



Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Wilder

Woodland Gathering 21 - 08- 19

**Event findings
and review**

Report by Trish Evans

Wilder Stage

Summary

The **Wilder Woodland Gathering** was curated to inspire a new approach to our public engagement and event programming.

Aimed at 'gathering' a wide range of partners, campaigners, projects, decision makers, artists, local Rushcliffe and city communities, this one-day event aimed to provide a platform to cultivate and champion positive action for nature, and connect to a wider demographic of audience, in particularly younger people.

As well as providing a space for visitors and contributors to connect and network, our event aimed to offer a range of engaging, entertaining and experiential opportunities to enable **deeper connections to the natural world**, and to share the work of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and each other's achievements and the broader conservation movement in Nottinghamshire.

This event was clearly a debut locally in terms of vision (**gathering**), programme (**art ecology community**) and its situation/environment (**Skylarks Nature Reserve** on the edge of Nottingham city).

What the **Wilder Woodland Gathering** aimed to do

Connect and engage more diverse audiences to our work and the Wilder Future campaign, in particular younger generations (0 – 40yrs)

Mobilise action for nature by connecting people and projects together in a wilder space, stimulating new opportunities and networks

Programme cultural wilder arts, skill sharing and 'experiences', for all ages and interests

Champion our work and activity as a local conservation charity at one of flagship nature reserves, our Skylarks Nature Reserve

The Wilder Woodland Gathering took place
21st August 2019, 1 – 7pm
Skylarks Nature Reserve, 2 miles from Nottingham city



“Having so many **passionate people** talk about nature and the environment all in one place, **showing unity**, was so inspiring.”
- Local resident



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What was different?

Art

Introducing the arts into our programme was deliberate. We identified from the offset that creative programming would lever new opportunities for us to reach new audiences, and also enable us to programme activity which would connect audiences to our conservation work in more contemporary ways.


The programming of our lead artist Jason Singh became the pivotal feature to our event. Programming Jason then inspired our vision, curation and design for the event, with the stage becoming the central 'gathering' area.

Unlike previous NWT events, a stage under the canopies of the woodland area of Skylarks NR became a curated space, a 'programme', with a number of offshoot spaces extending from this point across the reserve, navigating visitors to named 'zones' each offering creative and wilder experiences and opportunities to discover and explore.



sound art + sculpture + street art + contemporary music + poetry and spoken word + performance + circus + print making



Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust 

Wilder WOODLAND GATHERING

Wednesday 21st August, 1-7pm
Skylark Nature Reserve, Nottingham

Wilder STAGE

1.15pm: WELCOME by Paul Wilkinson
1.25pm: NOTTINGHAM FOR NATURE MANIFESTO reading by Keeping it Wild
2pm: JASON SINGH nature beatboxer
3.15pm: DEBATE how creative and direct do we need to be to influence change?
4.15pm: MYLES KNIGHT acoustic performance
5.30pm: A CONVERSATION ACROSS GENERATIONS with Indy Kiemel Greene & Tim Birch
6PM: DEBATE should we re-wild Nottingham?

<h3>WISE OWL ZONE</h3> <p>Creative writing, woodland library & campaign art printing</p> <p>4pm: Interactive sonic woodland walk with Jason Singh</p> <p>5.30pm: GCSE Natural History! Is it a good idea, or perhaps not? Debate led by Lucy McRober & Rob Lambert</p>	<h3>SCIENCE ZONE</h3> <p>Moth graffiti art & bird ringing demonstrations</p> <p>2pm, 4pm & 6pm: Bird walk with Neil Pinder</p> <p>2pm, 4pm & 6pm: Wilder meditation with Kathryn Morris-Roberts</p> <p>3pm: Rewilding walk led by Elliott Kean</p>
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FOX DEN & SILVER BIRCH ZONES

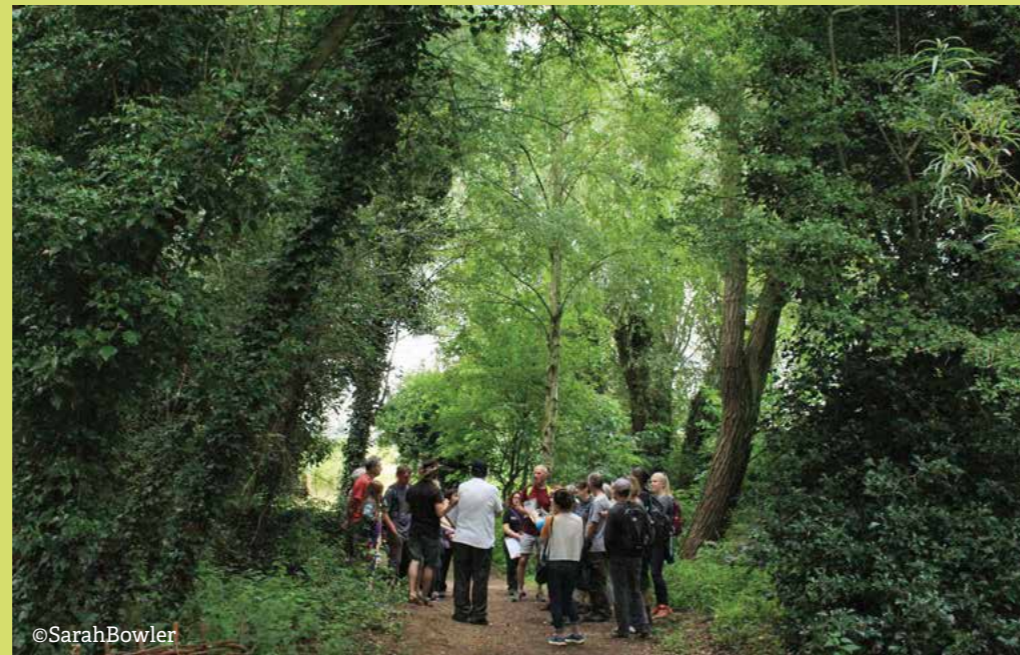
Slacklining through the trees - Wildlife ID - Canopy Ecology - Circus Hub - Carving, chizeling and wood working for all ages - Learn to live sustainably - Wormery displays and more!

FOOD & DRINK

Castle Rock Brewery - Betty Rose Cakes
Lono Espresso - The Peel Woodfired Pizza

Ecology

We consciously aimed to champion new approaches to connect people to our conservation movement, campaigns and wildlife work. We purposefully avoided having tables with leaflets and displays, and instead encouraged activities such as tree climbing with Ecologists (EMEC) to learn about wildlife monitoring in the canopies, a slack-lining trail through the woodland for all ages and a walk-in moth lab to accompany creative moth graffiti workshops. Aiming to transform our ways of engagement, these activities were symbolic of being 'wilder' and more confident in nature, whilst stimulating closer connections to nature, new conversations and trust.



Tree climbing and canopy ecology + slack-lining in woodlands + walk-in moth lab + re-wilding tours + badger vaccination talks + panellist debates + live drones

“I felt inspired to do more, to reassess my personal and work life. I felt a sense of peace and harmony and hope.”

- Environmental Sustainability Officer

Community

Our gathering aimed to create a temporary village, at community with our reserve. Whilst usually we would be the host of an event and invite groups and partners to have a stall and/or demonstrate their skills, for this event we **created invitations to gather**, engage and network. This philosophy aimed to create a collaborative atmosphere, symbolic of our need to connect together and inspire action for nature.

645

people gathered

“We had a brilliant afternoon. It was really inspiring and genuinely one of the best days out we’ve had as a family.”

- Parent visitor

A wilder day at the office

Organisations, charities, projects and experts instinctively arranging meetings, this was an outcome to our decision to host our event partially during working hours:

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust + Derbyshire Wildlife Trust + Yorkshire Wildlife Trust + Cumbria Wildlife Trust + Woodland Trust + Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust + RSPB + Rivers and Canals Trust + Rushcliffe Borough Council + Nottinghamshire County Council + many more...



What were the **Distinctive** features to our Wilder event?

The Wilder Woodland Gathering was a 'gathering' and **not a festival**. Everyone who contributed was championed. Whilst we were the hosts, we distinctly shared the stage with a wide range of passionate and professional advocates for nature from many organisations, professionals, campaigns and projects.

We did not push for membership and **did not aim to fund-raise**, we set parameters with other membership organisations also. This shifted our focus and priorities on the Wilder Campaign, audience, partnership engagement and outcomes.

We acquired a **public events license** to sell alcohol and host a live performance stage. This defined our event, validating it and our commitment, increasing our expectations, planning and public offer.



"We invited a wide range of individuals, projects, key NGO's and partners to share our stage. As the host, we wanted to give voice to many and champion the many different and positive ways we all make a difference for nature."

- Event Curator



"A fantastic event! We hope you are pleased with how it went. We heard of lots of positive comments from people. It was a very productive day for us, lots of volunteer sign ups and some **very useful contacts** made. Maybe we could run something like this in the Sherwood area one year"

- Scheme Manager, Miner2Major

An expected outcome was our opportunity to launch our **Wilder Nottinghamshire Plan at the Wilder Woodland Gathering. This opportunity linked to the national Wilder Future campaign and our vision for a Nottinghamshire **Nature Recovery Network****



Gathering pace...

How our invitation piloted a new approach

As a debut event we needed to **innovate** new ways to secure support from a wide range of potential supporters and contributors, those new to us but also those we work alongside, ensuring that our event was prioritised. To achieve this, we produced an invitation.

We believe this invitation, was a **pivotal tool** in making our event successful. With very little (if any) confirmed programme at the beginning, this **personal and signed** invitation confidently set the scene and vision for our event as a gathering, whilst also endorsing those we invited. Signed by Paul Wilkinson (CEO Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust). Once an invitation was accepted we added contributors to our event page.

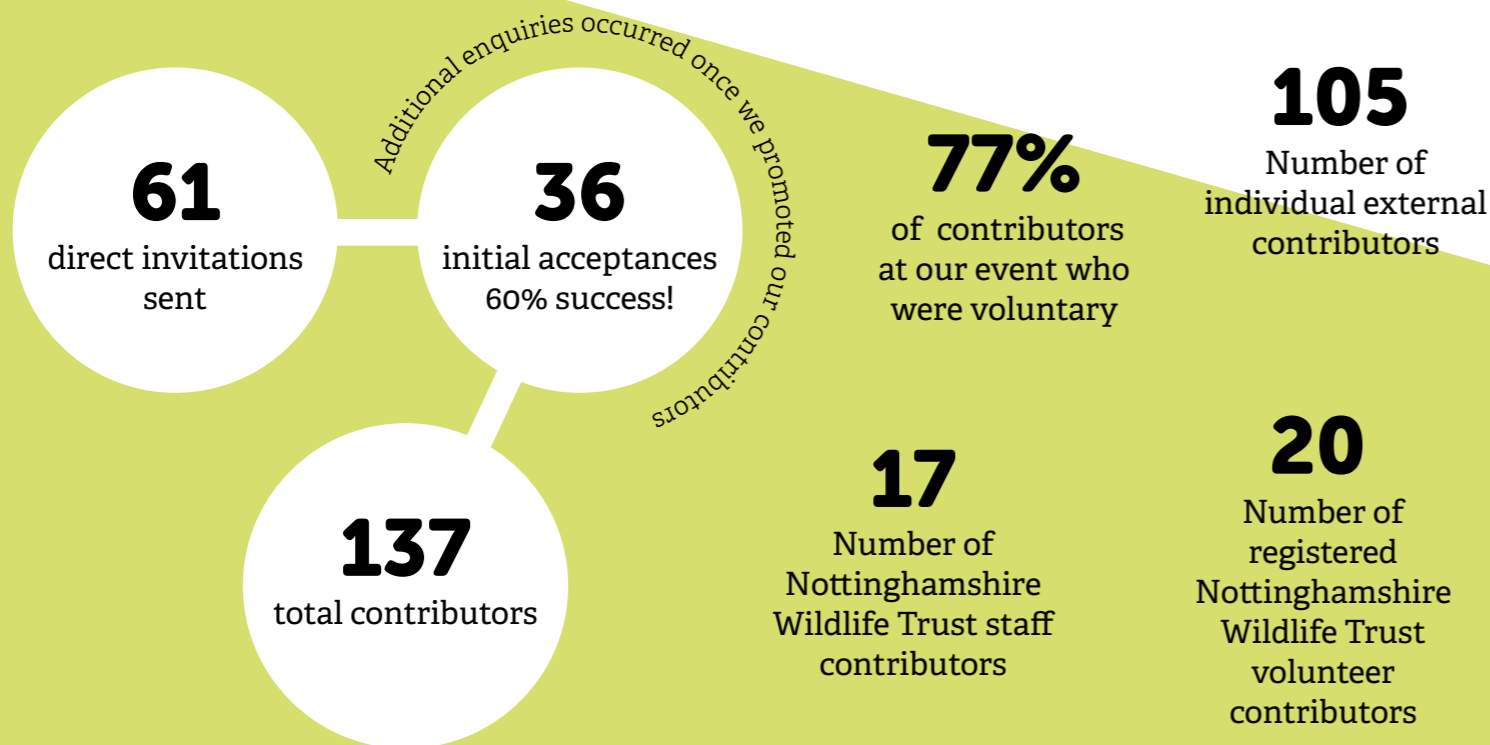
*Invite - Front

INVITATION

Wilder Woodland Gathering

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust welcomes communities, ecologists, creative artists, environmentalists, decision makers, educators, scientists, performers, designers, producers, thinkers and speakers...
to join us for our first wilder gathering event!

By gathering under the canopy of our woodland we invite you, your project or your organisation to join us in hosting an unforgettable and vibrant event, which aims to connect, inspire and invigorate positive action for the natural world and its recovery.



*Invite - Reverse

Why join us?

We recognise that you, your project; your organisation is doing great work for nature! Whether that is directly through conservation, by being a voice for nature through your campaigning, as a local pesticide free grower or as a creative using natural resources for inspiration or production. We want to showcase what you do, demonstrate your passion and commitment for the future of the natural world and importantly advocate your contribution to a **#wilderfuture**, and a **#wildernottinghamshire**.

We will give you a platform to showcase your work, but we also want to invite others to connect to what you are achieving, we want to mobilise greater support, share skills and knowledge, stimulate passionate debates so as to inspire progress and new opportunities for Nottinghamshire, the UK and critically the planet. We believe that by working together, people can change the natural world for the better, and so by organising our gathering event we hope to connect people together for a **wilder future**, and with your involvement we believe it will be an inspirational, exciting and empowering event.

It is essential that new audiences are engaged in the campaign for nature, and so our event programme will be diverse, enriching, highly creative and positively spirited! We believe by bringing together people from across the arts, culture, nature, government and private sectors we will be a catalyst for change and offer a fantastic experience for everyone.

Paul Wilkinson
Chief Executive
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Who were our contributors?

Projects and groups (10 groups)

XR Nottingham, South Notts Ringing Group, Nottingham Permaculture, Summerwood Gardens, Friends of Sharphill Woods, Community Archaeology, South Notts Local Group, Lound Moth Group, Friends of Cotgrave Forest, Weird willow.

Organisations (12 organisations)

Woodland Trust, River and Canals Trust, RSPB, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Minor 2Major, Biodiversity Network, University of Nottingham, Nottingham Green Festival, Trees for Cities, EMEC. Rushcliffe Borough Council, BBC Nottingham

Artists (10 individuals)

Jason Singh, Dave Wood, Michelle Reader, Circus Hub, Made by our Hands, Alex Rubes, Myles Knight and co-singer

Young people (16 individuals)

Keeping it Wild, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust & Tomorrows Natural Leaders Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Independent local businesses and professionals (11)

Zero Waste Nottingham, The Urban Worm, Five Leaves Bookshop, Lucy McRoberts, Iona Espresso, , Peel Pizza, Betty Bakes, Castle Rock, Kathryn Morris Roberts, Tom Huggon, Bay Sounds

The **timing of our event (in the summer holiday's and mid-week) was a governing factor, many of those invited wanted to attend but were otherwise engaged**

The decision to host our event partially during working hours was more successful than expected, particularly for partner organisations, enabling them to attend as part of their work



Our online platform and 'contributors' page

Reviewing similar types of events and information provided online, our communications team produced a web page for our event. This again was a first for us, and we maximised the tools available with our new web format to accomplish our vision.

Once our personal invitation was positively accepted, we asked each contributor for a photo, short bio and online links which were then added to our contributors page and also utilised as part of our marketing plan:



©HarrietLavender

This instant endorsement was valuable as:

We established **positive relations** between ourselves and contributors through this style of platform.

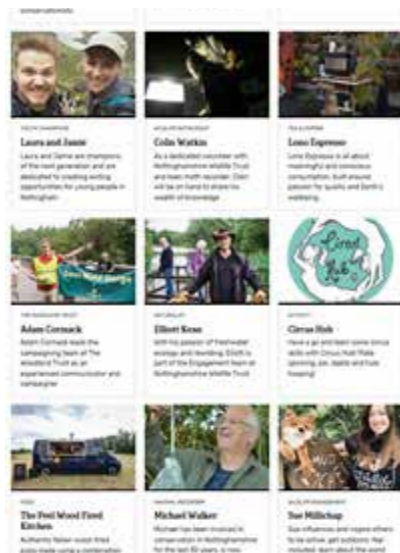
We were able to **endorse** our supporters via social media regularly, featuring new contributors as and when they confirmed their involvement.

The page gathered pace, encouraging more support and interest from wider and **new audiences**, with a visual representation of the diversity of contributors.

The page became a **networking tool** in advance for those involved and we encouraged contributors to look at each others profile and background.

We could put a **face to a name** which helped our networking on the day!

The event became more exciting, growing energy with more contributors regularly being added, and the 'gathering' could be visualised. This enabled us to make announcements and to generate a sense of a growing level of support and interest in a refreshing way.



4881 views in total

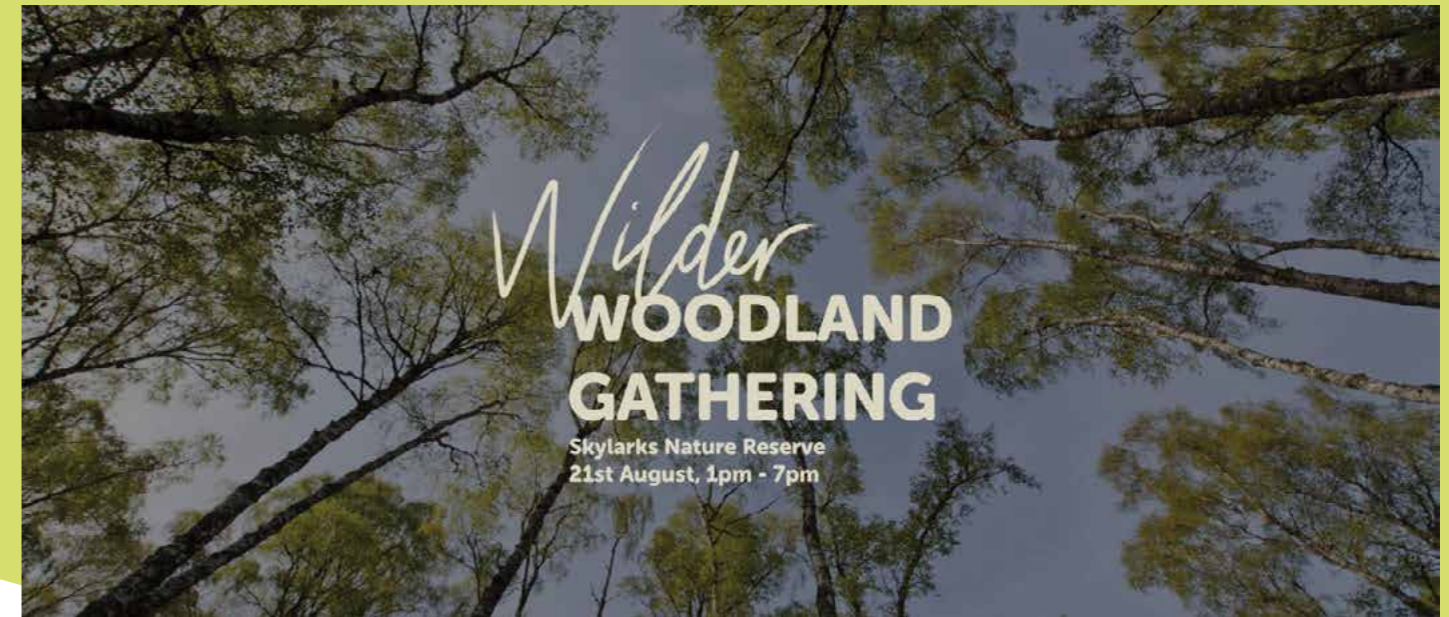
3000
number of web-page visits during the 3 weeks leading up to the event

Facebook
was the most popular social media platform

83,542
facebook views

3016
facebook engagements (likes, shares, comments)

17,000
number of people reached via our Facebook event
with 672 clicking 'attending' or 'interested'



Audiences reached...

We reached a total of **83,542 views** via social media.

Our event on Facebook reached **17,000 people**, with 646 clicking 'interested' and an additional 126 clicking 'going'.

As well as having a facebook event, we also created an **Eventbrite** 'tell us you are joining us' link. This link provided us with a great tool to make new contacts, indicate interest and predict attendance. This page, unusually gained significant momentum very close to and on the day of the event!

239 bookings were made via Eventbrite, 80% of bookings were from non-members of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, and potentially new audiences, with opportunities to retain contacts for future correspondence (consent use provided)

Both Twitter and Instagram were poor contenders on social media and a review of the posting content and links could be a factor and research into similar events led by other Trusts could be useful for us when planning communications for similar events in the future, particularly as these platforms (particularly Instagram) which are important media channels for younger audiences.



©AlanHurst

Gathering graphics and print

Given that we wanted to establish a wider demographic for our event and an invigorated sense of #wilder we opted for simply using tree canopies for our PR. This worked well across both our print and online platforms and did not prescribe a vision of what our event was going to look like. One current photo bank imagery was limiting and not suitable for event PR aiming to attract more diverse and young audiences, and stock images are often recognisably fake.

Leaflets

1000 printed leaflets were distributed to 1000 local residential homes in the Lady Bay and West Bridgford area, in close proximity to the event. This direct mailing would mainly be targeting younger families and community.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Members magazine

A feature and advert was placed in our members magazine Summer 2019, with a print run of 6000 distributed across Nottinghamshire.

Local Press

A total of 7 articles reached local press, with Nottingham Post appearing to drive increased visits to our website and event page.



Roadside banner

An event banner was installed 4 weeks before our event. This was on the A52, one of our busiest commute roads into the city of Nottingham.

TV and Radio

BBC Radio Nottingham conducted 1 x afternoon slots a week before the event, interviewing Trish Evans (event organiser) and Myles Knight.

Notts TV conducted a live interview with Erin McDaid (Head of communications) and Myles Knight who subsequently performed live.

BBC East Midlands attended the event and did a **live link up for their lunchtime news** and then created a short feature of their evening news, interviewing visitors and Paul Wilkinson (CEO)

Left Lion

Additional to our printed flyers and social media networks, it was important for our event to reach younger audiences and key to this was our programming of the arts and our partnership with Left Lion.

Left Lion is Nottingham's printed (and online) cultural magazine and for their August edition they focused on wilder themes, featuring a number of interviews and art work inspired by nature, our programmed contributors and event information. This printed newspaper (40,000 copies printed and distributed) is also electronically share and we were able to share features via social media to help PR our event.

40,000 printed copies across Nottingham City

36,000
number of LL webpage visits each month

Jason Singh - our lead programmed artist featured in Left Lion, enabling us to gain copy and coverage.



Indy - Keeping it Wild Youth Member who featured in Left Lion as part of our Wilder taker over.



Creating an atmosphere; our event layout

Creating an atmosphere and a place to gather was a key inspiration for this event. The idea to stimulate action, generate debate, entertain and inspire was key, and a decision was taken to keep most programmed activity on the stage and provide a more drop-in plan for the majority of all other zones. This worked well at the event, and the site infrastructure enabled visitors to relax, sit, and engage in areas, with straw bales, hammocks and zones created.

The wilder stage area was also the hub for our wilder bar and food vendors and XR Nottingham had their campaign placard and banner making workshops. This DIY feel near the stage, alongside our campaign information HQ provided a good level of activity.

To create an atmosphere, we chose to use our woodland area of Skylarks Nature Reserve rather than the large open meadow area on the opposite side of the reserve (a previous choice for event activity). The woodland provided a wonderful backdrop to the event, and helped keep the event curious and a place to navigate for visitors. Importantly the design and layout of this area by using zones ensured that visitors could not view all activity in one area, as one experience. It was a deliberate plan to also ensure that if the event was not well attended, an intimate atmosphere could still be created.

There was a buzz in the atmosphere across all zones throughout the event, with each zone taking on its own character and experience. Programmed walks such as the sonic walk, bird walk and rewilding walks were all fully subscribed and these took place throughout the site, giving a great dynamism too. Usually walks go off and away from an event and it was fantastic to see these walks moving through the event.



“One of the best things about this event was that there was a lovely calm and friendly atmosphere which encouraged people to take their time and join in with activities. Everything flowed really well and I loved how there were lots of different areas to discover and explore. It was really great to see so many people interested and engaged with wildlife, conservation and the work of the Trust”

- Volunteer





Site infrastructure

Throughout the event space we adopted simple and strong signage to direct and connect audiences to our **Wilder campaign** and opportunities. Throughout the space we created simple wooden signage, straw bales, bunting and hammocks to create atmosphere and support navigation for visitors.

Our budget was tight so we relied heavily on donation, loan and volunteer/staff time to create our infrastructure. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust loaned us their festival signage from Wildside Festival which helped us enormously, they also provided us with guidance about management of waste (eg recycling points) and health and safety.

Staff gave their time to help build our recycling points using old pallets and also to build and spray our zone signs. Our aim with our site infrastructure was to keep impact on the reserve to a minimum, and our Ranger teams were key to ensuring our site was managed and designed carefully, keeping vehicle access to a minimum.

The weather impacted significantly on the success of our plans, as very little (if any) impact occurred as a result of our festival and we left no trace!

Fox Den Zone / led by young people

This space was co-designed and managed by our young people's group Keeping it Wild. This ownership and leadership of a space worked really well and resulted in the group gaining a **Rushcliffe Borough Council Award for contribution to the environment**. The involvement of young people not only supported staff but also stimulated a strong sense of energy and atmosphere within their zone.



Staff and volunteer time

Key staff involved in this event and their approximate days of support:

Trish Evans / Head of People and Nature / Curator and event manager 20 days
 Laura Bacon / People and Nature Officer / Event development, infrastructure, delivery 10 days
 Jamie Shortland / Keeping it Wild Co-ordinator / Event infrastructure, build, delivery / 7 days
 Rob Atkinson / Volunteer Officer / infrastructure and volunteer co-ordination 7 days
 Rachel Rutherford / Communications Officer / Event set up and delivery 3 days
 Harriet Lavender / Communications Officer / web and event signage / 4 days
 Erin McDaid / Head of Communications / 3 days
 Paul Wilkinson / CEO / 2 days
 Chris Kennedy / Reserve Manager (south) / reserve preparation / 2 days
 Elliot Keen / Engagement Officer / 2 days
 Sue Millichamp / Engagement Officer / 2 days

Volunteer hours

A total of 20 NWT volunteers supported our event each offering an average of 4 hours volunteer time / equivalent of **10 days**



Capacity and challenges of staff and volunteer time

One of our main challenges was security of our site during the evening before and after our event. This required staff to camp over to ensure safety. Whilst this was an opportunity for staff to enjoy a social and get together, this situation was not ideal and would require an alternative plan for future events, to ensure staff capacity is not compromised and that staff are safeguarded against any potential anti-social behaviour or crime.

Volunteers selected a range of roles and slots to offer their support, from photography to car park duties. Our aim was to ensure volunteers had the opportunity to enjoy the event and also to feel supported, with the offer of complementary food and drinks.

Our main challenge was to enable volunteers to feel involved but not demanded upon. This worked successfully, however for volunteers supporting activity away from the main area, shorter shifts on rotation would be have been better and whilst this was our aim, this was not so easily co-ordinated on the day.

10 full days of volunteer time

71
total number of staff and volunteer days contribution



Feedback

We conducted two survey monkey questionnaires, one of external contributors and one for Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. These surveys produced a range of indicative responses and feedback to inspire our future plans and learning outcomes, summarised below.



Recommendations

More visible presentations and demonstrations about positive volunteering

More music and arts

Improved roadside signage and directions to the event, with improved public transport and walking access

A longer event (either into the evening or over a couple of days) and perhaps over a weekend

Better volunteer co-ordination and rotas

A higher pitch on the tent to allow for better viewing from a distance

More food outlets as they all sold out

Location of the debate stage to be further away from the main stage

More #hashtag and social media opportunities linked to #wildernotts

Less people on panel debates

More seating areas

Establish engagement with local schools

Improved visitor evaluation



Positive themes

The positive and relaxed atmosphere of each zone

The visible effort and enthusiasm of staff, volunteers and stall holders

The variety of the programme for a wide range of interests and ages

The layout and spacing of the event

Level of opportunities for engagement

Visitor numbers and length of stay

Hammocks and infrastructure

The level of professionalism

Networking and connecting opportunities

90%

of staff and volunteers surveyed rated the event 8/10 or above

17% rated the event 10/10