

FIVE SITES, FIVE SENSES PROJECT
Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund Project Report 2015 – 2016

From April 2015 to March 2016 Julia Walling of Woods for Wellbeing ran the Conservation Fund project Five Sites, Five Senses for Vision Homes Association's Loudwater Studio staff and service users and their partners. The project was designed to be mutually beneficial for the Shropshire Hills AONB and for the VHA and Loudwater users. Its' priorities were education about and appreciation of five beautiful sites, making of bird and bug boxes for conservation and recording our learning and experiences in a project book.

The grant offer stated the following terms and condition, that we:

1. Hold visits to 5 different sites within the Shropshire Hills AONB and follow-on creative workshops at Loudwater Studio
2. Provide practical conservation activities for participants e.g. making nest boxes, acorn/tree planting, etc.
3. Creation of a project storybook
4. Hold final celebration event and performance

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The project would involve 5 visits to 5 chosen AONB sites followed by 5 studio sessions held at Loudwater Studio in Ludlow. At the sites, we would experience and learn about the AONB's wide variety of landscapes and habitats and their special qualities. At each site, we would focus on a different sense and build our project work around our experiences. We planned to create a project storybook to record and celebrate our project and build bird and bug boxes for conservation use at the residences of the service users. We were joined on the project by Jean Atkin, community and landscape poet who turned our words and experiences into beautiful poetry which was recorded in our project book.

The Five Visits:

Carding Mill Valley

Our first visit was to Carding Mill Valley, where we learnt about the place and the wildlife from Rob Webster, Education Officer. The focus was on sight and we used the microscopes to look at pond life and were fascinated by how much like monsters the creatures looked. Some of our service users are blind but they enjoyed the sense of place and being part of nature.

Gleanings

Our second visit was to Gleanings for a singing workshop focusing on the sense of sound. We chose this site because of its beauty, its wonderful views of the Stiperstones and AONB landscape and the wonderful facilities provided by John and Yvonne Hart, which are so user friendly for disabled people. Yvonne and John know a great deal about folk music and are great singers. They reworked some popular folk songs into songs about the Gleanings. We sang songs we knew and loved all day accompanied by guitar and banjo. Everyone enjoyed this workshop. We were joined by Working Together – a group of young people with Down's Syndrome who were learning skills to work and become independent.

Brynmawr

Our third visit was to Brynmawr where we were joined by Sophie Holt – who volunteered for us and sourced ingredients from the farm for a cooking session followed by delicious lunch. The focus was on taste. Food was prepared by staff and by the Working Together team. We cooked beef burgers with Trevor Wheeler's beef over a fire bowl and people learned how to cook in this way.

The Stiperstones

Despite very foggy weather which obscured views all around, our visit to the Stiperstones was quite magical. We were joined by Natural England staff member Jenny Tibbetts who had travelled a long distance to be with us and was very knowledgeable about the Stiperstones. We were also joined by Sophie Hunt who had helped us on the Brynmawr visit and enjoyed it enough to want to come along on this visit. The focus was on the sense of touch and we marvelled at the textures in the landscape, the dew dropped cobwebs, Fly Agaric mushrooms and the vivid colours of the gorse. We then enjoyed lunch at the Bog Centre where we read myths about the Stiperstones and laughed at the dialect words scattered about the tables. One service user knew some of the words from his own childhood and Jean Atkin created poetry to record our visit and our comments on it.

Tru Wood

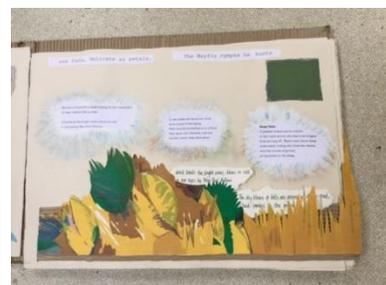
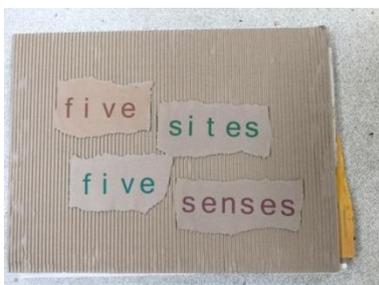
This visit took us to a private woodland near Bucknell, where hosts Toni and Ru had prepared a treasure hunt of smells, which was the focus for this visit. We sat by a fire and cooked dampers, drank tea and played games of woodland words and memories. Jean Atkin wrote and read poetry to us about our experiences there. We enjoyed hearing about the conservation plans Toni and Ru had for the wood and seeing the work they had been doing there.

THE STUDIO SESSIONS

Each visit had a follow up session and work continued beyond these sessions. Everyone was engaged in making bird and bug boxes. They were made imaginatively using all kinds of materials including seed pods and twigs:



The Project Book was designed to include photos, art work, poems and images:





Feedback and Evaluation

The project brought many new partners and rallied a rich array of resources from contributors such as poet Jean Atkin and food project developer, Sophie Hunt. Other service user groups, such as Working Together and Helena Lane joined us and very much enjoyed the visits. The studio was busy with people working on the bird and bug boxes and project book. Much was experienced, enjoyed and learned.

Five Sites, Five Senses was managed and delivered by Julia Walling for Loudwater Studio, a part of Vision Homes Association.

Vision Homes Association Charity No. 1017893

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