



# Bourne to be Wild

## Evaluation Report



 **Essex Cultural  
Diversity Project**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**





## Commission description as publicised

Essex Cultural Diversity Project and the National Trust invite proposals from creative practitioners for a new commission that will respond to Bourne Mill, the National Trust's site in Colchester, Essex. For this commission we are specifically looking for a project that will raise awareness of biodiversity, support positive attitudes and behaviours around Climate Action and the environment, and engage with new and under-represented audiences. The project will respond to the rich history, cultural heritage and nature of Bourne Mill, as well as the wider Bourne Valley area and Colchester district.

About this Commission Essex Cultural Diversity Project and the National Trust are working together to broaden access to inclusive and diverse arts, culture and heritage across the Trust's Essex and Suffolk Countryside portfolio of properties, of which Bourne Mill is one. The National Trust have hosted three commissions to date as part of Essex Cultural Diversity Project's NPO commissioning programme, which provides an opportunity for creative practitioners to create new work, explore diversity and develop their socially engaged and participatory practices. Projects aim to capture the spirit of place and connect with diverse communities.


Key objectives of this commission are to:

1. Engage families and adults with nature across Colchester using the five nature connection pathways: Contact, Emotion, Compassion, Meaning, and Beauty
2. Raise awareness of biodiversity within the Bourne Valley and Bourne Mill itself.
3. Explore small but mighty approaches to supporting positive behaviours around Climate Action.
4. Enrich and enhance engagement with new and under-represented audiences in Colchester whilst exploring shared approaches to positive environmental behaviours.

Through the commission we seek to raise the profile of Bourne Mill as a site that can inspire the people of Colchester to champion both cultural heritage and wildlife. Key themes for Bourne Mill relate to the fulling and corn milling industry, which link to key individuals including Sir Thomas Lucas as well as the Elizabethan Dutch refugee community who shaped the landscape around them. The building was intended as a status symbol with the Lucas family's coat of arms incorporated into the architectural style, built in that location due to Bourne Spring and the St John's Abbey Mill ponds.

There are opportunities to create new interpretation and narratives around the nature and historic themes, as well as considering the Mill and Bourne Valley's wider significance to wildlife across urban Colchester, engaging new audiences in the process. Post-pandemic, Bourne Mill's core audience has shrunk to National Trust members for guided experiences and we are now once again reaching out into the locale within the city's districts.

The focus is very much set on growing the Trust's community engagement through outreach and connecting people with the myriad of benefits that nature in the city can bring. As part of the commission, we would like the appointed creative practitioner(s) to work with at least three local community or voluntary organisations, and engage volunteers in developing the work of the commission. It is important that the artistic process creates opportunities for people to learn new skills, gain confidence and have enjoyable experiences. We are keen to see significant engagement with local communities and, where possible, visitors too. Space is available at Bourne Mill so we would be happy to see some activity take place there, bringing people into the space (through a visit, workshop, exhibition or performance for example). However, off-site engagement and building nature awareness is of greater importance in this commission, as the site currently has limited access.



“Personally, I have been so excited to see the importance of nature being explored in such a creative and inclusive way”

Sarah,  
National Trust



“Our creative vision was to rewild the streets of Colchester with art”

INSTAR

## Summary of our Bourne to be Wild proposal

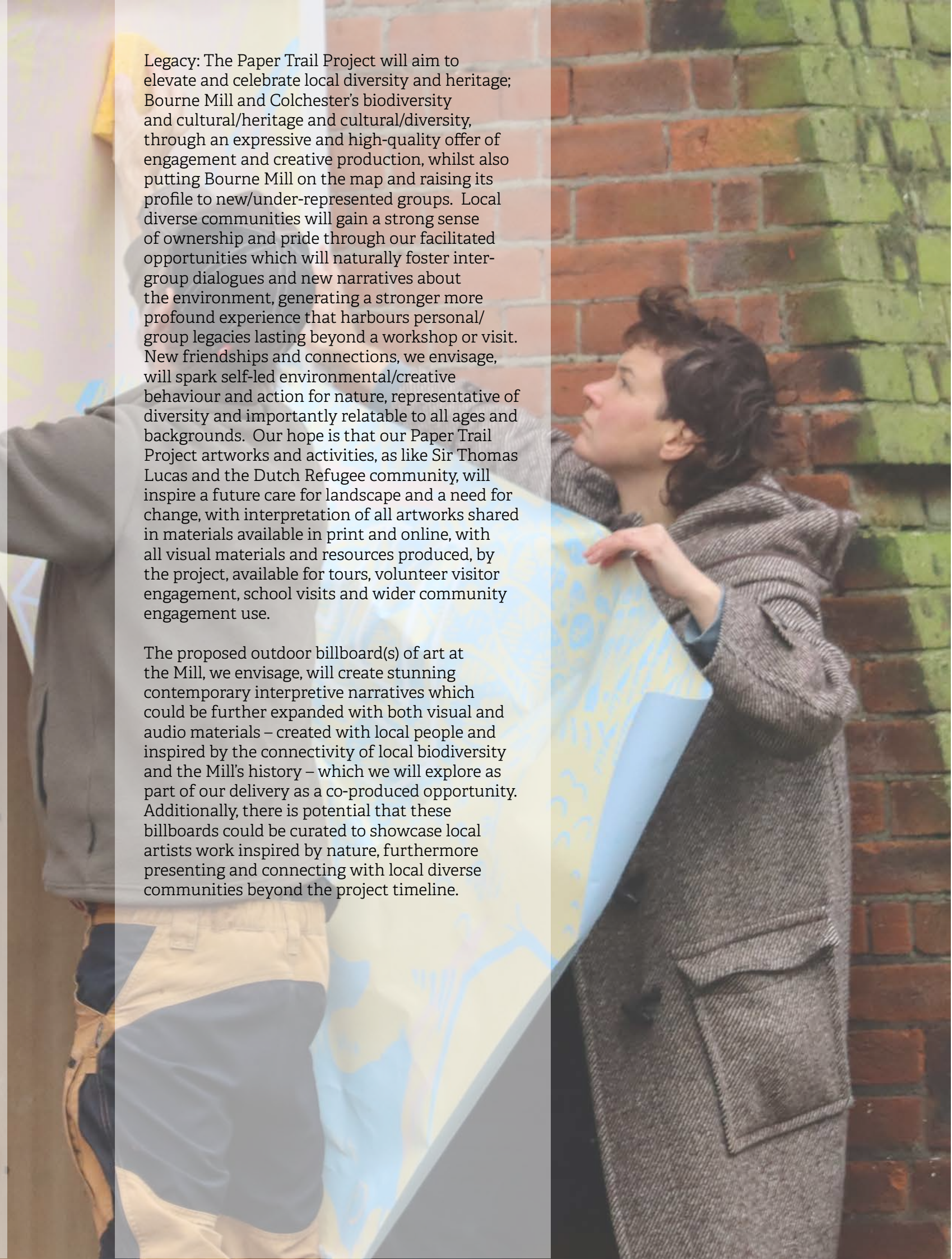
(originally titled Paper Trail Project)

The Paper Trail Project is a proposal exploring the art form of print, poster art and paste-up to visualise and express the wonder and natural biodiversity of the Bourne Mill, Bourne Valley and Colchester area, an art form steeped in a history of visual communication, expressive voice and accessibility, with its distinctive reproductive and duplicative quality and powerful aesthetic. Print works created by ourselves, and those we will engage throughout the project, will be exhibited in impactful and unique ways including a Paper Trail touring cycle exhibition whereby we cycle ad-trailers along chosen routes across areas and into communities (with a free limited edition print giveaway as we cycle), a Paper Trail Project paste-up exhibition in chosen public locations and a crafted wooden framed Paper Trail Project billboard(s) within the wilder grounds of Bourne Mill, exhibiting a series of new INSTAR printed artworks - as commissioned artists - complimenting the existing sustainable features on the estate and offering a curious invitation for visitors to navigate and discover the natural biodiversity beyond the Mill area. Paper Trail bespoke micro-artwork postcards with interpretive information will also be available to pick up in the visitor welcoming area and potential partner locations in Colchester as well as available to view online.

A core foundation of this idea is that neither art nor nature are tied to a gallery or park environment and that each can be far-reaching and celebrated by all. Particularly poignant at this juncture in time, with a growing urgency for environmental change and action, there is an importance of connectivity to the natural world. With many people having a disconnection with the natural world or experiencing barriers to enjoy the many valuable benefits of connectivity with green spaces and wildlife our project aims to increase interactions that are proven to be of benefit to well-being. The Paper Trail Project will provide a positive and exciting route to reducing isolation and improving connectivity to the rich biodiversity of Bourne Mill and surrounding area, its art and heritage, for all. A true celebration of local nature and spirit of place.

Legacy: The Paper Trail Project will aim to elevate and celebrate local diversity and heritage; Bourne Mill and Colchester's biodiversity and cultural/heritage and cultural/diversity, through an expressive and high-quality offer of engagement and creative production, whilst also putting Bourne Mill on the map and raising its profile to new/under-represented groups. Local diverse communities will gain a strong sense of ownership and pride through our facilitated opportunities which will naturally foster inter-group dialogues and new narratives about the environment, generating a stronger more profound experience that harbours personal/group legacies lasting beyond a workshop or visit. New friendships and connections, we envisage, will spark self-led environmental/creative behaviour and action for nature, representative of diversity and importantly relatable to all ages and backgrounds. Our hope is that our Paper Trail Project artworks and activities, as like Sir Thomas Lucas and the Dutch Refugee community, will inspire a future care for landscape and a need for change, with interpretation of all artworks shared in materials available in print and online, with all visual materials and resources produced, by the project, available for tours, volunteer visitor engagement, school visits and wider community engagement use.

The proposed outdoor billboard(s) of art at the Mill, we envisage, will create stunning contemporary interpretive narratives which could be further expanded with both visual and audio materials – created with local people and inspired by the connectivity of local biodiversity and the Mill's history – which we will explore as part of our delivery as a co-produced opportunity. Additionally, there is potential that these billboards could be curated to showcase local artists work inspired by nature, furthermore presenting and connecting with local diverse communities beyond the project timeline.





## What was delivered

Bourne to be Wild was awarded in June 2023, with a public announcement followed by an R & D phase of site visits, city scouting for spaces, community consultation with groups and creative visioning/planning.

Public and workshop engagement activities took place over a three month period from September through to the end of November 2023.

Artworks on billboards were exhibited from 18th November 2023 - 13th January 2024, a total duration of 8 weeks.

### A summary of our delivered activity

#### A public talk at Maker Space in Colchester

Due to our print focus for Bourne to be Wild, synergy was soon established between our practice, our project and the Maker Space in Colchester. This resulted in us being invited to give a talk to members about our practice and the inspiration behind our ideas for engagement and creative print-based work in Colchester.

#### A total of 11 relief (lino) print and nature studio sessions with 4 local groups.

Engagement of over 60 participants took place. A close collaboration with Level Best, The Outhouse youth group, The Outhouse Craft with Pride group and Young Artist Kollektive at Firstsite resulted in a series of new works taking inspiration from local nature and wildlife at Bourne Mill. Each session was a pop-up printing studio, offering a hybrid of both nature and art engagement, resulting in 100's of new print artworks being produced.

#### A 'Colchester wildlife' resource pack of wildlife interpretation by INSTAR

This simple collection of interpretation provided the foundation for discussion and learning about local nature, to inspire ideas and stimulate debate about nature where we live.

#### The design and build of 3 site-specific Bourne to be Wild billboards in Colchester.

Partnerships and permissions were successfully gained for the bespoke build and installation of 3 billboards. These were sited at The Minorities pop-up space in Long Wyre Street and the Jumbo Water Tower.

#### A trio of 3 'This is here, You are here' billboard artworks by INSTAR

Inspired by our Bourne to be Wild R & D, engagement and creative explorations in Colchester, these artworks were site-specific and unique to the project and localities.

#### A trio of 3 collective co-produced billboard artworks by participants with INSTAR

Inclusive of over 65 participant artworks and words from a poem 'At Peace With Nature' written within workshops, these 3 site-specific artworks were designed by INSTAR and very much symbolic of the project co-collaboration and collective voice for city nature.

#### Artwork poster prints for bicycle trailers

As part of our launch programme 4 artwork 'posters' were designed and pasted up to form part of a nomadic exhibition on wheels. These included art by participants and INSTAR as well as funder logos.

#### Limited edition Risograph prints by INSTAR

A series of 3 artworks were created by INSTAR of local wildlife and produced into a limited edition run of 90 risograph prints. Prints were distributed across groups and communities, with detailed information about Bourne to be Wild printed onto the reverse. The risograph printing took place at Makerspace in Colchester.

#### Online gallery of all Bourne to be Wild artworks

Launched alongside the billboard exhibitions, an online gallery of all project artworks, (collective and individual) on the INSTAR project webpages.

## What was achieved

### Research and Development

2 x Mentoring sessions with local artist (previously commissioned) Lisa Temple-Cox took place to share learnt experience and knowledge of local group engagement and contacts.

10 x direct group contacts (community leads) were established, opening up opportunities to set up participatory partnerships for the delivery of workshops, This included valuable consultation including African Families UK youth team, Colchester Library and Chameleon.

3 x organisations (The Outhouse, Level Best and First Site Young Artists Kommunity) became participatory partners on the project, with a total of 4 individual engagement groups established.

4 x creative/city leads were progressed to support local cultural and programming opportunities, these included Makerspace, Colchester Bid, Hat Projects, First Thursdays 2 x 1-2-1 sessions took place with 2 local print artists enabling access to local printing resources

4 x face to face meetings took place to progress opportunities for engagement and programming

3 tours of Colchester took place to look at potential opportunities to exhibit / create billboards in Colchester, included 1 x guided tour of Colchester led by Hat Projects for INSTAR

3 x site visits to Bourne Mill to look at opportunities to produce site specific work

### Engagement

69 x participants engaged in creative lino print workshops, equivalent of 151 individual attendances

7 x support staff and support volunteers participated in workshops and learnt new print making skills, with a total of 66 hours contributed by support staff

76 x individuals learnt about local wildlife and species – invited to have a voice about nature where they live

11 x lino print workshops were delivered, totalling 28 x hours of workshop delivery

7 support workers and organisational staff contributed 55 hours of support and participation in the project

37 x number of audiences reached via our public talks

34 x attendees at the launch event / tours at Jumbo Water Tower

2 x support volunteers from English Heritage for Jumbo Tower tours, totalling 8 hours

### Reach

572 x direct BTBW online engagements via INSTAR project specific webpages

5859 x online impressions via our INSTAR social media

1000+ estimate audience reach via live interview on BBC Radio Essex

28,000+ estimate walk-by audiences reached via billboard exhibitions

90+ audiences reached via poster distribution

BOURNE TO BE WILD





Print Workshop Gallery





## Learning outcomes

### Participants

76 x gained new understanding of urban wildlife in Colchester, with species specific awareness and local nature interconnectedness

76 x gained new skills in print making using lino relief techniques. This included:

- mapping and designing ideas
- transferring ideas onto lino
- lino cutting techniques and mark making using 3 different tools
- single and double ink planning and application
- ink preparation and ink application using rollers
- burnishing and printing onto paper
- paper types including Japanese papers
- duplication of printing
- cleaning and management of tools, equipment, ink and spaces for printing

76 x gained confidence in expressing creative ideas and nature through print

76 x participation in debate and discussion about nature and having a voice for nature and the protection of nature, particularly in Colchester and in urban spaces

200+ new artworks created by individuals, providing a strong sense of achievement and confidence in printmaking and printmaking skills – many of whom were new to print making

76 x gained greater awareness of Bourne Mill, its location and the opportunity it provides for nature and experiences in Colchester

### Participating organisations

7 x gained additional new interest and opportunity that both nature and art can bring to the wellness of their participants – particularly print and urban nature

7 x gained impact of printmaking as an artform and how productive and exciting it is to express and share ideas

7 x gained new practical skills in relief print making

7 x gained new relations with other participating groups and project partners, with a new network established, with indications of future print projects and connections with Makerspace in Colchester and visits to Bourne Mill by groups.

7 x gained a sense of pride of being involved in the project, and being part of something they felt was very exciting and great for them as an organisation and for those they engage. A greater sense of inclusivity.

### Learning outcomes for INSTAR

Connecting with local artists, including Lisa Temple-Cox at the beginning of our contract, provided us with a valuable baseline of shared knowledge and experience for our engagement work. These sessions fast tracked us well, so we were up to speed with local need, challenges and opportunities and we were able to use our time efficiently.

We've gained greater skills in adaptability of our printmaking for the delivery to contrasting groups in terms of size, skills and needs, to ensure quality experiences and outcomes and that personal/group achievements were gained successfully.

We have gained 1-2-1 creative and practical new skills in Risograph and screen-printing techniques – guided by local artists in Colchester at Makerspace. This positively impacted on our self-led use of printing resources for the project, enabling us to produce our own print runs of limited-edition artworks to project giveaways.

We've gained skills in designing and installing new bespoke billboard spaces in unconventional environments for the first time. This opportunity has inspired us greatly and a future legacy of street-based exhibitions in Colchester – led by ourselves – is a significant outcome and will open up opportunities for groups and creatives in the future.


We feel our presence and profile in Essex, particularly Colchester, has been positively gained through our approach to collaboration, communication and networking and our work will inform our future plans and practice in print and street level (partnership) work.



“Lino printing felt very therapeutic”

Participant





“Very positive impact, North Essex Heritage Trustees really enjoyed working with you and being able to do tours for the community groups INSTAR worked with. For me it reinforced the connection between art, culture and the environment. And the potential for creativity to be used as a tool to stimulate conversation and reflection about bio-diversity and nature”

Participating partner

## What worked well

Our partnership and collaboration with groups, individuals, projects and community. A strong sense of shared ownership and contribution was achieved and a new network of positive relationships have been formed. Great numbers, particularly of diverse young people, were achieved. New contacts have been made for our commissioners Essex Cultural Diversity Project and (t) National Trust, Bourne Mill.

Our printing workshops produced excellent quality of outcomes and artworks. Templates, guidance and mentorship (from ourselves but also with organisation staff) enabled individuals to gain confidence and produce work to be proud of. Artwork was meaningful and stories and connections to subject matter and nature/environment were expressed and shared.

The build of our billboards. These were designed and adapted to meet the needs of landowners and hosts, meeting requirements set by the Environment Agency, Heritage and Planning authorities. Gaining permissions was achieved with a visual presentation produced by ourselves to help visualise the project, benefits of the billboards and quality, together with zoom meetings and regular conversations to set agreements.

Our exhibition of artworks on billboards and online were achieved well. The adaption of an over-paste of artwork to utilise just 3 billboard spaces was successful and enabled all artwork to be exhibited whilst also sharing the physical practice of street art and the maximising of space. This accompanied with online presentations of individual prints ensured that artworks, in their own right were, displayed, shared and celebrated.

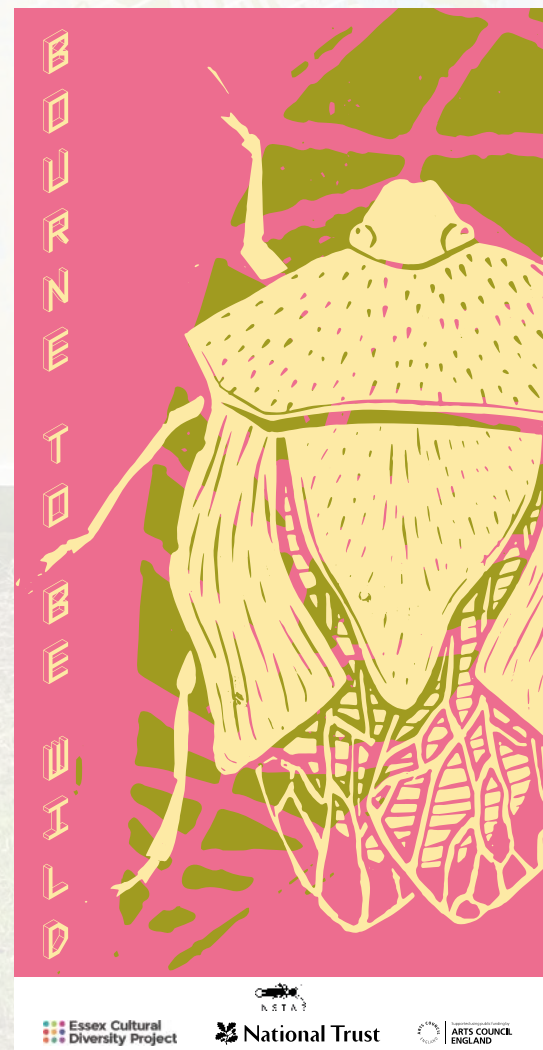
The physical application of paste-ups. This became a performance, and in fact the billboards being identified as sculptures. We personally felt that this physical work became a key feature to our experience of the project, and for our practice, which has inspired us greatly.

The print giveaway provided a successful, and a potential long lasting, addition and layer of audience reach.

Our tours of Jumbo Tower for participants as part of our exhibition launch. These felt like a true coming together of the project and whilst these were not accessible to all, it was a great unexpected addition to the project and a great outcome and offer from one of our participating exhibition hosts.







Billboard and print artwork



## What did not work so well

Our ambition to offer hybrid workshops of both outdoor and indoor opportunities for groups. This was ambitious on three counts:

- The time of year being seasonally challenging, e.g. no butterflies or summer flora
- The limitations/availability of groups due to pre-existing commitments with regular weekly sessions in place and a summer holiday offer proving trickier to commit to
- The aligning of our time with group availability due to us not being based in Essex.

This challenge was bridged with us bringing nature and themes of urban wildlife into workshops.

Our ambitions to have a physical presence at Bourne Mill (NT). Originally our vision was to produce artworks to be temporarily sited within the grounds of Bourne Mill however, due to limited and closed winter opening times and the extension to our project timeline, a decision was taken to conduct only outreach based work, which was viewed positively in aiding a greater NT profile beyond the estate.

We also were keen to run workshops at Bourne Mill with existing and visiting groups, which unfortunately did not happen due to participant/organisational capacity and timings not aligning. This was a missed opportunity.

The timeline. This required an extension down to a number of factors including:

- Summer holidays not being as viable for regular engagement with existing community groups (as timetables and staff availability were reduced or unavailable),
- The alignment between our availability and group availability together with the need for adequate lead in time to plan activity and promote opportunities to individuals
- Greater time was required for artwork development with groups in advance of the exhibition. This included billboard site locating – each requiring permissions from land owners, Environment Agency, English Heritage and Essex Planning authorities.

Whilst the billboard artwork exhibitions launched alongside the buzz of Christmas – which was of huge benefit, it was not ideal due to seasonal weather and shorter days. This particularly impacted on our cycle tours and launch event engagement.

Cycle tours were less successful. This was down to our limited capacity to plan well for these and to support volunteer engagement successfully with partner organisations. Again, in hindsight the time of year was not right and we were up against the clock in getting our street exhibition designs, prints and online works ready for launch. Tours of cycles, volunteer engagement, fixtures for bicycles to our advertising boards and gaining permissions to cycle were not given enough attention by ourselves and this is certainly something to plan better for in the future.

“I really loved the friendliness and patience of (INSTAR) running the workshop, and very easy to follow instructions”

Participant

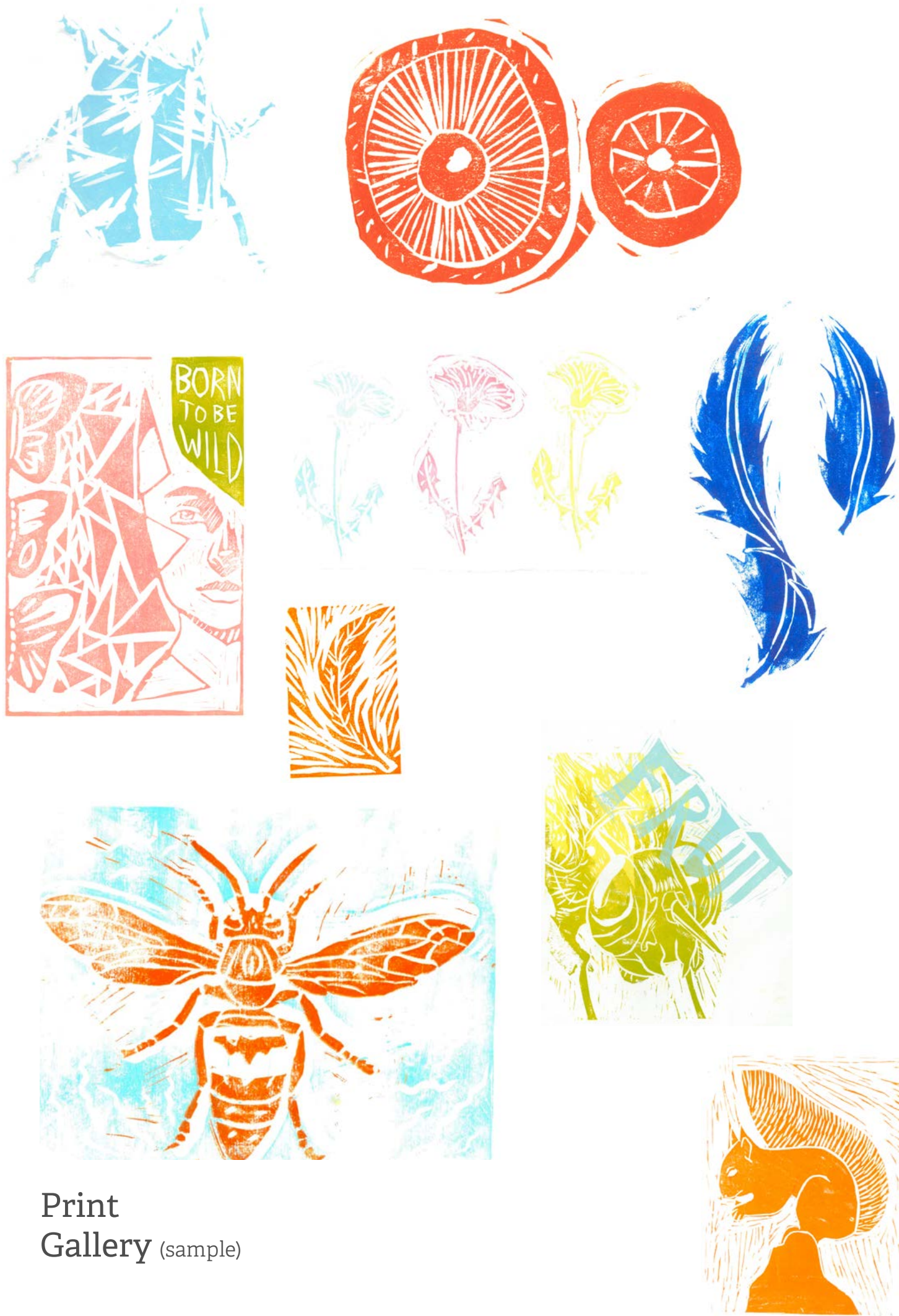
“It was amazing, I loved it.”

Participant

“The YAK members have loved seeing their artwork on display on the billboards and have enjoyed seeing the process of how their individual designs have been transformed into a collaborative artwork through the expertise of INSTAR.”

Beth  
First Site





Print  
Gallery (sample)

“We were very pleased to host INSTAR in our Makerspace. Nick and Trish used both the Risograph and Screen Printing presses to develop their concepts. Didn't the work turn out well?!?”

Mark,  
Makerspace





## Legacy

A stronger collective care for, and interest in, the local natural environment and wildlife in Colchester and Bourne Valley has been established through our creative engagement.

New partnerships and connections between project partners, participants and heritage organisations. This includes new opportunities and ideas to connect community groups to Makerspace as a local space for print making, as well as new connections between gallery and heritage sites such as The Minories, National Trust Bourne Mill and North Essex Heritage (Jumbo Tower).

A suite of prints is available to our commissioners and participants to contribute to independent engagement and learning opportunities. For example, the National Trust can share artworks with visitors to Bourne Mill, and participants can include their prints as part of their personal creative development. YAK (Firstsite) have continued to print beyond the workshops, with Bourne to be Wild artwork now printed onto textiles and included in other project activities.

The future use of two of the billboards at The Minories, to be used by a local artist as a street level exhibition space for their artwork.

As artists we have made new connections with a wide range of local arts, heritage and cultural organisations which we are continuing to sustain and grow into future collaborations. This includes a vision to curate a series of permanent billboard art spaces in Colchester with The Minories, The Jumbo Tower and potentially in partnership with Bid Colchester. We have grown a deeper passion for street paste up as a result of this project and our vision to continue to creatively rewild streets with art, inspiring our future practice and print work significantly.

Many friendships have formed which we believe will continue beyond Bourne to be Wild and the spirit of Colchester and Bourne Mill we believe will continue to inspire.

## Useful links

[www.we-are-instar.co.uk/bourne](http://www.we-are-instar.co.uk/bourne)

[www.essexcdp.com](http://www.essexcdp.com)

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/essex-bedfordshire-hertfordshire/bourne-mill](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/essex-bedfordshire-hertfordshire/bourne-mill)

[www.theouthouse.org.uk](http://www.theouthouse.org.uk)

[www.dacontrust.co.uk](http://www.dacontrust.co.uk) (Level Best)

[www.firstsite.uk](http://www.firstsite.uk) (YAK)

[www.theminories.org](http://www.theminories.org)

[www.colchester/cneebpt/jumbo](http://www.colchester/cneebpt/jumbo)

[www.makercampus.co.uk](http://www.makercampus.co.uk)

### Acknowledgements

Bourne to be Wild is made possible through a commission from the National Trust and Essex Cultural Diversity Project (supported by Arts Council England, Culture, Heritage and Green Spaces, Environment and Climate Action and Essex County Council)

INSTAR wishes to thank all collaborators and individuals who have contributed to Bourne to be Wild:

Essex Cultural Diversity Project (commissioner), (t) National Trust (commissioner), Arts Council England, Firstsite YAK (engagement), The Outhouse Youth Group and Craft Pride (engagement) Level Best Trainees (engagement), Makerspace Colchester (printing and creative hub) The Minories (exhibition hosts), Jumbo Tower (exhibition hosts)

Artworks featured in this report are by INSTAR and participants from The Outhouse, YAK and Level Best.

Photos by INSTAR and Jo Nancarrow.

“Thanks again for the workshops you facilitated with us, I know the Trainees really enjoyed it and we hope to see you again in the future”

Emma,  
Level Best

