghamshire Woodland Trust with this in mind.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would spend the money on a residential outdoor weekend. This will give our service users an added incentive to maintain consistent engagement with some activities and to reach a level of engagement and stability which will allow them to take on something exceptional, memorable and challenging. We would work with staff and service users to ensure that there is a fair and open process, as well having ‘criteria’ which is fair and reasonable. For example, someone may have to move away from drinking alcohol on a daily basis in order to go on the trip. We would work with the group to decide on what range of activities to do, for example gorge walking, caving, climbing, and mountain biking.

Organisation: Future Roots
Project Name: The Countrymen’s Club

Describe your project in one sentence:
A programme for retired farmers who are suffering from poor mental health to re-establish their connection to the land and their peers through therapeutic horticulture and animal-assisted activities.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Adult Social Care

What are the project’s objectives?
We are aiming to further develop a weekly programme of farm-based activities for retired farmers (and other people who have lived in the countryside) who are suffering from dementia or poor mental health and who are now resident in nursing homes or accessing other care services.
What are the project’s activities?
A weekly programme for retired farmers (and other older people who have lived in the countryside) who are now living in nursing homes due to poor mental health. The programme activities focus on re-establishing their connection to the land and their peers by providing therapeutic horticulture and animal-assisted activities. As a care farm, Future Roots’ entire ethos is to put people in touch with nature by facilitating work with animals and plants in a safe environment. We are referring to this project as a club, as the aim is for it to develop into a regular weekly meeting that the older people will gradually take ‘ownership’ of. Their club is an opportunity to socialise, to work in the garden growing fruits and vegetables, and to help care for our farm animals.

Future Roots also hosts 65 young people each week who are referred to us from schools and learning centres (pupil referral units) across Dorset. An important element of our work with adults and older people is to facilitate intergenerational learning with these young people in order to share knowledge of farming and rural life as well as build community cohesion in general.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The programme provides gentle exercise and cognitive stimulation, which has been shown to play a part in delaying the further onset of dementia or Parkinson’s Disease. Over the last year the project has developed organically as a result of a growing demand from care homes that are struggling to find meaningful activities for their elderly gentlemen who are not interested in the everyday indoor activities (baking, needlework etc.) that is on offer to them. We have been hosting visits from three care homes (Thorngrove House Care Home in Gillingham, Riverside Nursing & Convalescence Home in Sherborne and Hendford Care Home in Yeovil), two supported houses for adults with learning disabilities (Smallwood in Blandford St Mary and Ivers House in Marnhull) and a supported housing group in Sherborne. All have reported back that their visits to the farm and the highlight of their weeks and an important part of improving their quality of life.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
The programme has developed organically and has focussed on a structured care package based around therapeutic horticulture and animal-assisted activities. We want to expand this programme to more care homes and to start offering regular events that focus on positive reminiscences by drawing on farming memorabilia and heritage-based events. This would include events with direct links to nature such as demonstrations of traditional crafts such as beekeeping, thatching, dry stone walling and hurdle making as well as events linked to local food such as cheese tasting. We plan to establish a group of 10-15 gentlemen over the next six months.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
As a provider of farm-based therapeutic and educational programmes, Future Roots already has the infrastructure in place to deliver the new programme and would use the prize to pay for some of the direct costs of activities. In particular, the prize would be spent to help cover the costs of a worker trained in horticultural projects with vulnerable people and to develop the positive reminiscences events. This would include covering some of the expenses of external demonstrators or the costs of plants and other materials that would be needed.
Organisation: **HMP Guys Marsh**  
**Project Name:** **Guys Marsh Biodiversity Corridor**

**Describe your project in one sentence:**  
A series of individual areas that together form a ‘Biodiversity Corridor’; designed to broaden offender learning, create habitats and support an increasing variety of wildlife.

**Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?**  
Category C Adult Male Training Prison.

**What are the project’s objectives?**
- To improve an area of land which has previously been left fallow.
- To engage a minimum of 30 men (initially) in constructive work, thereby encouraging them to contribute to the enhancement of their living environment.
- To incorporate subjects such as conservation and wildlife into a pattern of learning and study, not only for the initial workforce but also for all future groups that have contact with this area.
- To attract and support an increasing variety of wildlife within this part of the prison estate.

**What are the project’s activities?**
- Digging, lining and filling a pond ready for planting its surround. The pond has been designed to complement the existing bog garden.
- Establishing an area of decking and accompanying pathways.
- Constructing a framework to support the pleaching of willow trees.
- Using spoil from the pond to alter the contours of the land alongside established pathways.
- Naturalising bulbs.
- Broadcast sowing grass and wildflower seed.
- Propagating and planting wildflower plugs.
- Completing a partially established native hedgerow.

We intend for this project to provide significant and interesting winter activity for prisoners designated to work within the Farms and Gardens department. We aim to encourage them to observe and contribute to the development of this land, whilst also understanding the positive impact of their work on the wider countryside.

**What has been the impact / achievement of the project?**
- To enhance the appearance of the landscape as you enter the core of the prison estate.
- To draw interest from the men at the prospect of being able to take part in an exciting winter project, which will continue to evolve over the coming years. We hope they will enjoy gaining qualifications and having their opportunity to leave a legacy from their time at Guys Marsh.
- Field voles, owls, a woodpecker and a collared dove have all been spotted living and moving around the vicinity. We hope to increase the biodiversity of the immediate area whilst providing another attractive wildlife corridor in this area of North Dorset.

**What are your plans for developing the project further?**
- Involve the local wildlife trusts so that the men can learn to undertake regular surveys of the flora and fauna.
- Use covered indoor growing space for further propagation and cultivation of native plants to colonise the meadow areas.
- Provide more nesting sites within the existing woodland area and attract a broader cross-section of wildlife.
- Improve the area beyond the willows and pond, near the main entrance to the core of the estate.

**How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?**
Some funding has already been raised from our successful entry into the National Amateur Gardening Show earlier this year. This will contribute primarily to the construction of the pond, pathways and decking.

We would therefore be seeking further funding for;
- Wildflower seed
- Aquatic plants
- Bulbs
- Native plants (such as hedging)

This would enable us to;
- Create a wildflower meadow
- Plant up the margins of a new wildlife pond
- Enhance the edges of a pathway leading into the core of the prison
- Improve and complete the existing hedgerow to provide potential nesting sites and food sources

**Organisation:** Home Group  
**Project Name:** Mirehouse Community Garden

**Describe your project in one sentence:**
A community driven project to develop an unused and derelict site on the housing estate of Mirehouse (an area scoring very high on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) into a community space and vegetable/fruit garden for use by the local lunch club, tenants and residents and local school (Valley Primary School).
Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
A Social Housing estate in Whitehaven where the majority of housing is owned by Home Group social housing provider. The area scores very high on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Mirehouse being in the top 5% nationally in the super output areas.

What are the project’s objectives?
The Community Garden has been developed to be a hospitable place for people to mix with a group, diverse in age, background and ability to form friendships and social bonds which contribute to a sense of community; to be a place where tenants and residents can share gardening knowledge with other locals who have no, or just less experience in the field of horticulture - about sustainability, organic methods, waste-reduction and yearly food cycles; to be a space on the estate where fresh organic food such as vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers can be grown; to provide a place for social interaction, physical exercise, nutritious organic produce and a sense of well being; and to create an environment that is tranquil and neighbourly.

What are the project’s activities?
The projects activities include the regular exercise and outdoor activities that tending a garden brings. It is not only the physical well being it promotes, but also the mental well being, the sense of achievement it has brought to the people involved in the project. It is important to note that it has also helped to assist the schoolchildren in their literacy & numeracy work as part of their school project activity work. We have also helped to acquire a couple of benches for residents who just want to sit and enjoy the tranquillity.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
This project is not simply about growing a few vegetables; it is all about community Cohesion and the promotion of healthy eating and activity. From the original conversation at the community centre, it was about how we could involve residents of all ages in something that they could enjoy, have fun with and be proud of. It was, no doubt, a challenge as there was funding to secure, as well as much cynicism (sadly from a local PCSO who suggested that it was a waste of effort as it would be vandalised) the residents hadn’t done any bids previously, where would it be? How? Who? What? Where? The common theme was that everyone that used the centre had family or relatives at the local school. We contacted the school who were elated at being invited to take part. Using Intergenerational practice & activities, plans were drawn up, based on ideas and suggestions from consultation held at bingo sessions, youth clubs, lunch clubs and school lessons. These were drawn up and presented for approval at further sessions funding was secured and the site identified and developed.

The impact has been something special, at the official opening we had young schoolchildren, being supervised by the older generations, and for the first time in their lives digging up and collecting vegetables and fresh fruit. Believe me you had to be there to see the face of an 8 year old boy on discovering just how many potatoes came off one plant!! The impact has driven the groups on to further projects and wider ambitions. They continue to work together to improve their community: a dilapidated railway arch has been redecorated and improved, there are silver surfer computer sessions staffed by young people to aid the older generation become familiar with technology. There have also
been theatre trips organised as this was initially seen by some as 'out of their league' and only for 'posh folk' | there is a common sense of belief that they as a collective can achieve, which in an area of low aspiration and high unemployment is crucial

**What are your plans for developing the project further?**
The project is ongoing, and this second year we hope that we may be able to establish a form of Food Co-op and run this from the local Community Centre, using local farm produce and making it more affordable and accessible to our lower income families - who are in the majority in our local area. This project has shown that working together achieves results and inspires ambition. We intend to expand the residents group and promote its activities and achievements to ensure more residents have the opportunity to have a say and make a difference in their community. We would like a more effective watering system rather than the collection system we have at the moment with water butts, although we have to say there is no shortage of rain in West Cumbria!

**How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?**
The prize money would be invested into the continued development of the garden project, to initiate the food co-op which would make the project more inclusive to the wider community. This would of course be subject to approval of all groups involved in the project.

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**Organisation:** Kairos Community Trust  
**Project Name:** Kairos Beekeeping

**Describe your project in one sentence:**  
Kairos offers programmes of rehabilitation and move-on accommodation to homeless people with addiction related problems

**Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?**  
Community Detoxification unit; Rehabilitation Care Home; Move-on Accomodation (30 houses); Aftercare Programme; Day Programme. The hives are situated at three of the move-on houses.

**What are the project’s objectives?**  
The objectives of the beekeeping project are:
1. To provide an environmentally worthwhile creative outlet and hobby for residents in Kairos Move-on houses
2. To train residents in beekeeping
3. To educate residents in the vital role bees play in pollination
4. To support resident beekeepers through all the stages of the beekeeping process, e.g., buying of hives; allowing hives to be placed in Kairos hostel gardens; getting local established beekeepers to mentor and guide Kairos trainees.

What are the project’s activities?
We have seven hives. We have trained six people in beekeeping with Urban Bees, a London-based umbrella group for the promotion of beekeeping in the city. We hold an annual honey harvest in early August to which we invite children for a hands-on educational experience in spinning the honey. Our beekeepers have learnt the skill of swarm management in the propagation of hives.

What has been the impact/achievement of the project?
It has had an incredibly positive impact resulting in an understanding and knowledge of the work of the bee; in the skill and fun of beekeeping; in being voted best honey in London last year in a competition run by the Evening Standard; in having a chapter written about the project in a book entitled Bees in the City (Allison Benjamin); in the taste of beautiful natural honey and in the wonder of playing our part in looking after our environment.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
- Increase hives and train more people
- Start a seed propagation programme

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
- Buy another hive along with tools and protective clothing
- Train two more people who have been through rehab
exclusion from schools due to complex behaviour difficulties or criminal activity and children already excluded and referred to the iMap (Intensive Mentoring and Assessment Programme) and King’s Reach Training Centre from social services, local schools, Youth Offending Team or the Maidstone and Malling Pupil Referral Unit.

What are the project’s objectives?
- To help and support young people, in particular but not exclusively those who are at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of crime, by providing information, support and activities for them to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible adults.
- Using woodland activities as a catalyst for building self-esteem, positive relationships and teamwork.
- Use the woodland as an educational space to provide accredited courses as part of an alternative curriculum. The accredited courses aim to engage the young people back into education and work.
- Provide the opportunity for vulnerable teens and children to experience nature and adventure, take considered risks, manage themselves and to care for others.
- Provide a venue for preventative services to engage with young people to limit exclusion from education and criminal activity.
- Maintain the woodland as an area of ecological excellence and sustainability where it can be enjoyed by children, families and the wider community

What are the project’s activities?
- Explore nature and learn bush craft
- Cook
- Track, hunt, sporting activities
- Individual and group challenges
- Education: Accredited courses and forest school activities
- 1:1 counselling and mentoring
- Building skills linked to courses eg roundhouse, green toilet facilities, fire pit.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
We have been running woodland activities in Marden for the six months and in various small venues for four years. These activities have included nature based woodland walks, fire making and nature enjoyment and skills activities as well as education based projects such as building a roundhouse. To date the woodland experiences have been pivotal in linking vulnerable teens back into positive relationships, education and work.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
King’s Reach is purchasing Rutland Wood to enable the existing outdoor experiences and education opportunities to significantly expand. We would open up the much larger site to become available to other schools, youth groups and community groups. The permanent site would enable us to run the activities daily which would increase the number of young people who receive 1:1 counselling and mentoring, small group nature and adventure activities and courses. We would like to build a low ropes
course and develop the paths, fire area and lake to be safe for children to access. We plan to stock the lake. We would also secure planning permission and build green toilet facilities and a roundhouse.

**How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?**
We would use the £1000 for materials and to pay for any special services/consultation needed to prepare the woodland for use. It would not be used for salaries as the Woodland Project Manager is funded separately and has a volunteer base of over 20 men to provide labour.

We will:
- Plan for the new woodland to be environmentally sustainable and ecologically sound.
- Check the woodland and remove/relocate unsafe or harmful items
- Clear paths
- Build green toilet facilities
- Clear a fire pit area and purchase fire grill and cooking materials
- Stock the lake with indigenous fish and ensure lake is a sustainable habitat
- Purchase materials for the low ropes course
- Purchase materials for future outdoor activities and education

**Organisation:** Life Cycle UK  
**Project Name:** Two’s Company

**Describe your project in one sentence:**  
Two’s Company aims to open up a whole new world for people who are blind or visually impaired by giving them the opportunity to get out into the countryside and participate in a healthy, fun and life enhancing activity – tandem cycling.

**Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?**  
Adult Social Care, Community

**What are the project’s objectives?**  
We believe that everyone should be able to get out into the countryside and experience the joys of riding a bicycle, no matter what their personal circumstances. Two’s Company provides opportunities for visually impaired and disabled individuals to come out cycling on the back of a tandem bike. We cater for adults who are visually impaired or disabled. Some visually impaired participants have been blind from birth, whilst others have lost their sight as a result of an accident or deteriorating eye condition. We also cater for adults with other disabilities. One participant, for
example, suffers from Marfan Syndrome; a genetic disorder affecting eyesight, heart, skeleton, balance and concentration.

Two’s Company aims to connect its participants with the natural environment to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. In doing so, the project aims to address several areas of need for our participants:
• Sport and exercise: Many disabled people find it hard to exercise independently, telling us they lack opportunities to exercise and keep fit. None of our participants are able to ride a bike independently.
• Social exclusion and isolation: Some participants tell us they can feel isolated and lonely and their opportunities to socialise and make new friends are limited. Many are unable to organise a trip beyond their immediate neighbourhood without help.
• Low incomes: 75% of visually impaired people are unemployed. Finding the money for any social and life enhancing activities can be a real struggle. We keep Two’s Company rides free of charge as we don’t want to exclude people who wouldn’t be able to afford to take part.

This is what the participants have to say:
• “I frequently encounter barriers that make it difficult for me to do the things I want to do. Cycling is one example. Socialising is another.”
• “I am unable to run or to cycle unless on the back of a tandem. These things are important to me, as I like to try and keep myself fit.”
• “I have wanted to take up regular tandem riding for a long time but have only had this opportunity since hearing about Two’s Company. They are a very friendly and supportive group of people and have made me feel very welcome.”

What are the project’s activities?
Two’s Company offers a fully supported programme of guided tandem rides to visually impaired and disabled individuals across Bristol. All rides are free of charge. We organise about 24 rides every year between March and October, with the intention of getting participants out and about, experiencing and interacting with nature. Most rides are on local “green corridor” routes around the Bristol area, but we go further afield too. A typical ride has up to eight tandems, each with a sighted person at the front and a visually impaired/disabled co-rider behind. The rides are enjoyable days out, giving participants who would often struggle to organise excursions independently opportunities to spend time in the countryside and reconnect with nature.

The rides offer participants a change of scene and a breath of fresh air, a chance to exercise, to socialise and to feel part of a group. Many participants have commented that after an enjoyable day out in the countryside, they feel sad when a ride comes to end and they must return home for the evening.
Responding to this, in 2011 we ran a weekend trip away to an idyllic location – The Tarka Trail, a long distance cycle path in Devon.

The Tarka Trail incorporates many different wildlife habitats along the route including estuary mud flats and salt marshes, oak woodland, hazel coppice, hedges, ponds, streams, ditches and meadows. Travelling through this unspoilt countryside, participants were transported a world away from the trials and limitations of their everyday life at home. And with no need to return home at the end of the day, able to let their minds wander free and completely immerse themselves in their surroundings. The trip
was a huge success. Participants relished spending an extended period away in such beautiful surroundings and are extremely keen to return next year.

**What has been the impact / achievement of the project?**

Two’s Company is making a huge positive impact on the lives of visually impaired and disabled people in Bristol. Our guided rides open up new possibilities to people who are often marginalised or isolated due to their conditions. The programme provides positive outcomes in a number of areas:

**Appreciating Nature:** Our participants often struggle to get out and about independently because of their conditions. A fully organised (and free) day out with Two’s Company can therefore represent a rare opportunity for individuals to get out of the city and appreciate the beautiful countryside; the sounds and smells of nature, the wind in their hair and the sun on their face. Each ride takes in somewhere different and is tailored to the needs of the group.

- “**Beautiful scenery. Would love to go on some more rides. This day really made a difference to me**”.  
  – Krysia, disabled participant

**Health and fitness:** We offer participants regular opportunities to take part in physical activities and keep fit. All our participants agree that cycling through the countryside is infinitely better than going to the gym!

- “**Two’s Company is very important to me as it helps with my fitness levels and breathing which has been very badly affected due to my car crash.**” – Jenny, blind participant

**Equality:** Tandem riding is an activity that requires both riders to work together as a team. Participants tell us this is important to them as they want to take part on an equal basis without feeling patronised. Confidence, inspiration and motivation - some visually impaired people told us that losing their sight/part of their sight, has been a major blow to their confidence. After coming on a ride the same people told us that they have been surprised by how easy the rides have been, and how much they have enjoyed themselves and that riding has given their confidence a real boost.

**Community Cohesion:** The project has spawned new friendships and helped reduce isolation for visually impaired people by bringing them into regular contact with sighted people:

- “**Two’s Company gives me a social life and has allowed me to make new friends and be accepted by sighted non-disabled people.**”

**What are your plans for developing the project further?**

Two’s Company is proving to be fantastically successful at getting visually impaired and disabled people in Bristol out of the city and into the countryside. However, demand is normally greater than we can cater for as participants are so enthusiastic and keen to come out. We are currently limited by capacity to organise the programme. Each extra participant on a group ride requires us to buy a new tandem and recruit a new volunteer front rider, an expensive and time consuming process. Each extra ride requires route selection and reconnaissance, recruitment of a full contingent of volunteer front riders and the organisation of transport to and from the start point of the participants – none of whom can drive.

We wish to increase again the number of rides which we run each year and the number of tandems in our fleet. However, this process is very much dependant on securing the necessary funding. The
enormous success of the project’s first weekend trip away to Devon has also made us extremely keen to make an extended trip away a regular feature in our yearly programme.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
The winner’s prize of £1000 would represent an enormously helpful contribution to the costs of organising our 2012 ride programme.
In particular, we would put this money towards organising another weekend trip away to Devon, allowing participants the chance to spend a sustained period away from home in a beautiful natural environment.

Weekend Trip Budget
- Accommodation (£210)
- Food (£140)
- Spare parts (£50)
- Transport of people & tandems (£235)
- Insurance (£50)
- Planning, organisation, monitoring & evaluation (£280)

Total: £965

Organisation: Newport City Homes
Project Name: The Lliswerry Pond Project

Describe your project in one sentence:
Lliswerry pond is a restored oasis sustaining wildlife and habitat in the heart of 4 large housing estates and provides residents with much welcome reprieve from the daily grind.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
As mentioned, the pond is located in the heart of four of Newport City Homes’ estates that together accommodates some 2300 properties.

Until recently the pond was looked after by Newport Council. Unfortunately the area was very much neglected and soon became an area of anti-social behaviour. In 2007 the running of the pond was taken over by a local fishing bailiff and a group called The New City Anglers were formed. All maintenance is currently carried out and paid for by this group.
The pond has become a community oasis and has an excellent club membership spanning all user groups. Numbers are increasing steadily each year and this can be evidenced by the increasing entries
received for competition held on an annual basis. For example the most recent saw 54 apply which saw an increase of over 50% to that of last year.

It goes without saying that through providing a facility for angling those responsible for the maintenance and repair of the pond and grounds have been instrumental in developing a mini nature reserve in what could otherwise be described as an urban setting. Moreover stewards of the pond can often be found providing tours and guides to visitors to the site in respect of wildlife, flora and fauna and habitat not forgetting also our returning swan visitors.

What are the project’s objectives?
The project objectives are too:

- Provide an a first class angling facility accessible to all by 2012
- Promote the sport of angling to all user groups and with it the benefit of spending time in a facility offering a calm and relaxing environment
- Promote the facilities to the wider community as a place to come and enjoy
- Through local community engagement promote angling to youths as an alternative after school provision thereby reducing anti-social behaviour synonymous with some of the neighbouring estate*
- Improve and subsequently maintain pathways around the site thereby support disabled people or those with impaired mobility to access the facility whether for the purpose of angling or enjoyment.
- Through the vehicle of angling raise awareness of and interest in local environment, habitat and biodiversity
- Maintain, repair and develop the facility recognising the need to meet current human need while preserving the environment so that needs can not only be met in the present but for future generations also.

* The local police and councillors have been in full support this application due to the fact that the youths that were once causing trouble are now also involved in the pond and ASB has reduced by 27% in the area. We hope that we can continue in this way by partnership working, encouraging community involvement and teaching new skills.

What are the project’s activities?
We now have a ladies’ fishing club that meet twice a week in the summer and this has culminated in holding fishing competitions specifically for women on an annual basis. We now have a fishing group for children and hold fun days and children’s fishing competitions. The youths tend to continue to meet even when the fishing weather is inappropriate. We then teach them to care and maintain the area which they enjoy. We now have a disabled fishing club that attend every week. In time we would like to extend this to make the visits more often. We have an avid group of bird watchers that come to the pond for their pictures. We are also members of the Swan rescue Club. Thanks to the seating installed families now come for the day and hold BBQ’s, picnics and feed the ducks.
What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The local police and councillors have been in full support this application due to the fact that the youths that were once causing trouble are now also involved in the pond and ASB has reduced by 27% in the area. We hope that we can continue in this way by partnership working, encouraging community involvement and teaching new skills.

All service users have benefit from this project, from parents with their children feeding the ducks to people enjoying their hobby of fishing. The pond is a public right of access and is open to the public 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The project has benefitted the whole community as the comments made to the group are priceless. The most striking thing about this project is that, as an area that used to be synonymous with ASB, it is so refreshing to see how such a facility is able to positively effect a community and its residents for the better.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
Through common interest another local association (rugby club) has recently relocated to the land adjacent to the pond this for the purpose of creating critical mass and synergies. For example the rugby club are looking to install changing and wc facilities that will be available for use to users the rugby club and the pond. Similarly it is anticipated that interest in both sporting arenas will be heightened through increasing attendance rates.

Also a youth project is soon to run that will see youth from neighbouring wards design and graffiti onto an existing porter cabin that is used to store maintenance equipment that has become the subject of repeated theft attempts. It is believed that by engaging the local youth to take an active interest in the cabin it will deter/prevent future attempts.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
If successful the prize money would go towards having the pond dredged. Once this is done it will be easier for the volunteers to maintain and manage.

Organisation: Octopus Community Network
Project Name: Wild Places

Describe your project in one sentence:
Wild Places is funded by the Big Lottery through Natural England and offers people of all ages from deprived communities in Islington the chance to appreciate nature through an exciting seasonal programme of excursions to beautiful green spaces around London, learn about and work with nature through a wide variety of nature inspired learning activities and creative workshops, helping them to recognise and enjoy the plants, birds and wildlife that live
around us, and preserving nature through creating and maintaining our new community wildlife habitats.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Our project is delivered through four large, multi-purpose community centres located in deprived neighbourhoods across Islington.

What are the project’s objectives?
Our consultation showed that many people in our target groups: individuals and families from BAME, refugee and migrant communities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have little knowledge or experience of the natural world around them. Wild Places aims to:
- Equip people with the confidence to access, appreciate and learn about the ‘great outdoors’, inspiring them to enjoy and work with nature through outdoor activities on a regular basis;
- Deliver an exciting seasonal programme of new learning activities within community-based settings to engage people of all ages with the natural world and increase their knowledge of wildlife around them;
- Promote the health benefits of participating in outdoor activities;
- Create four new urban wildlife habitats and equip local communities with the skills and confidence to sustain them.

What are the project’s activities?
Over two years, engage 800 individuals through:
- At least eight excursions to ‘wild’ sites of natural beauty around London to enable people to explore, learn about and enjoy the wildlife there;
- Community based workshops to learn about and study wildlife; nature themed after school clubs and creative workshops;
- Building four new urban wildlife habitats at our community centres, involving community volunteers and equipping them with skills to sustain them;
- Seasonal events to engage the wider community and celebrate the achievements of the project and its beneficiaries;
- Engaging, supporting and celebrating the achievements of at least 20 volunteer Wild Places champions.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
After nine months, 368 people have been able to appreciate nature first hand through excursions to Epping Forest, the Lea Valley, Rainham Marshes, and the London Wetlands Centre where expert tutors led nature walks.

Children at two newly created After School Clubs at our community centres have explored nature through activities such as bird spotting, pond-dipping, making bird feeders, building and installing bird
and bug homes, creating a mosaic to reflect the wildlife that they have seen. Elders have explored forest gardening and the benefits of coppicing and forest management to wildlife, enjoyed walks in local woodlands at Kenwood and Waterlow Park and have enthusiastically joined in pond–dipping and meadow sweeping alongside young children. Young people have learned to climb trees under the tuition of arborists at Epping Forest and helped with digging and installing a pond and bog garden at one of our community centres.

The parent of a child attending one of our After School Clubs commented:

- “Charlie has learnt more from his session here than a full week at school, he is relaxed and can’t wait for the next session. It’s the first time he has looked forward to anything, and loves to chat about what he’s done, seen or made. He has also made some friends and has really come out of his self.”

Elaine Shapiro, who brought her grandson Benjamin to our excursions to Lea Valley and Rainham Marshes said:

- “Benjamin loved the day. It’s a good space; so much wildlife and fun, he loved the pond dipping and identifying the pond life, Bird box and insect box making. ... he has learnt a lot and would not learn these things locally.”

Two new urban wildlife habitats: bog garden and a forest orchard garden have been created at two of our community centres; a butterfly garden and a native hedgerow will be created at two more centres. These will become a permanent legacy of the project for local communities to enjoy.

Demand for and take-up of workshops has far exceeded planned expectation. Two regular after school clubs have been established focussed on wildlife and centre managers report increased footfall in their centres. The centre manager at Caxton House reported that the project has successfully attracted groups not previously represented in the centre, for example a group of Kurdish and Middle Eastern women, who joined the excursion to Epping Forest.

The project has brought new focus on wildlife and biodiversity to the borough, successfully attracting partners such as the London Wildlife Trust and the Bat Conservation Trust to work with us. The Nature Conservation Officer at Islington Ecology Centre has commented that the project adds value to all their work, without any duplication.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
The funding for the project has a further year to run and we will engage new people to the project reaching out across the borough to new communities. In particular we want to engage with more adult and elderly men who are poorly represented in our project numbers. We also intend to establish a third Wild Places after school club in partnership with a local primary school. We are currently seeking additional funding from City Bridge Trust and other funders to enable us to extend the project life span, to expand to more community centres and extend the learning that we can offer through expert tutors. We have introduced a pledge and donate scheme to encourage people to take action for wildlife and to donate money to fund the hire of an adapted mini-bus to enable us to take disabled and wheelchair bound people on our outings.

We will work closely with the Greenspace team in the Council to embed Wild Places in the borough in support of the borough Biodiversity Action Plan.
How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would organise a borough-wide Wild Places Festival to celebrate the project’s achievements, introduce people to the nature and wildlife that abounds in the borough, mount an exhibition of all the wonderful creative work that has been achieved by our beneficiaries, thank our funders and support the delivery of the borough’s Biodiversity Action Plan.

Organisation: Plas Dwbl - Ruskin Mill Trust
Project Name: Plas Dwbl – Ruskin Mill Education Trust

Describe your project in one sentence:
Independent specialist further education: Providing Practical Skills and Therapeutic Education for young people aged 16 to 25 who have a range of learning difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders and behaviours that challenge.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Adult Social Care & Education; Supported Housing

What are the project’s objectives?
● To enable young people with complex learning needs to engage in activities and social interaction that maximizes their potential for autonomy and employability.
● To provide threefold* opportunities for specialist further education within a context of creative communities, cultural initiatives and commercial regeneration

*Threefold: “In the Heart - the loom of Feeling, In the Head - the light of Thinking, In the Limbs - the strength of Will” – Steiner.

What are the project’s activities?
Plas Dwbl, part of the Ruskin Mill Trust, is based on a 100 acre bio-dynamic hill-farm in Pembrokeshire and, like Acorn, is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable and socially excluded young adults. Young people are provided with a holistic learning experience through arts, crafts, commerce, agriculture, nutrition, living skills and the environment that generates positive outcomes in their well-being and their ability to belong and engage in relationship with others as they learn new skills and develop a strong self belief and purpose in life.
We do this through a Bio-dynamic practice: a method that sustains the environment naturally. Young people learn how to use resources responsibly; use self sustaining bio-dynamic agricultural practices; learn traditional craft work such as green woodwork and metal forging; sustain and manage woodlands, and look after animals on the farm. Other learning in ‘Life Skills’ is embedded in their work and leisure activities daily.

We strive to increase the understanding of sustainable development and the environment amongst all those who work, learn and visit here. We aim to create functional, working solutions to environmental issues present in a rural farming and traditional craft cultures; i.e. renewable energy and waste solutions and conserving and enhancing the habitats on the land.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
Wales is a devolved country where 24% of the population live in exclusion and poverty (Bevan Foundation 2011); the stunning Preseli Hills are the home for the first provision of this kind in Wales. Meeting the needs of vulnerable young adults with complex learning needs in today’s social and economic climate is at best challenging. Our achievements so far include the setting up of the project; the continuation of the land as a working bio-dynamic farm, and the renovation of living and learning accommodation across the site to house six young people and six staff.

September 2011 saw the first eight students arrive (Two live with ‘shared-lives’ providers in the community) to start their learning programme. This number will increase to 15 by next year. Sixteen staff are currently employed; all from the local area, thus generating employment. Strong links have been made to the Welsh infrastructure locally and nationally i.e. WAG, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, Unitary Authorities and Social Services, and Environment Wales. Local producers and suppliers have been engaged when sourcing materials for building and everyday living ensuring support for our local community whilst being mindful of sustainability and the aesthetic that underpins the Trust’s philosophy.

The impact on the individuals is already evident, as you will see from the photographic evidence provided. The young people are actively engaged in and achieving milestones in their learning and living plans. At the moment they are involved in the traditional crafts of growing produce as part of a farming & horticulture programme; greenwood working and working towards traditional bow making; and metal forging. We hope to develop further crafts such as felting, pottery / ceramics and basket making in the near future. Life skills are embedded in every aspect of their work and enhanced through working in the farm kitchen and interacting with the community through a weekly newsletter. A small ‘honesty box’ shop has been built at the farm entrance where eggs and garden produce are sold. Engaging with each other; the craft materials; their tutors and range of new people, as well as the wider community in this way has already increased the young people’s self esteem and sense of belonging in the short time they have been at Plas Dwbl.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
We would like to see the provision grow and deepen over the next five years to accommodate more youngsters, engaging physically and aesthetically with a wider range of craft specialism. The Trust has a strong commitment to working with nature to enhance the lives of young people. Alongside such
developments as ecological habitats using ‘flow-forms’; a reed bed sewage and water purification system of ponds, we aspire to building-in renewable energy technology to reduce our carbon footprint. The farm itself will benefit from maintained hedge laying; traditional fencing and stone wall reparation in keeping with landscape and bio-diversity.

We would like to refurbish a part of the current farm accommodation to become an independent living space for young people, as well as look to developing new barns for the animals and a minibus to support our transport needs in this rural area. In order to engage fully with our community we will hold formal open days to a wider audience and will soon be taking advantage of local ‘Farmers Markets’.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
To further the site’s development and enable the young people to be more functional on a day to day level we hope to build up to three Compost Toilets around the site. Having the convenience nearer to their work stations in the Gardens / Polytunnels; Woodland and Forge will mean that valuable learning and interaction time won’t be lost by staff and students in walking back and forth to the main buildings and changing from outdoor to in-door footwear. On a 100 acre site this can be quite time consuming. A very purposeful outcome and effective by-product is the intention to re-cycle the compost from the ‘humanure’ for farm use. This will also reduce the water requirement on site and, given the large amount of natural wood material available to us reduces the cost further. We shall engage the skills of an experienced compost toilet designer and builder to lead a work party made up of staff, students and volunteers to build the structures with us. Commercially bought compost toilets can be very costly, on average £2,000 per unit; but we are confident that we can, with our own resources and labour build two for the prize money.

Organisation: Poplar HARCA in Partnership with Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques
Project Name: Re(sidents)Cycling

Describe your project in one sentence:
We have partnered with the Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques to organise cycle training in our local parks for people who cannot ride a bike or unconfident cyclists, and take them on escorted bike rides around the local area, including through Victoria and Mile End Parks and along the extensive network of canal towpaths that criss-cross the deprived urban area of Tower Hamlets.
Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
We are a Registered Social Landlord which owns and manages most of the social housing within the area in which this project is based. We work with the local community and our partners to make Poplar a better place to live.

What are the project’s objectives?
The scheme has been developed in partnership with the Council of Mosques (CoM), who have a very good relationship with Poplar HARCA and have recruited project participants from amongst the Muslim community. The wards across which the scheme operates rank within the worst 10% in the country on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Mental and physical health outcomes are particularly poor. Buying a bicycle is often beyond the financial reach of the beneficiaries of this scheme.

Although Tower Hamlets is generally an extremely dense urban environment we have two large Parks (Victoria Park and Mile End Park) in the east of the Borough and we are criss-crossed by a network of canals. Despite the relative proximity to open space however, the beneficiaries of this scheme tend not to use these open spaces for recreation or exercise as frequently as they could.

This project specifically aims to increase the incidence of cycling amongst the Muslim community, and sustain their participation in the activity. This is because we understand that cyclists from black and minority ethnic groups, particularly women, are significantly underrepresented. We have deliberately taken advantage of the beautiful, green, car free spaces which our parks represent to deliver the training sessions and carry out some of the escorted rides. This means that not only do participants benefit from the cycling itself but they also get introduced to new ways to enjoy their local parks and explore their natural beauty. Bikeworks, our training delivery partner, is based in Victoria Park.
Partnering with the CoM has offered a particularly promising opportunity to promote cycling within our diverse community and we hold women only training sessions in order to maximise the participation of women. In addition, the organisation delivering the training, Bikeworks has bikes specifically for people with disabilities. This means that disabled people are not excluded from participation.

An additional aim of the project is to improve awareness and understanding of the benefits of cycling amongst the participants and improve health by increasing levels of physical activity. We hope that by carrying out the training and rides in our parks and along our canal towpaths, participants will be encouraged to continue to use these amenities once the training element of the programme has ceased.

The scheme has proved enormously popular. For the training and escorted tours part of the project we have been using bicycles loaned by Bikeworks. We have also managed to buy a few bicycles to use as ‘pool bikes’ which are stored at the mosques and are lent out to project participants upon request. It was our original hope to add to the number of pool bikes for loan by receiving a number of additional bicycles from the Metropolitan Police. They had suggested that they might be able to donate a number of bikes which had been recovered from thefts but were untraceable or unclaimed. Unfortunately, due to various problems, this has never been possible and our pool of bikes for loan to participants to ensure that they continue to cycle after the end of the scheme is not big enough. We would use the prize money to add to the pool of bikes.
What are the project’s activities?
- Cycle training for beginners and unconfident cyclists in small groups in Victoria Park facilitated by Bikeworks.
- Further cycle training close to the mosques where participants are taught to ride on the roads and further afield, particularly utilising the canal tow paths and Mile End Park - facilitated by Bikeworks. Elementary tuition in bicycle maintenance.
- Special training sessions and group rides aimed at women only and families, facilitated by Bikeworks.
- Escorted Group Cycle rides facilitated by Bikeworks.
- Further group rides organised and facilitated by the participants themselves with the support of the Mosques and Poplar HARCA, to continue beyond the end of the initial project period.
- Establishment of a number of cycle pools whereby programme participants can borrow bikes from the pool and return them after use.
- Participants are encouraged to sign up for the TfL Bike Hire Scheme which has a number of stands in our area.
- A celebration to be held at the end of the initial project period with awards and certificates to bring people closer together and celebrate their achievements and continuing use of cycling in the local area as a means of improving their health and exploring the local parks.
- Word of mouth recommendation is encouraging further participants to sign up to this scheme and to a programme of free cycle training being offered by the Borough.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The project is still ongoing. It began in September this year for an initial period of one year and the interest and uptake has been very good. So far we have trained 21 women and 19 men. Other individuals are signed up to begin training at a later date.

A number of group cycle rides have taken place and these are proving very popular. We have had several requests from more confident cyclists, who do not own bikes, to join our group rides. Many of the men want to join group rides rather than cycle on their own. As a result we are planning to gather the most confident cyclists and organise a number of group rides along more challenging routes. This may culminate in a trip to a big Mosque, further afield, in the spring.

What are your plans for developing the project further?
Based on the initial success of this scheme, we plan to fund raise to enable us to roll out the scheme to other mosques across the Borough and add to our pool of bikes for loan to the participants of this initial phase.

We will continue to support the mosque cycling groups to organise regular group cycle rides and tours of the area. We will also encourage them to explore further afield. The Greenway, for example, which runs alongside the Olympic Park on the eastern edge of our borough, through Newham and Hackney and beyond is a beautiful green pathway which is ideal for cyclists to take exercise and enjoy the natural environment. The Lea Valley park which is a unique ‘natural’ corridor on London’s doorstep and provides a vital refuge for wildlife, is also an ideal place for cyclists and is easily accessible from our area. They key
to getting the participants of this scheme to utilise these resources is to show them where they are and how easy and fun it is to access them. The project has worked wonderfully to achieve this so far. The prize money from the Acorn Award would be used to buy more pool bikes to enable participants to take part in the group rides and also to explore on their own.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
The prize money from the Acorn Award would be used to buy more pool bikes to enable participants to take part in the group rides and also to use recreationally on their own. The bikes would be kept securely within the mosques and maintained by project participants who have learnt basic cycle maintenance as part of the course. Cycle group administrators are already in place to make sure that the bicycles are loaned out on a fair and equitable basis.

Organisation: St Mungo’s (Bath)
Project Name: The Big Grow

Describe your project in one sentence:
A social enterprise built round green woodcrafts, growing plants, sustainable woodworking and keeping small scale livestock, for people with long term mental health issues promoting independent living, widening horizons and helping build communities.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Supported Housing

What are the project’s objectives?
- Develop a Social Enterprise that contains a range of roles that will allow maximum opportunity for people with long term severe mental health issues to develop their skills and build on their existing strengths
- To work in partnership with other local organisations to allow both our in house clients and others to have access to a range of different social opportunities and to develop their interest in the outdoors and sustainable living.
- We work with HMP Guys Marsh, Julian House, the DHI, Clean Slate and the Eden Project
- To become a self-sustaining project through running courses in outdoor living, foraging, roundhouse building and green crafts and also to grow and sell our own fruit, veg, eggs and woodwork, all produced and built by clients and volunteers.
- To restore and renovate the overgrown Georgian gardens which surround mulberry house and to use as show garden for training and events and to help get more work.
What are the project’s activities?
At present we run a weekly woodworking group for people with mental health problems to come along, build confidence and learn basic woodworking skills, this is with both in house clients and clients from other projects with similar health needs, we try to be open to everybody.

We also run monthly day courses for a clients (we are hoping to open these out to more people) these have included – earth oven building, wild food cookery and foraging. In extension to this we keep chickens, grow and eat our own vegetables and do a lot of one to one cookery courses and building sessions. We also sell homemade apple juice, our veg and eggs.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

- One client has started a woodworking course after trying carpentry for the first time in our sessions (and doing really well at it too!)
- Another client who has agoraphobia has been leaving his house and walking 2 miles on his own in order to come to the project
- One client has developed a new interest in gardening and has been eating produce he has grown all summer.
- Several other clients have started participating regularly and have remarked that it has given them a large boost of confidence, (most of our clients have been in the mental health system for at least several years and find getting motivated to do anything incredibly difficult!)

Our impact can only grow as we lease with other projects in the area!

What are your plans for developing the project further?
In the next 6 months we are:

- Building a sustainable roundhouse.
- Developing our links with Guys Marsh so that we can offer people on their horticultural courses an immediate placement when they leave prison, therefore helping towards minimising re-offending and allowing often lonely clients a place to come and a link in with the rest of the Bath mental health support network.
- Working towards partnership with the Eden project thus giving more professional advice and support.
- Getting goats
- Getting to the point where we are offering 2 days a week of courses/ workshops and gardening drop-ins, that are open to members of the public (for a fee) but free for clients thus helping people integrate better and become part of the local community.

We are still a new project (we started up less than a year ago) so we have a long way to go!

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would spend the money on a goat shed, some goats a library of wild food books and solar panels for our roundhouse.
Describe your project in one sentence:
Transformation of a neglected and fly-tipped ancient woodland area into the ‘Enchanted Woodland’ including creation of a community-led development trust to own, manage and enhance the area, for use by the local community in the Temple Hill area of Dartford, Kent.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Community regeneration within a social housing context

What are the project’s objectives?
Current project objectives are to:

- Manage and enhance the Enchanted Woodland for the greater enjoyment and appreciation of the local community.
- Work with local partners and agencies to promote the woodland and its benefits to local residents.
- Increase the number of local volunteers, particularly from social housing properties that sit next to the woodland, and young people, to support and improve the woodland.
- Deliver Forest Schools and other learning and educational initiatives introducing more people to nature and the outdoors.
- Develop a sustainable project model to ensure resources that will keep the woodland maintained and open for public use.

What are the project’s activities?
The Enchanted Woodland is the result of joint project between The Hyde Group and a two other social landlords (RSLs). The Hyde Group led the ‘Chart Partnership’, securing project funding and employing a project manager to lead the work in the area. Over 2 years the project engaged the local community and worked with the local NHS trust (which at that point owned the land) to open up the woodland for use by the local community. Rubbish was cleared, pathways were made, assessments and management plans carried out and volunteers were engaged to carry out ongoing maintenance. The woodland is of historical interest encompassing part of the old Joyce Green Cemetery. Related heritage stories helped to engage older volunteers who undertook a genealogy and archeology course in the woodland, and continue to ensure that this area of the site is maintained and respected.

As the Enchanted Woodland project grew it became clear that most sustainable model for its management was for the community to take ownership themselves. The THG employed project manager took a lead role in supporting local volunteers and the Temple Hill Community Forum to set up the Temple Hill Trust (THT) as an independent charity. THT has gone on to take on full ownership and responsibility of the woodland. THT continues to run a range of activities for the local community and visitors to the woodland. School-children regularly plant bulbs (they also gave it its name), Easter egg
hunts happen as do Teddy Bear’s Picnics. Over school holidays THT also run woodland based activities including sessions with young people run by a local woodsman. Two members of THT have trained and qualified as Forest Schools (FS) instructors and with external funding are delivering a FS programme for school children. FS offers ‘a classroom without walls’ concept and builds on the natural instinct to learn that everybody is born with. It offers opportunities to make choices, initiate learning, and take risks, encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour.

THT engages and supports a team of volunteers known as Woodland Rangers. Rangers work to maintain the woodland whilst learning about, and enjoying nature and the outdoors. The Rangers also run Corporate Social Responsibility activities for businesses and organisations wishing to offer their staff time to help with projects to maintain the woodland. This also supports the Trust as a small income stream.

Other activities include community events and volunteering days for local residents and visitors, this promotes the work of the Woodland Rangers and encourages greater involvement and enjoyment of the area. Some residents just enjoy peaceful walks or dog-walking. THG remains fully committed and involved with the project through a staff representative who sits as a Trustee on the THT board; by providing the payroll function for the Project Manager; supporting the project at events and partnership meetings and providing funding for ongoing initiatives.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
The major impacts and achievements of the project are:

- The total transformation of an neglected, overgrown and fly-tipped area of land, sitting between two social housing estates, to an imaginative and attractive woodland space, open for the community to enjoy. The Enchanted Woodland is a leisure space for all residents to enjoy - accessible twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The woodland is an oasis of tranquillity amongst its urban surroundings allowing everyone the opportunity to enjoy a quiet and natural place close to where they live. No open space of this sort existed locally before this project.
- The establishment and ongoing success of a locally owned community development trust and transfer of land ownership to them (with all the legal wranglings and negotiation of a dowry for ongoing maintenance that this involved) means the project is now truly led by local people.
- Provision of local opportunities for people to volunteer their time and develop new skills around woodland management and conservation. Currently the project is hosting an apprentice ranger from a local agricultural college who is not only developing skills and experience for himself but has also brought knowledge to the project that the other rangers can learn from.
- Through Forest Schools hundreds of children from across Kent, South London and Essex the chance to experience learning in a new and imaginative environment and the learnt skills can feed back positively into other areas of the child’s life.

The Enchanted Woodland as it is now is the result of real grassroots community development activity. The passion and dedication of all those involved, especially the Project Manager, means that Temple Hill has its own woodland, bringing nature to the doorstep of urban social housing, and other, residents in a way that is welcoming, engaging and educational with interest for all facets of the community.
What are your plans for developing the project further?
THG are working with the Woodland Rangers to recruit more volunteers from the local community to enable the management of the wood to be sustainable for the future. Recently, a family volunteering day was arranged in the wood to help build a new pathway in and plant some trees following the creation of a new entrance from our housing estate. The event not only attracted new volunteers to the project but also offered an opportunity to promote the activities of the woodland and the benefits it brings to the local community.

The project will continue to run the Forest Schools programme to local school children, providing that funding is available, and look to extend this to include older young people of secondary school age and older.

Going forward, the Woodland Rangers are looking to develop a performance area in the wood for people to sit and listen to stories and music and perform plays. This would also offer the wood to other groups to enjoy.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
The prize money would be put towards creating a natural stepped arena within the woods to provide a place for local people to enjoy music, plays and story times. The site for the arena has been mapped out already but will take some structural work to build the stepped area and use equipment to clear the top soil and move the tree trunks for seating.
The woodland arena will provide a new seating area for visitors and a space that the whole community can enjoy for the entire future of the woodland.

Organisation: Threshold
Project Name: Gone Fishing

Describe your project in one sentence:
Gone Fishing works with vulnerable people and uses sport and nature to promote the environment, self help, create pro-social networks and build confidence, all set in an "oasis of calm."

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Gone Fishing was established in 2009 at a supported housing service in Oldham. Through the creativity, passion and energy of a support worker and two customers, the idea to using fishing as a model for self help and support was developed.
What are the project’s objectives?
Gone Fishing has a number of key objectives:

- Promote pro-social activities and, in doing so reduce anti social behaviour
- Develop a model for self help and support
- Raise awareness and exposure to nature and the environment
- Learn new skills
- Learn about fish and fishing
- Meet new people
- Create a model for engagement and volunteering
- Have fun!!

What are the project’s activities?
Every month, Gone Fishing meet and fish at Alexandra Park in Oldham and spend the day learning about their environment, building their confidence, learning new skills and meeting new people. The emphasis is on learning in a safe, comfortable environment and ensuring the environment is celebrated and respected.

Threshold aim to use the whole environment to encourage and enable all our customers to engage with services and activities. The sessions at Alexandra Park have become an “oasis of calm” in many people's lives. All our projects are designed to enable people to learn and enjoy by using the environment where they live as the inspiration to grow and learn in a style and manner which best suits.

Gone Fishing is an initiative which embodies this and has maintained a strong focus on using the environment and nature. Since it started in May 2010 it has encouraged people from a range of backgrounds to learn about themselves, learn about fishing and the environment. It provides a fantastic opportunity for our customers, who often have chaotic lifestyles, to spend time on their own personal development simply by using fishing as the hook!!

Gone Fishing is going from strength to strength, with more members joining in the activities each month and, in the new year, the initiative will be delivered across two sites.

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?
This initiative has been so successful that, since starting with a small grant from Oldham Council, we now have a strong core group which now has a group of volunteers forming a committee who also act as and recruit Gone Fishing Marshalls.

Our Marshalls are ‘recruited’ to the role based on values which reflect our vision for this initiative.

- They must have a ‘passion’ about nature, the environment and fishing
- They must be ‘personable’, great with other people, great as team members and leaders and great ambassadors for the initiative
- They must act in a ‘professional’ manner while representing themselves, the group and the organisation
- They must always be looking to ‘progress' in their outlook and not settle for the way things have always been
• The must also focus on dealing with the 'practical' parts of the initiative ensuring that equipment is maintained, packed lunches are made, areas are left in a great condition, fish are handled correctly and that participants are encouraged and learn about the fish.

• Marshalls also write articles for the Threshold customer magazine which is produced quarterly which has been a popular feature for all our customers. In the article which the Marshalls have named "Talking carp" we see updates on the group's exploits as well as featuring details of some of the fish that we are likely to see and how we should care for them if they are caught.

The group has been so popular across our customer base, that we have now opened up sessions to other agencies and some of our customers have seen a really personal impact through the initiative with one family being reunited through the project.

Jez aged 47 says, "This means so much to me and my family. It’s made such a difference. We never did anything like this before. We really look forward to every session"

John aged 55 was one of the founder members. He spent over 20 years in custody and had been with Threshold’s services for only two months when, through his passion and drive, Gone Fishing was launched. He says, "I love being outdoors and fishing is my hobby. What I now know is that others do too. These sessions have been great and I’ve met some brilliant people. We often have mad lives and it’s great to meet others. We learn all sorts of things and it helps to keep us all focussed. I am now running the sessions and it’s great that I can share my hobby and my love of fish with other people."

Kevin aged 48 says, "I love helping other people set up. I get a real sense of purpose from this. I’ve learned so much through Gone Fishing, not only about fish and fishing but most importantly about myself."

Gone Fishing has recently been awarded a small grant through Homeless link's sports bursary which has bought additional equipment and permits to access another site. Homeless Link said, "Homeless Link was happy to support ‘Gone Fishing’ through our sports grants as it had a proven track record of engaging and inspiring clients. It demonstrably allowed the project’s direction to be led by clients through their Steering Committee and ensured participation impacted on additional outcomes relating to employability and engagement"

What are your plans for developing the project further?
Gone Fishing has been a really successful model for engaging with our customer group and we plan to develop the project to engage more people, increase the appeal, reinforce the learning and broaden our sites. We intend to do this by:

1. Further developing the role of the ambassador
2. Developing further the bi monthly newsletter updates. The ambassadors write a bi-monthly update for the Threshold newsletter. The feature, called "Talking carp", talks about fish types, attendees, what they learned and tells amusing stories about some of the participants.
3. Developing and introduce a kit loan scheme
4. Developing a social network community for Gone Fishing
5. Enabling access to further fishing sites with links to countryside ranger services.
How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?
We would be absolutely delighted to receive this award as not only is it recognition of a service which we know makes a huge difference but it also enables us to invest in:

- Storage facilities
- Social media development
- Environment licences and site permits
- Promotional literature including sponsorship packages
- Additional equipment

Organisation: **Write to Freedom**
Project Name: **Wilderness and Writing Weekend**

Describe your project in one sentence:
Personal and professional development for disaffected young men, through wilderness engagement and the written and spoken word.

Specify the setting(s) where your project is delivered (eg supported housing, adult social care, prison / YOI, social housing, community)?
Delivered in young offender institutions and youth offending teams and on Dartmoor National Park, Devon.

What are the project’s objectives?
Working closely with nature and the creative arts, Write to Freedom seeks to empower students into a deeper, highly positive, creative and practical relationship with nature; this in turn leads a deepening of their relationship with themselves and ultimately to empower them to build their own self esteem, their understanding of who they are and their place in the wider world. Support in developing creative/environmental projects in their communities is a key focus of the year long course. We do this by providing inspirational, positive role models to disaffected young men (15-21) both in and out of prison. The role models are primarily ex offenders who have turned their lives around through wilderness, writing and community development projects – including Caspar Walsh.

The overall project is made up of workshops and time out on Dartmoor engaging in wilderness awareness, tracking, bushcraft, walking and writing activities. Writing is a key element of all our work, providing an opportunity to journal all experiences and learning as a chance to reflect of their own personal and emotional journey. Storytelling is also a part of the project. Ultimately Write to Freedom’s work is about supporting and empowering young men's transition into adulthood and in becoming responsible productive members of society.
What are the project’s activities?

- Writing
- Walking
- Bushcraft
- Storytelling
- Team building
- One to one mentoring

What has been the impact / achievement of the project?

We have run over a hundred workshops over the last ten years with over 300 participants. Currently around 50 per cent of all participants from the HMP and YOI Ashfield workshops have stayed in touch, engaging in the ongoing mentoring programme and signing up for the year long course – which we are seeking funding for.

What are your plans for developing the project further?

Write to Freedom currently runs a series highly successful of introductory weekends. We are seeking funding to begin a year long course (in 2012) comprising 4 weekends and a week-long wilderness survival intensive.

How would you spend the winner’s prize of £1,000?

The prize money would cover one third of the costs for the planned Write to Freedom reunion weekend for all released students from HMP and YOI Ashfield who have attended one of the eleven introductory weekends on Dartmoor over the last three years. This would also be the first weekend of the year long course.

Should the remaining funding not become available to pay for the rest of the reunion weekend, the £1000 would pay for two, one day Write to Freedom recruitment workshops based on Dartmoor for local youth offending teams. The money will be spent well!