



Evaluation of the Prospects Foundation

By Jennifer Griggs, March 2014



Executive Summary

The evaluation examines the work of the Prospects Foundation as an environmental capacity building organisation across Hyndburn. It includes the administration of the Windfall Fund, the Nature Walks Project, the Cultivate Project, the Peoples Pods Project and finally the legacy of ongoing social enterprises. Staff were consulted on the scoping of the evaluation which aims to reflect the many functions. The Windfall Fund shows how offering small pots of funding can promote the Prospects Six Themes of Sustainability. The Nature Walks project ended April 2014, the Cultivate Project is ongoing but the past five years are evaluated and the People's Pods ended March 2014. These projects were either funded by the Big Lottery or (in the case of Cultivate) Public Health East Lancashire as part of Lancashire County Council. The achievements exemplify best practice for environmental management, health & wellbeing, community development and supporting the local economy. The evaluator makes recommendations for future sustainability strategies.

Chair's comment

"The charity is constantly evolving".

These were the words of the Foundation's auditor at a meeting about our annual accounts this month. This evaluation report demonstrates how true that observation is. I have been involved with PROSPECTS from the very start in the mid 1990's. We were determined that Hyndburn's response to the challenge of sustainable development would be real and meaningful for people, but we had no idea it would grow into such a diverse and far reaching influence within Hyndburn's communities.

Who would have thought that by 2014, through PROSPECTS work, there would be, for example:

- **mutual support between disability groups for environmental projects** (Sandy Lane Gardeners creating gardens for the disabled residents of Plantation Cottage and Pendle View); or
- **an ethical goods shop on Abbey Street (One Planet); or**
- **an event to celebrate four years of Nature Walks across the borough at a new Environment Centre in Accrington town centre; or**
- **a community enterprise doing management work in urban woodlands planted twenty years ago (WoodyCIC); or**
- **a community environmental grants scheme utilising funds from a windfarm on Oswaldtwistle Moor (Windfall).**

These are all things of which all those involved should be immensely proud.

It is a few years since the last full evaluation of the Foundation's work and, as we have just passed our fifteenth anniversary, this report is very timely. It is the time to review all we have done and is a prompt to take stock of where we're up to and to think about what our next priorities should be.

That is now the task.

Summary of the Nature Walks Achievements

Outcome	Key actions / achievements	Key partnerships	Commentary
Maintaining natural sites using conservation techniques e.g. woodlands	Harwood Bar Wood Millennium Baby Woodland Woodnook Vale Priestley Clough Plantation Road Sparth Road Woodland Edge End Wood Spout House Woods Over achievement by two sites.	Prospects Panels Monday Conservation Volunteers Group Lancashire Wildlife Trust ACCROSS College Landowners e.g. Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancashire County Council	The Prospects Foundation has provided guidance and expertise at every level from funding, site planning, risk assessments, organising volunteers and organising walking events. The Panels and other community groups report that they could not have achieved a fraction of what they have without the support. All sites requiring ongoing support.
Developing practical skills	Accredited training e.g. LANTRA brushcutter Practical courses linked to AQA Unit Awards e.g. Tools maintenance Woodland management Grassland management Wildlife identification	Monday Conservation Volunteers Group Prospects Panel Community groups Lancashire Wildlife Trust	Monday Conservation Volunteer Group attracting members from hard-to-reach groups especially mental health referrals. All participants reporting improvements in wellbeing and practical skills. Able to demonstrate new skills in woodland management whilst working towards AQA Unit Awards.
Learning about the natural environment	8556 direct beneficiary opportunities 6351 indirect beneficiary opportunities. This is significant in an area the size of Hyndburn with a population of 80,700.	ACCROSS College Hollins Technical College Accrington Academy Forest School Various primary schools Expert-led walks from various organisations and volunteers Prospects Panels Lancashire Wildlife Trust Hyndburn Borough Council Healthy Walks part of the Health Improvement Team	Opportunities include tree identification to measure tree stock and take management decisions for wildlife, bird surveys, bumble bee identification, bat identification, night time photography with longer exposure times, forest school work including minibeast identification, making shelters and bow and arrows from natural materials, woodland survival skills, pond dipping, fungi identification and wild food foraging.
Increasing sites across Hyndburn	Development across Hyndburn on a total of seventeen sites where the target was twelve. Survey of regular walkers of Priestley Clough feedback "fantastic job."	Prospects Panels Monday Conservation Volunteers Lancashire Wildlife Trust Hyndburn Borough Council Lancashire County Council	In addition to outcome one (where community groups took ownership), there has been general site improvements. This included general volunteer conservation work, training in managing sites, carrying out wildlife surveys, developing community management of key Local Nature Reserves and Biological Heritage Sites. Expert-led walks at some sites has also increased participation.
Increasing engagement opportunities	Nature Walks Festival General Publicity Celebration event and legacy film	Expert-led walks from various organisations and volunteers Prospects Panels Lancashire Wildlife Trust Hyndburn Borough Council Healthy Walks part of the Health Improvement Team	The Nature Walks Festival has been the key method for getting borough wide publicity and drawing in new participants to the Nature Walk project. Four Nature Walks Festivals have been held with over 500 people attending. Walks have included expert-led bat, bee and food foraging walks and volunteer-led walks around local trails including the Baxenden Jubilee Walk, Huncoat Trail, Great Harwood Nature Trail and the Ladybird Trail.
Future funding strategy	Enhanced reputation of Prospects Foundation with key stakeholders. Steering group partners want continuation especially staff time. Hard-to-reach groups well represented. Excellent feedback from partners.	Prospects Panels Accrington Academy Lancashire Wildlife Trust Hyndburn Borough Council Lancashire County Council Healthy Walks part of the Health Improvement Team	Investment in volunteer skills. Steering group collaborative approach to smaller pots of funding. Social enterprise model where community groups put in funding applications and employ Prospects Foundation staff as session workers.

Summary of Cultivate Project achievements

Outcome	Key actions / achievements	Key partnerships	Has the outcome been achieved	Recommendations for future
Campaigns and strategies	7 national, 3 north west, 4 Lancashire and 6 Hyndburn strategies e.g. Change4life, 5 ways to wellbeing	Public Health East Lancashire	Yes – hard to conceive another Hyndburn third sector / community project that is as multi-faceted, tackling the social gradient that Marmot describes.	Connect to the change of footprint for public health to a county wide level. Link into the matrix to show best practice for “food poverty and sustainability.”
Work with hard-to-reach communities around health to improve skills and knowledge	5477 beneficiary opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">866 volunteers1281 training3330 food growing activities including schools	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Red Rose Recovery Inward House Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – significantly overachieved. Prospects Foundation skilled at encouraging allotments for mass participation, organic food growing training, developing food growing communities, schools work, back yard growing and events. The sustainability legacy increases as more local people are taught to grow food and peer mentor others.	Partners believing the Prospects Foundation brings benefit and real value to their existing activities. Prospects need to shout about this and publicise at a county wide level. Recognition of models like Social Return on Investment (SROI) showing financial benefits to the public purse of preventing ill health.
Increased wellbeing linked to “5 ways to wellbeing”	People with long-term enduring mental health conditions and those recovering from substance misuse reporting turning their lives around. All participants questioned showing improved wellbeing.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – feel good factor of access to nature, opportunities for physical exercise in the fresh air, improved diets and opportunities to socialise.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for wellbeing. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery.
Increased physical activity	All participants questioned showing better than Hyndburn averages.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – successful intervention for increasing exercise levels.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for physical exercise. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery.
Increased fruit and veg consumption	With allotments all participants questioned showing better than Hyndburn averages. More support for participants with long-term enduring mental health conditions and those recovering from substance misuse.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – successful intervention increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of allotment holders. More support is needed for people with complex needs who tend towards poor diets although there are “success” stories for this group.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for wellbeing. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery. Signposting of participants with complex needs to healthy eating / cooking sessions.

Summary of People Pods achievements

Outcome	Key actions / achievements	Key partnerships	Commentary
Two previously derelict allotment sites at Meadoway and Woodnook transformed.	Improvements 10,020m2 directly 12,412m2 indirectly Over achievement by 1,632m2 Meadoway constituted.	Hyndburn Borough Council. Bootstrap Enterprises One Planet Planter Meadoway Allotments Association Woodnook Allotments Association Various community groups	This is more than an allotment regeneration project as it would not have achieved a fraction of what it has without the investment in people. It shows to everyone that is possible to produce more food locally and make it affordable. Allotment Week Activities in 2013 raised profile across the borough.
Two tenant management groups	Woodnook regular meetings and moving towards constitution.	Hyndburn Borough Council.	Community champions coming to the fore who are willing to build infrastructure, support new comers, give growing guidance and offer showcase plots.
500 people enjoying health and social benefits	Over achieved by 196% at 981 direct beneficiaries. This does not include schools and town centre events so indirect beneficiaries are much higher.	Community Re:Start Maundy Relief Inspire HARV (domestic violence) Stroke Association Hyndburn Homes St Christopher's C of E High School Accrington Academy Various primary schools Scouts	One of the key successes of the project has been working with the most marginalised members of society especially those living, recovering and surviving chronic health conditions, mental health conditions, disability, stroke, domestic violence, crime, substance misuse, unemployment, homelessness and general social isolation through living in low-income neighbourhoods.
Fifteen co-operative food-growing communities	The effectiveness of the facilitators role is demonstrated by the extraordinary number of co-operative food growing communities that were supported in the just two years, many starting from scratch. The target was 15 and 25 food-growing communities were achieved.	One Planet Planters Meadoway Tenants Association Woodnook Tenants Association St Christopher's Eco Class Accrington Academy Woodnook Community Garden Stroke Association HARV Inward House Inspire SNAP (Special Needs Activities) Hyndburn Community Resource Centre Incredible Edibles Accrington Rishton Prospects panel Sandy Lane group Creative Support Rough Lee care home Heys Allotment Association Friends of Milnshaw Park	The Prospect's Foundation works as a facilitator for co-operative food growing communities. The supported co-ordination has enabled three groups to access their own funding for community food growing including the Stroke Association, HARV and Accrington Academy. The key to the prolific number of co-operative food growing communities is that Ian Hodgson engaged with groups that gained impetus quickly and ensured that they had their own ownership for the food growing. Support to these groups will continue from the Cultivate Project.
120 people per year will benefit from organic food-growing training.	Over achieved by 591% at 710.	One Planet Planters Community Champion Mark Kerr Inward House Allotment sites Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS)	Informal training in organic food growing is offered to all the groups that Prospects works with work with from container to allotment growing. Beginners Organic Food Growing courses have been held at various venues across Hyndburn, for example at target allotment sites (Heys, Meadoway and Woodnook), ACCROSS and Accrington Women's Centre. Accredited training e.g. “healthy eating.”

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1.0 Introduction

The Prospects Foundation is a community-owned charity, working for lasting environmental change in Hyndburn. The Foundation is governed by an elected management committee and was formed in December 1998. It became a registered charity in July 1999. The Foundation was set up in order to support the existing Prospects Panels. Eight Panels / Forums are supported and these are based in towns throughout Hyndburn. Each Panel is an independent community group made up of local residents. The first Panel was formed in 1996, in response to Agenda 21, and since then the Panels have completed many projects in order to improve the environment and quality of life for the local community. This evaluation only seeks to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Prospects Foundation as the capacity-building organisation. However, as the Panels achievements are inextricably linked to the evaluation of the overall Prospects Foundation, the work of their dedicated core of volunteers is revealed. The Huncoat Community Forum and Spout House Woodland is presented as a case study within the (section 3.3).



2.0 Windfall Fund

The Windfall Fund was launched in April 2013. The Windfall Fund has been established from proceeds from the new Hyndburn wind farm on Oswaltwistle Moor. The Fund is a community benefit fund that is being provided by EnergieKontor, the wind farm developer, and the Prospects Foundation has secured an agreement with EnergieKontor to manage the Fund on their behalf for the lifetime of the wind farm. Grants are available to community groups throughout Hyndburn for environmental projects which will improve the quality of life of local residents and contribute to the sustainable development of the Borough. This means money is available for environmental projects in Hyndburn for at least the next 20 years and this is significant.

The Fund has two strands; one for smaller projects with grants up to £2,000 and one for larger projects with no upper grant limit. The Windfall Fund is available to any not-for-private-profit organisation in Hyndburn including community groups, charities, community interest companies and social enterprises. All groups / organisations wanting to apply have to be formally constituted and have their own bank account. It is managed by the Windfall Fund manager.

There are several closing dates for applications and all potential projects have to fit under at least one of Prospects' Six Themes of Sustainability:

1. **Biodiversity**
2. **Energy**
3. **Sustainable Transport**
4. **Waste & Recycling**
5. **Local Food and**
6. **Raising Environmental Awareness.**

The fund enables other sources of match funding for the projects increasing the value of the Fund and the amount of money being brought into the Borough. In total match funding of almost £110,000 (early rounds) was secured (just over 50%). This means the value of the projects to be carried out is equivalent to £210,000.

Delivery towards Prospects' Six Themes of Sustainability are discussed throughout the evaluation. The biodiversity, local food and raising environmental awareness themes come to the fore with the evaluated individual projects; Nature Walks (chapter 3), Cultivate (chapter 4) and People Pods (chapter 5). Therefore, to highlight other Sustainability Themes four Windfall funded case studies are examined.



View across Hyndburn from Windfarm

Sustainable Transport

Great Harwood Prospects Panel Boots and Bikes. Awarded £1993.



This project promotes walking, cycling and a change in lifestyle by providing opportunities to walk and cycle in and around Great Harwood. The independent evaluator met with Great Harwood Prospects Panel

volunteer Barbara Sharples who could be described as a “dynamo”. The panel are creating a year-round calendar of led walks coupled with the new walks published in booklets, maps and electronic apps e.g. “geocaching”. All routes start and finish in Great Harwood but extend beyond the town boundary to create circular routes. There are family bike rides, guided walks and led cycle rides. The aim is to introduce adults to walking and cycling and make these activities more attractive to lone females, older people and other excluded adults. There will be themed walks and rides. The Panel is working with Hyndburn Ramblers on the “Boots” part of the project and CTC, the national cycling charity, on “Bikes”.

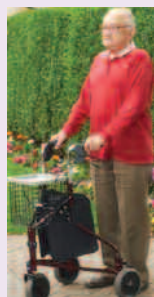
Barbara has been particularly successful at linking into other initiatives such as Healthy Streets where she has networked at meetings for this at Lancashire County Council. Barbara sees the need to link at every level as an important success factor for voluntary projects to progress. She is also skilled at local consultation (where she found out that photography was one of the most popular themes) and publicity ensuring that posters are at all community venues within Great Harwood.

The first themed walk “Autumn Colours” was on the 27th October 2013 and was planned by Peter Eddleston of Great Harwood Camera Club. The route chosen was a tranquil walk through the vale between Great Harwood and Langho where there is a rich and varied landscape, breathtaking countryside and superb views. The camera club gave hints on digital photography demonstrating photographing landscapes, trees, birds and wildlife. The walk was aimed at those with limited or no experience of photography. When it comes to future walks, Barbara added “the series of themed walks will be at a more leisurely pace and are a great opportunity for people to take up walking. A particular aim of the “Boots & Bikes” project is to attract people who rarely, if ever, walk or cycle to have a go on their doorstep.”

Waste and Recycling

Hyndburn Homewise Society Recycling of disability and support aids. Grant £8500

The aim of the not-for-profit social enterprise is to enable people and relatives to remain independent in their homes when their mobility or personal care reduces. Due to the comprehensive spending review only cases classed as “substantial and critical” can gain aids on prescription. People with mild to moderate support needs now have to buy their own and may be avoiding to do so because of cost. Coupled with this, Social Services and hospitals are recommending people put their disability aids such as walking sticks, walking frames, bath seats in landfill when they no longer need them. Therefore a further aim of the project is diverting and refurbishing perfectly good equipment. The Windfall grant allows disability aids to be collected, cleaned and sold at affordable prices. It has also enabled for a shop in the Arndale Centre to be open for 15 hours per week. It is anticipated that this project will become self-financing within a couple of years.



The independent evaluator interviewed Sue Sinclair who said “the Windfall Fund has been a life line that will enable us to develop the “re-use not refuse” scheme in the hope of becoming self sustainable. A new leaflet has been produced and a marketing plan developed to promote the services further and try to get around and meet as many community groups working with potential customers as possible. All our dealings with Alison Silver (Windfall manager) at the Prospects Foundation have been great. Initially we put in a larger application not really knowing what the upper limit was. Alison gave us constructive advice and we applied again which was successful. Essentially the Prospects Foundation has the same ethics as us. We are able to change people's lives at a point when they need the help the most. We are also bridging the gap where the public sector is no longer providing services. The grant has enabled us to make a huge difference.”



Raising Environmental Awareness

Broadfield Specialist School Developing a sensory garden. £5000

The purpose of the garden was to develop a horticulture area and sensory garden accessible to all students particularly as there are now more students in wheelchairs. The infrastructure work was carried out in the 2013 summer holidays by a Lancashire County Council approved contractor and then after that the Prospects Foundation's Cultivate Co-ordinator Julie Livesey advised on and supervised suitable planting especially avoiding toxic plants.

The independent evaluator interviewed Community Co-ordinator Lee Bentley. “Working with Prospects has been great. It started before the application where Alison (Windfall manager) visited us to give us advice and I would recommend this. We already have an enthusiastic approach to horticulture and have a dedicated teacher as all our students live with disability. The grant has enabled us to create a wildlife garden with raised beds which the children have planted with edible and non-toxic plants with all year interest. The planting scheme also includes sensory plants which gives the widest experience possible to the children. The raised beds and benches are made out of recycled plastic and the living willow arch and arbour are to be planted in the next few weeks.”

Lee strongly endorses the work of the Prospect's Foundation “Julie has been more than helpful. She is hands on and here rain or shine. Now that we have developed a relationship with the Prospects Foundation we look forward to future partnership work. This garden is a long-term thing which will be enjoyed by the new influx of students each year. The plants are not even yet fully mature but it is wonderful to see the children enjoying the space and increasing their environmental awareness.”



Local Food

Sandy Lane Gardening Group Developing Plantation Cottage and Pendle View

Sandy Lane Gardening Group developed independently of the local food work of the Prospects Foundation (see chapter 4) although they have received support in terms of advice. The group developed in 2009 when a group of service users, all with mental health issues, decided to develop an unused part of the garden and start growing fruit and vegetables. All volunteers are supported by Creative Support. Members live in supported housing or live in the community whilst still receiving support services. They were helped with grants from Eaves Brook and Creative Support but their ambitions grew very quickly and soon realised the need to access more grants. They formalised with a constitution, committee and bank account. From the outset the gardening group was totally service user-led. They use peer mentoring techniques to pass on skills. For example, Prior to Windfall they had already been learning green woodworking at Offshoots in Burnley and now build furniture to order from timber felled from local woods.

The independent evaluator interviewed Gerry Burke, a service-user, to discuss how the Windfall Fund had enabled them to take the project further. Gerry said “four years later we have virtually completed the work at Sandy Lane, become self financing, and are now using the equipment and skills that we have built up in order to help others. From November 2011 we began work on two learning disability projects Plantation Cottage and Pendle View and our social enterprise now has the garden maintenance contracts for these. Work started initially with renovating furniture and ponds. We went onto build raised beds from planks cut from tree trunks at Offshoots and put up a 20ft x 12ft polytunnel. The Windfall grant is for continuing work at Plantation Cottage by clearing scrub to make way for an orchard and at Pendle View to increase wheelchair accessibility and build two raised beds and a greenhouse.”

Gerry was asked about the application process for Windfall which he described as straight forward. “We see Prospects locally at the hub – the place all the gardening projects can link into.” In terms of the management of Windfall Gerry commented “the awarding of small grants has more impact locally. Used correctly it is a great asset for Hyndburn. We are not keen on contractors getting paid for the work. It is important to provide people with support needs with purposeful activity. This really can change lives. One resident gets up every morning at 8am just to feed the cat in the summer house at Sandy Lane. Before the garden, he struggled to get out of bed. We are all benefiting because helping those who are less fortunate than ourselves increases self-esteem.”

Other organisations that have been awarded funding include:

- **Church & Oswaldtwistle Rotary Club – widespread planting of crocuses.**
- **Lancashire Wildlife Trust – 2 projects – running the Monday Conservation Volunteers group and reinstating the banks at Tinker Brook within Foxhill Bank Nature Reserve.**
- **Hyndburn Used Furniture Store - to develop a cardboard shredding business to produce fibre bedding for horses.**
- **One Planet Shop - to promote the use of environmentally friendly / Fairtrade / local and organic products to voluntary sector organisations throughout Hyndburn.**
- **Rishton Methodist Primary PTA - to develop a food growing site to educate children about how to grow their own food and use it in cooking.**
- **The PROSPECTS foundation - to employ an Activity Organiser, develop the Prospects Environment Centre and develop a programme of environmental awareness raising activities for the people of Hyndburn.**
- **Belthorn Village Committee - improvement works to the frontage and sides of Belthorn village pond.**
- **Friends of Arden Hall & the Coppice - to purchase equipment and carry out ecological surveys of the Biological Heritage Site in Peel Park. This is also part of the Nature Walks project (see 3.3)**
- **Woodnook Residents Community Association - to further develop the Woodnook Community Garden to encourage organic food growing and raise environmental awareness. This is a case study in the People's Pod project (see 5.5).**
- **Incredible Edibles Accrington - to develop an Alice in Wonderland themed garden incorporating organic food growing and wildlife areas in Oakhill Park, Accrington.**
- **Community Solutions North West - Community Repaint Scheme for Hyndburn.**
- **Aawaz - environmental awareness project.**
- **Sandy Lane Gardening Group - chicken coop at Pendle View.**
- **Hyndburn District Explorer Scout Unit - to develop an allotment at Woodnook to enable young people to gain a skill or participate in volunteering activities as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.**
- **Friends of St Paul's School - to develop a food growing area in the playground.**
- **Friends of Huncoat School - to develop a food growing area and community orchard in the school grounds.**
- **Growing Wild - to develop an outdoor space (in Baxenden) for children and families to explore and learn about the natural environment.**

The Windfall Fund has been awarded to a wide range of projects on the Prospects' Six Themes of Sustainability, although there has been no applications for energy and the most popular theme is “local food” reflecting the community development work of the Cultivate and People Pods project. The application process is straight forward and applicants have appreciated the help offered to them by Alison Silver. Community groups throughout Hyndburn are familiar with the scheme and perceive it as accessible. In a time where areas across the UK now really only have access to Big Lotteries Awards for All for small pots of funding, this scheme may prove to be very significant to Hyndburn's community and voluntary sector, moving them towards more sustainable environmental practices.

3.0 Nature Walks

3.1 Introduction

Nature Walks in Hyndburn project began in January 2010 with the aim to help disadvantaged people engage positively with nature through participation in Nature Walks, especially expert-led walks and high profile annual Nature Walks Festival, with progression to active conservation volunteering, training and community management. Hard-to-reach groups included Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, young people, mental health referrals and residents from low-income neighbourhoods. The project evolved by asking volunteers from target beneficiary groups what they wanted to do whilst taking into account existing strategic plans for natural sites and health needs.

The Nature Walks programme of work took a four-pronged approach:

- **improving both physical and virtual access to natural areas;**
- **nature conservation volunteering;**
- **training and**
- **organising expert and volunteer-led nature walks.**

An excellent partnership steering group ran for the duration of the project involving the Prospects Foundation, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Health Improvement Team, Hyndburn Community Network, eight geographical Prospects Panels and at least twenty community groups

who work with target beneficiaries. The project would not have had such a deep-lasting impact without the Access to Nature Funding.

This evaluation examined achievements, case studies and made recommendations around the five outcomes. In total 35 individual / organisations were consulted. The evaluation consisted of several steps:

- **collating information from quarterly monitoring for the grant administrator Natural England;**
- **collating information from the minutes of quarterly steering group meetings of partners which has allowed for steering and feedback;**
- **interviews with key Prospects Foundation staff, partners, volunteers and support workers to help capture qualitative data and**
- **standard internet survey techniques for other interested parties.**

Evaluation evidence was gathered from participants throughout the life of the project when attending walks, training sessions and volunteer parties. Anecdotal evidence and case studies were used for qualitative data. Photographs were taken especially showing “before” and “after” improvements on sites. Lancashire Wildlife Trust were commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the Monday Conservation Group and the Priestley Clough Footpath Improvement Project.



3.2 Maintaining natural sites

The Nature Walks Project target was six sites and this was successfully overachieved with supporting the management of eight natural sites:

- 1. **Harwood Bar Wood** is managed by Great Harwood Prospects Panel on a bi-monthly basis. Led by enthusiastic local residents, a small group of volunteers have opened up a previously inaccessible pathway. In partnership with Prospects Foundation and Hyndburn Borough Council, a site visit was organised with an action plan and the identification of trees with preservation orders. Volunteers continue to keep on top of the footpath work, coppicing shrubs, small tree felling, Himalayan balsam pulling and general maintenance. Bird boxes and a bird feeding station have been installed. Hedgelaying training has been provided as part of Supporting Change & Impact continuation funding (sustainability is further discussed in 3.8).



- 2. **Millennium Baby Woodland** – The Prospects Foundation continue to provide maintenance support for this new woodland, originally planted back in spring 2002 to commemorate local babies born at the millennium. The site is supported by students from Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) and Clayton with Altham Prospects Panel following the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's management plan for the site. By following the management plan, the students have learned why sometimes trees need to be felled, how to plant a hedgerow, tree identification, coppicing of hazel and how to use felled timber to create dead hedges.



- 3. **Woodnook Vale** is currently being managed by the Monday Conservation Volunteers Group and Baxenden Community Forum. They actively carry out care and maintenance tasks during winter and summer. Work has included Himalayan balsam removal, footpath improvements and general woodland management. The highlight of the site is the Willow Trail with benches. Willow workshops were held involving a women's BME walking group, St Paul's Scouts, St John's Primary School and Hollins Technology College. The children all made small willow items and lanterns for the celebration parade. Hollins Technology College were involved in making larger sculptures for the trail with the help of willow worker Joe Gregory and Jeff Allen. Living willow structures were installed with the help of Baxenden Community Forum volunteers.



- 4. **Priestly Clough Footpath Work** – following consultation with Lancashire Wildlife Trust and local user groups, it was identified as an area where access improvements could be made. A circular route was created which takes in the nature reserve. Volunteers helped with access improvements including path widening, cutting back overhanging branches and installing edging posts. Priestley Clough is part of the much bigger Woodnook Vale Nature Reserve.



- 5. **Plantation Road (Peel Park / Arden Road)** – grassland has been scythed on an annual rotation and alder removed from meadow to preserve the Biological Heritage Site (BHS). Volunteers helped with archaeology work on the the old remains of Arden Hall, which led to a larger archaeology project involving Oxford Archaeology and Lancashire County Council. They also created a wildflower area. There has also been management of hedges and Himalayan balsam along Plantation Road.



- 6. **Sparth Road Woodland** – completed access improvements with Clayton with Altham Prospects Panel, Groundwork Pennine Lancashire, Cycling Projects, Hyndburn Borough Council and Lancashire County Council. The aim of the project, led by Cycling Projects was to resurface a figure of 8 route to be used by a disabled cycling group as an alternative to using a running track. The access improvements have also made the woodland more accessible to pushchairs and wheelchairs. New interpretation boards have been installed and Prospects volunteers were involved with wood carving and willow weaving workshops to create artworks with the help of young people. The project worked with Clayton with Altham Prospects Panel to run a twelve month programme of events including wood carving, beech removal, lantern walk and wildflower bulb planting.



- 7. **Edge End wood** – again is managed by the Great Harwood Prospects Panel. The woodland management work involves pruning existing trees, thinning out overcrowded trees and creating dead hedging with the wood that this creates. The group have also planted bluebell and wild garlic bulbs as well as hedgerow whips to turn the dead hedges into living ones. Other work has involved scything, Himalayan balsam pulling in the boggy areas and general maintenance. The group also enlisted the help of the Hyndburn Tree Wardens to help remove some of the larger trees.



Spout House Wood and the Huncoat Community Forum case study

Spout House woodland is the heart of a green environment in the centre of Huncoat. It includes Bolton Avenue playing fields and pastures as well as the woodland. It is close to, surrounded by and of convenient access to residential areas so is of high amenity value. Hyndburn Borough Council has committed to preserving and protecting this open green space in the centre of Huncoat. The Huncoat Community Forum (which is a Prospects' panel) has supported and cooperated with the Council in this vision. The Forum's involvement in the woodland over the years has enriched the local environment and benefited the members. Through volunteering members have invested time, energy and interest in the local environment. They can feel some pride, ownership and responsibility in the area.

Various schemes have been progressed and completed at Spout House Wood including:

- organising a user survey of the area including the woodland;
- establishing the “flagship” Huncoat Trail, around the boundaries of Huncoat, including the woodland;
- hosting led walks around the Huncoat Trail during the Nature Walks Festival;
- identifying and promoting the public rights of way through the woodland;
- draining, fencing, tree pruning and felling and new tree planting;
- extending the forested area;

- thinning naturally regenerating trees;
- building new stiles and kissing gates;
- installing the Peak and Northern Footpath Society signpost;
- installing the oak promotional post;
- writing successful funding bids for interpretation boards and bird boxes;
- installing interpretation boards on trees and birds;
- installing bird and owl boxes;
- wildlife surveys, birds and flora and fauna;
- assisting Hyndburn BC with consultations on the woodland and
- supporting and promoting the Hyndburn BC scheme to further extend the wooded area.

Huncoat is an excellent example of how the Prospects Foundation (professional staff) support the Prospects Panels. The Panels are made up of local environmental champions and volunteers. The independent evaluator interviewed Roy Chetham “I have been the key person to develop this project from the Forum. I am very much involved in walking not just with the Nature Walks project but outside the area and I organise “Roy's Roams.” I have worked with the Prospects Foundation for ten years and more recently with Gemma and Roger. At the Forum we are just volunteers. We don't have the expertise and this is where the Prospects Foundation are strong, flexible and willing to come out on a Saturday to assist with our projects. Spout House Wood is a continuous ongoing project. If project officer support has to be withdrawn, because of funding, we will still survive but we appreciate the help. It gives us lots more confidence and all guidance is friendly, approachable and knowledgeable. More than this is that the support is always readily available and it is easy to get in contact either at the Environment centre or on the phone. We couldn't have achieved a fraction of what we have without their help.”

3.3 Developing practical skills

People from target communities have gained practical skills in woodland management and site maintenance. Groups work alongside the Prospect Foundation and partners, adhering to site management plans, volunteering (either with the Monday group or through voluntary support groups like the Prospect Panels), workshops and guided nature walks. Committed volunteers and those with complex needs (for example those building confidence when in recovery from mental illness) have had the opportunity to undertake accredited qualifications including:

- LANTRA brush cutting training;
- LANTRA strimmer training;
- NCFE Level 1 certificate hedgelaying training at Foxhill Bank Local Nature Reserve;
- various AQA Unit Awards through Lancashire Wildlife Trust. With their “teacher checklists” these are particularly suitable to non-traditional learners who may have poor literacy or numeracy skills and
- gaining a chainsaw license (in addition to working with the Monday Conservation Volunteer Group, this volunteer is also involved in the social enterprise Woody see chapter 7).



Other practical training (without formal accreditation) has included:

- tool maintenance;
- risk assessments;
- first aid training;
- footpath improvements;
- coppicing to increase light to understorey plants creating a better habitat for small birds and mammals,
- removing overhanging trees;
- removing invasive species including Himalyan balsam and rhododendron;
- installing woodcrete bird boxes;
- hedgelaying;
- grass scything and raking;
- wildflower grassland creation;
- willow working and
- green woodworking.

Monday Volunteers Conservation Group – Case study

The Monday Group was set up to provide a regular volunteering opportunity for people to participate in nature conservation management as part of the Nature Walks project. The group works in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust. Volunteers are recruited through the local Community Restart team (who refer people recovering from mental health issues); Hyndburn and Ribble Valley CVS; Prospects Foundation Environment Centre and website, the Lancashire Wildlife Trust website and the Job Centre.

Questionnaires were circulated in December 2012 and returned using the “Developing Audiences for our Natural Heritage: Guidance on evaluating and monitoring our People and Wildlife Work, 2004, The Wildlife Trusts”. This method uses four themes: felt good, joined in, skilled up and made a difference, to assess the change as a result of their activities. Eleven forms were completed and returned and the results for themes and individual scores are below.

Theme	Average score out of a maximum 44
Felt good	42.3
Skilled up	41
Joined in	36.3
Made a difference	34.3

All themes scored highly showing that the volunteers regarded the work they are doing is important to them. The group were also asked if they would like to take on more responsibility for the group with only two agreeing and most others preferring the supervised practical activities.

In a separate evaluation, independent evaluator Jenny Griggs went to interview different members of the group to get them to tell their own stories especially if they have seen personal improvements in their lives. The group were busy coppicing trees to let light through and increase the understorey. The day began with an explanation by Kim Coverdale of the work to be done and the reasons behind it. She also used “peer mentoring” techniques to get experienced volunteers to explain how to use tools safely like bow saws and loppers to newcomers to the group. Everyone was given high visibility jackets and safety helmets to wear.

Within the group there was a wide range of people from those who had retired but needed to keep active, to several unemployed people looking to improve their employability, one who was an ex-offender, one person who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, another from a BME community, one who is recovering from a nervous breakdown and several people who fitted in volunteering alongside full time work. The majority of this



group were from hard-to-reach groups and it is those people who face day-to-day hardship who show the greatest strides forward when getting involved in conservation volunteering.

Comments included:

What are your motivations for volunteering

“I would be at home doing nothing,” “I need the hard graft and digging up rhododendron is really hard work,” “I am unemployed and need more practical experience so I can get a job” and “I’ve given up hanging around with gangsters. My friends cannot understand why I would come and do this for free. They don’t understand that they are doing nothing. Just being unemployed when they could have some use in their lives. I wish I had known about this five years ago and my life would have been very different.”

Has volunteering improved your health and wellbeing?

“Yes I take notice of nature more and I have been doing it for five years,” “I’ve loved the countryside since I was a child. I have been diagnosed with schizophrenia and my medication has ensured that I have been stable since 2000. I need this to release the natural endorphins,” “coming here makes me determined to keep up lifestyle changes,” “we like coming here because it is a place in my life where there is no pressure” and “I am severely asthmatic and coming here helps me breathe” and “the secret is keeping active.”

What have you learned?

“I just like learning the skills and never thought I would be using tools like this,” “I know all different coppicing cuts like a birds mouth,” “I like the practical skills it reminds me of being on my grandfather’s farm in Pakistan,” “I am doing some accredited training,” “woodland management is my thing. I am a little rosey on flower identification,” “biodiversity feels more relevant to me now that I have been doing the conservation volunteering” and “everything is interconnected.”

Working with the Prospects Foundation

All volunteers agreed that they liked working with the Prospects Foundation. “It is a good organisation for Hyndburn” and “I like it that they text to remind me. They are so lovely.”

3.4 New learning about the natural environment

In addition to volunteering, there were opportunities for target communities to get involved in regular walking events and learning experiences. There has been 8556 direct beneficiary opportunities and 6351 indirect beneficiary opportunities. This is significant in an area the size of Hyndburn with a population of 80,700.

Learning about the natural environment training has included:

- **tree identification with Hyndburn Tree wardens to measure tree stock and take management decisions for wildlife;**
- **bird surveys including Where Kestrels Fly;**
- **bumble bee identification;**
- **bat identification;**
- **night time photography with longer exposure times;**
- **forest school work including minibeast identification, making shelters and bow and arrows from natural materials;**
- **woodland survival skills;**
- **pond dipping;**
- **fungi identification and**
- **wild food foraging.**

Some of these learning opportunities have been in partnership with formal learning institutions. For example, Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) students have developed woodland management skills at the Millennium Baby Woodland and Sparth Road Woodland. Hollins Technical College carried out Duke of Edinburgh Awards in Woodland Management where young people were taught how to use tools safely and identify key woodland management techniques. Forest schools workshops were carried out with Mount Pleasant School and a woodland survival day with Peel Park Primary School.



Working with hard-to- reach young people Nurture Class from Accrington Academy

The students who have access to the forest schools programme are year 7 and year 8 nurture students most of whom have social/emotional and behavioural difficulties but not necessarily learning disabilities. As Learning Support Officer Ben Mears said “these kids literally need a new string to their bow. The students have participated in a range of outdoor activities including basic woodland management tasks including pruning and trimming of trees in a small existing woodland in the Academy grounds. Other tasks have included digging a path through the woodland to lay a bark path and also planting trees and a fruity hedge.

The students have been introduced to the importance of health and safety and the need for risk assessments as well as being instructed on the safe use of various tools such as knives, loppers, secateurs and bow saws. As well as outdoor conservation tasks students have also participated in the construction of bird boxes and bug hotels as well as carving their own spoon from a piece of timber.

During the project the students have gained a greater knowledge and respect for the outdoors and participating in activities which they may not necessarily have previously done or be given the opportunity to do otherwise. The activities have enabled the students to engage in learning in a different environment to which they are used to and familiar with. Feedback from the students included “the last two weeks have been fantastic. I have met some new people that I didn’t know before. The favourite parts of it are making dens and eating sweets. I now love using tools.”

Gemma and other Prospects staff has been an integral part of the project and have played a vital role in rolling out the project at the Academy. Gemma is extremely patient and understanding of the students giving them time and encouragement to complete the tasks set. She has a wide range of ideas and activities which she has brought to the forest schools programme and is very flexible, being able to change sessions at the last minute due to the weather or lack of equipment. We have really enjoyed working with her on the project and hope it continues into the future.”

3.5 Increasing sites across Hyndburn

In addition to outcome one (where community groups took ownership for the improvements on eight natural sites), there has been development across Hyndburn on a total of seventeen sites where the target was twelve. This included general volunteer conservation work, training in managing sites, carry out wildlife surveys, developing community management of key Local Nature Reserves and Biological Heritage Sites. Expert-led walks at some sites has also improved the attractiveness of the area and participants regularly feed back that they are more likely to visit other parts of Hyndburn. Simply pointing out wildlife to walkers enabled local people to see the sites “in a different light” as learning spaces rather than a space simply to walk straight through.

Survey of regular walkers of Priestly Clough

Questionnaires were circulated and returned using the “Developing Audiences for our Natural Heritage: Guidance on evaluating and monitoring our People and Wildlife Work, 2004, The Wildlife Trusts”. This method uses four themes: felt good, joined in, skilled up and made a difference, to assess the change as a result of their activities. Eighteen forms were completed and returned.

- The highest score is from the “Felt Good” theme, with ‘Joined In’ being close behind. This reflects the importance of walking for health and organised walking being important for social interaction. ‘Feeling Good’ and “Enjoying Activities” scored the highest possible score.
- Under the “Joined in” theme, the high scores reflect that the walkers felt safe, part of the group and able to join in.
- “Skilled Up” scores were lowest but walkers did identify learning about the area and increasing confidence as a result of the new route.
- The “Made a difference” theme scores showed that the walkers are more likely to increase their walking and return to the site with their friends and family.
- Recommendations for improvement included publicising the route from Accrington Town Centre. The conclusion was the work was a “fantastic job.”

3.6 Increasing engagement opportunities

Walking is an inexpensive and easy way to encourage people to exercise and enjoy the outdoors. It is now recognised that contact with nature benefits people in their physical and mental well-being. Social interaction, increased confidence, training and a change in behaviour and lifestyle are all additional effects of regular walking in green open spaces.

Internet survey of beneficiaries

Local people prioritised their reasons for enjoying the project. They were asked how has this work improved your enjoyment and experience of this site?

More interesting to visit	88.89%
Walking more often	66.67%
More opportunities to see wildlife	66.67%
Feel proud	66.67%
I feel safer	44.44%
Information about wildlife	44.44%
Gained new practical skills	33.33%
Found a hidden treasure	33.33%
I can visit new areas of the site	33.33%



The Nature Walks Festival

The Nature Walks Festival has been the key method for getting borough wide publicity and drawing in new participants to the Nature Walk project. Four Nature Walks Festivals have been held with over 500 people attending. Walks have included expert-led bat, bee and food foraging walks and volunteer-led walks around local trails including the Baxenden Jubilee Walk, Huncoat Trail, Great Harwood Nature Trail and the Ladybird Trail. The festivals have received very positive feedback including “it really was a great success and everybody on the walks had a very enjoyable time. The walks were well planned and even set off on time! All the organised walks were in beautiful areas of outstanding scenery and some of the trails we went on I never knew existed.”

General publicity

Events and walk programmes are publicised in local libraries, at the Prospects Environment Centre, on the Prospects Foundation website and via facebook. Hyndburn Council for Voluntary Service refers volunteers to the Monday Conservation Volunteer Group. One success story is Chris Barrow who started volunteering for the Prospects Foundation as an unemployed graduate. He said “being on the dole is not much fun. I had done a degree in Integrated Promotional Media which covered everything from creating a marketing plan, graphic design, photography and maintaining websites. Working with Gemma on the Nature Walks project enabled me to put my skills into use and I maintained the website, the facebook page, created logos and leaflets. From this I decided to set up my own business in marketing. It has gone from strength to strength and my business is now three years old. Working with everyone at Prospects definitely built my confidence.”

Celebration event and legacy film

The independent evaluator attended the event and this was a great opportunity to interview strategic partners. The celebration event was organised to thank groups and individuals who have been involved with the project. This included partner organisations from the steering group and volunteers who have led walks, carried out nature conservation work and helped to make improvements to their local green space. It gave everyone the opportunity to recount memories of the project, take a look at displays and a local film company (who have created a short legacy film) interviewed volunteers.

3.7 Conclusions and sustainability strategy

In terms of attracting new people to the Nature Walks project, it has overachieved on all of the five original outcomes. Walks have enabled local communities to enter their local greenspaces and have been engaged in new learning about wildlife and local history. In particular hard-to-reach groups have been well represented.

- Mental health referrals – working in partnership with the Community Re:Start Scheme the conservation volunteer group has been particularly successful at retaining long term commitment from a group that is traditionally hard to engage. As feedback from the Monday Conservation Volunteer Group showed the changes on wellbeing, in particular, have been life changing.
- BME groups - have been engaged in Woodnook Vale and Priestley Clough. After attending a local walking group it was found that they were interested in learning more about wildflowers and what they could forage to use in cooking.
- Young people - close links have been made with Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) horticulture group who carry out practical work at the Millennium Baby Woodland on a monthly basis. This has been a successful way of engaging with young people who are already interested in the natural environment. For hard-to-reach young people using the Forest Schools approach enables children to become comfortable with the natural environment.



- **People living with disability.** Walks have been advertised giving people the opportunity to book trumper vehicles where this has been appropriate. This has been only a minor success. The Prospects Environment Centre is now housing a trumper that can be booked free of charge. Working with Lancashire County Council, accessible local routes will be identified and promoted to people with low mobility.
- **Families - Nature walks have been popular with families who are clearly keen for their children to learn more about nature.** Bat walks have been consistently popular with 40+ people. Pond dipping has also been popular.

Lessons learned have included:

- **More work needs to be done to engage with BME communities more effectively.**
- **The “moving on” aspects of the project e.g. someone attends a walk and then becomes a volunteer did not happen.** This is because the large events were very family orientated and parents do not have the time to commit to conservation volunteering. However, this can also be perceived as a strength so that all levels of need were catered for. The people who did regularly commit to volunteering and training were often from hard-to-reach groups e.g. mental health referrals and so the positive impact on these individuals is more far reaching and life changing.
- **It is better to focus on specific sites for volunteering activities.**
- **Ensure that all walking participants have access to information about volunteering.**
- **Link volunteering opportunities to all walking programmes e..g. Stepping Out.**

This section looks at recommendations from the work of the independent evaluator as to continuation. The formation of a steering group comprising of partner organisations with nature conservation at the forefront of their work has been a success. Previously there was no such strategic group in Hyndburn but now, partners can keep each other up-to-date with activity and also coordinate work where appropriate to ensure no replication. The steering group has only strengthened the approach to nature conservation in the borough. This enhanced the reputation of the Prospects Foundation with key stakeholders.

Ben Mears Accrington Academy and Scout Leader carrying our Duke of Edinburgh said “with the support of the Prospects Foundation we are looking at securing various funding applications so that we can bring in Prospects staff as session workers. We have intentions of engaging with the wider community and the feeder primary schools to Accrington Academy to make the project appealing to the Lotteries Awards for All. I cannot do this on my own.”

Anne Hourican, Senior Environmental Projects Officer, Hynburn Borough Council said “there are fantastic natural resources around Hyndburn that local people are really passionate about. Some people already have the skills to engage with these areas like bird watchers. The strength of the Nature Walks project is that it “enables” other people who would not normally do this engage with these beautiful areas. It should also be said that the staff at Prospects Foundation are really good and have a gentle approach that gained its own momentum so as word spread more people got involved. The high profile Nature Walks Festival which were a full fortnight of events helped.”

Phil Johnson, Tree and Woodland Officer, Hyndburn Borough Council said “my involvement has been around improving access to council owned sites and it is good to collaboratively work with the Prospects Foundation, as a third sector organisation they can access different pots of funding. There is still so much more capacity for improving woodland access and “the Coppice” has been a very successful scheme working not only with Nature Walks but also the social enterprise “Woody” that is also supported by the Prospects Foundation. All of Prospects are very easy to work with and are my preferred contractor, unless it is beyond the scale of their equipment. In the future we would like to continue to work in partnership on council owned sites.”

Mark Pickup, Hyndburn Borough Council said “The Prospect Foundation are a unique organisation. They help to promote access to nature, sustainable and healthy living and protection of the world’s resources at the local level through a variety of activities. They remain true to the original vision of Agenda 21 and although have evolved and adapted during challenging times have had a large impact locally. They also rely on external funding to fulfil many of their objectives and have the infrastructure and experience to deliver projects such as the Nature walks Projects efficiently. If resources were no object I would like to see ranger style posts at a number of the locations that the Nature Walks project use. This would include a visitors centre and help further engage people in these sites with regular activities.”

Kim Coverdale, Lancashire Wildlife Trust said “The Prospects Foundation are very in tune with their local communities and if I want to know anything about starting a project in Hyndburn I would approach them first. Prospects Foundation and the Wildlife Trust need to have a more collaborative approach to funding. The Steering group has been extremely useful and we all work well together. At the Wildlife Trust we can bring in our specialist conservation knowledge to make biodiversity relevant and in this respect John Lamb is key to translating strategies into management plans. The volunteer groups then work to these management plans. However, we must never underestimate the dedicated staff time required to bring all the complex strands together for a project like Nature Walks. It should also be mentioned that not only is it officer time but the integral support that the Prospects Panels bring to the table. There is always a



starting point of someone who knows the local area. A future direction may be looking at ways to providing complementary services provided by the NHS or adult services e.g. Stepping Out Programme for weight management and mental health referrals.”

Fran Riley, Health Improvement Service – Healthy Walks Co-ordinator said “We take GP referrals and wanted to ensure that we helped promote each other’s work. There is a lot of synergy with ours and Prospects Foundations services and we were on each other’s steering committee. The Prospects Foundation are the best source of local information. So if I want a new route risk assessing I always approach them first. I think in the future if the Nature Walks project has to be more volunteer-led then the key is to investing in these dedicated volunteers in terms of training. The Prospects Foundation create positive solutions and involve the community at every stage. They are empowering the community sector. There may be opportunities with the Windfall fund and I think the Nature Walks Festival has been key at raising the profile of the borough.”

Continuation Strategy

The Prospects Foundation put in a bid to Reaching Communities to seek continuation funding, with a particular focus on the conservation work and Forest Schools. Unfortunately, this was unsuccessful. Therefore there needs to be a three stranded approach to continuation:

- 1. Investment in volunteer skills especially through the Prospects Panels.** Further training programmes should skill up volunteers and generate interest in general conservation activities in Hyndburn. The key courses are health and safety, first aid, risk assessments, tools maintenance, woodland management especially coppicing and thinning, brushcutter operations, hedgelaying, invasive species management and dry stone walling. The Supporting Change and Impact funding has allowed eighteen volunteers to be skilled up in bird surveying

and monitoring, hedgelaying and brushcutter operation. Wildlife identification skills training may assist a move onto the physical work of improvements but these services can be provided by passionate local experts. Without the conservation work the wildlife value and public access to sites will decline so skilling more conservation volunteers has to be a key priority.

- 2. Collaborative approach to fundraising from smaller pots** - There may be opportunities for the Prospect Panels to do fundraising from smaller pots or Heritage Lottery Fund with a redefined project. During Supporting Change and Impact, Lancashire Wildlife Trust secured £4,909 additional funding from the Windfall Fund to continue the work of the Monday Conservation Group until April 2014. This paid for fifteen sessions with additional sessions being run by the Prospects Foundation.
- 3. Social enterprise model** – community groups are enabled and supported to put in funding applications to smaller pots and then the Prospects Foundation staff are employed as session workers. This is a common strategy. There may also be opportunities for collaborative working with the social enterprise Woody.

The independent evaluator Jenny Griggs said “the number of beneficiaries engaged, the regular engagement of hard-to-reach volunteers, the amount of site and access improvements and positive feedback from partners is positive proof that Nature Walks is well managed. Staff time is essential to the successful delivery of the Nature Walks project at a borough level. There is a high level of co-ordination, risk assessment, organising volunteering sessions, organising training, organising and publicising walks. This is beyond the capacity of volunteers. The co-ordination of volunteers takes time. Whilst the funding culture for projects like this have changed the Prospects Foundation will need to enlist partnership and community organisations to fundraise. In the future part-time staffing is more likely and work will be more ad hoc responding to the fund raising capacity of local communities.”

4.0 Cultivate Project

4.1 Introduction

The Cultivate Project is an ongoing health promotion project which has been preventing ill health through community food growing since 2008. The independent five year evaluation discusses findings in detail and this is a summary of findings. There is also cross over with the now completed People Pods project (chapter 5) and synergies are discussed in this chapter. The Cultivate project is aimed at local people to Hyndburn who are likely to experience high inequalities in health, arising from poor diet, physical inactivity and poor mental health. It utilises a community development approach to motivate and enable confidence for participants to make lifestyle changes. Working with relevant partners, a referral service is offered to individuals catering for different needs as well as life stages.

The Cultivate Project has been assessed against its ability to contribute to key strategies especially public health strategies. Key partners and beneficiaries were identified and they were surveyed to see how effective the project has delivered its outcomes. The evaluator conducted face-to-face interviews, phone interviews and used standard internet survey techniques. Furthermore, throughout the project, quarterly monitoring has enabled individual participants to be checked and key statistics revealed.



4.2. Campaigns and strategies

Unhealthy lifestyles are the norm for many Hyndburn residents. The following are worse than the national averages (2010) :

- **adults who smoke;**
- **healthy-eating adults;**
- **obese children;**
- **incapacity benefit for mental illness;**

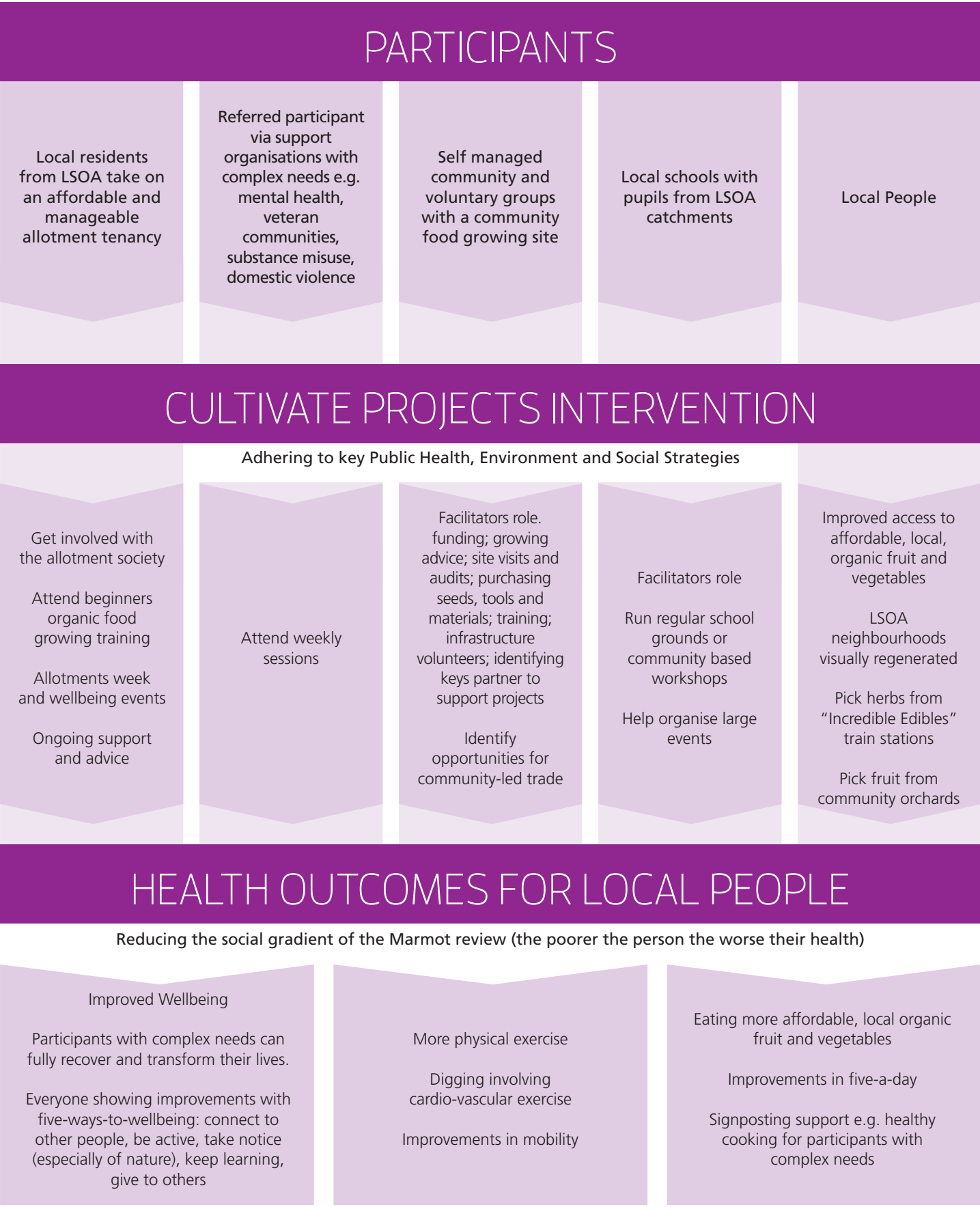
and at the national averages for:

- **sedentary lifestyles and**
- **obese adults.**

Consequently, Hyndburn has been recognised as a “spearhead” area where local partners are encouraged to co-ordinate action with Public Health East Lancashire in order to reduce the regional and local health inequalities.

The evaluation highlights how the Cultivate Project is delivering Public Health England's priority campaigns and strategies. It is hard to conceive of another third sector / community project that is as multi-faceted in Hyndburn. For example, the project should have particular benefits for reducing Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), with more physical activity and healthier diets. Health improvements are done in an inclusive way, enabling hard-to-reach individuals and communities to grow and eat their own affordable, healthy organic vegetables.

Participants progression through the Cultivate Project



4.3 Engaging hard-to-reach individuals and communities

Over the five years 5566 beneficiary opportunities have been provided which is significant when you consider that Hyndburn has a population of 80,700. These are opportunities to learn about food growing through long-term volunteering, formal training, food-growing workshops and taking on your own “manageable” allotment space:

- **945 volunteer opportunities on work parties;**
- **1281 formal training places;**
- **3330 participants attending one-off food growing workshops including schools.**

Anne Hourican has been a key partner in the allotment regeneration which is discussed in section 4.3 in relation to the People Pods project. She said “this is a mass participation activity where hundreds if not thousands more people are still to be engaged. There is still much untapped potential and other ways and spaces that people could be encouraged to grow their own food. The allotment regeneration would not have achieved a fraction of what it did without the investment in working with hard-to-reach communities. The allotment investment and the people investment is the magic combination.”

Heys Allotment Big Plot

Allotment holder, Stephen Lowe was interviewed about his work with the Cultivate Project over the last 4 years. Coincidentally, he is a BBC Radio Lancashire presenter and has done a lot to raise the profile of the project running outside broadcasts from the allotments and food growing sites.

Stephen said “Heys used to be a massive derelict plot. So it was split into 30 quarter plots and “pods” which are small boarded raised bed. There are knee high fences and a polytunnel. Because everyone makes eye contact everyone says hello. It is a communal space that really works. I met the Prospects Foundation through attending a growing course. It was great for giving confidence but it also ensured that newcomers interacted afterwards. We had a soft fruit planting day in and around the edges of plots. So many turned up I think it was about thirty which is heart warming. So we dug a ditch and helped dig over some plots. Such a big group can do in ten minutes what one person can do in three weekends. We also find if someone is starting to neglect their plot, for example because they are ill, we all help out. So we are a community that has happened naturally. Working with Ian from Prospects in the early days was great. He has boundless



enthusiasm. On our wishlist would be having a long-term relationship with the Prospects Foundation for ten years or more.”

Anne Hourican, Senior Environmental Initiatives Officer of Hyndburn Borough Council said “on Heys we have improved 55,000 m2, that’s nearly 14 acres, making it our biggest allotment site. Through sub-division and improvement of overly large plots and provision of raised beds etc. there are now approx 220 lettable plots on Heys, compared to around 140 before.”

Food-growing is a proven means of building capacity and changing lives. As seen from the experience of the tenants, it is very easy to gain a sense of achievement from food growing, and this empowerment can help in other areas of life. This evaluation makes a convincing case for policy makers and funders that investment in allotment regeneration in tandem for community development, can deliver across a range of themes for more sustainable communities. In particular allotment holders showed, via questionnaires, better diet and physical exercise statistics than the general Hyndburn population.

Recommendations

- **Whilst allotment infrastructure works are near completion it is important that Hyndburn Borough Council continues to invest in a dedicated Allotments Officer to keep the “allotments for everyone” culture alive.**
- **Other funders and public sector commissioners need to continue to invest in a dedicated officer to provide health & wellbeing and community development functions for hard-to-reach communities in Hyndburn.**
- **Together this forms the “magic combination”; allotments investment and people investment.**

4.4 Organic food growing training

All courses and workshops have focused on food growing potential in areas of high health deprivation. A key to the success has been offering newcomers training and ongoing support. This has naturally encouraged co-operation, self-help and self-management amongst food growers. There has also been a programme of “peer mentoring.”

Informal training in organic food growing is offered to all the groups from container to allotment growing. Beginners Organic Food Growing courses, offered to groups and residents, have been held at various venues across Hyndburn, for example at target allotment sites in areas of health deprivation (Heys, Meadoway and Woodnook), Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) and Accrington Women’s Centre. Accredited training such as “healthy eating” and “how to grow herbs” has taken place across the borough and at various venues including ACCROSS College, Mercer House and Inward House. Dedicated volunteers, many suffering from enduring mental health conditions and / or substance misuse, have been taken on inspirational visits across the North West and have attended formal training.

Mark Kerr, One Planet Planters and peer mentor

A deeply committed local horticulturalist, Mark first became involved with the Prospects Foundation before this project, through the One Planet Planters which began as a horticultural therapy project for those recovering from a mental health condition. At this time he began his own landscape gardening business and was recognising his potential not only to teach on-the-job practical skills e.g. building raised beds but also his ability to communicate with those teaching in a more formal classroom environment. To this end the Prospects Foundation supported Mark to get his “PTLLS”



(Preparing to Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector) qualification at ACCROSS College.

With his new found skills he began a peer learning programme at the Woodnook allotments. The course was set up before the growing season and began in a nearby classroom. As Mark said “the course was an introduction looking at soil, crop rotation, when to plant seeds and how to look after crops. At times it felt like a bit of a bumpy ride in terms of making the teaching work and often you have to accommodate different personalities. I can say it has been life changing. It has been brilliant working with Ian and Julie (Prospects Foundation) as they are good at getting people involved and what they do is beyond a normal job. I have ambitions to do lots more food growing training. I like the whole spectrum from the building to the growing.”

Prospects staff speak highly of Mark, Ian Hodgson says “every so often you find a person who you know will excel and really shine and Mark is such a person. His willingness to get involved and his gentle demeanour makes him ideal to work alongside in many varied settings and the fact he is a resident of the Woodnook area, a target area, is nothing short of perfect for all involved.”

Recommendations

Continue the diversity in informal short workshops and more formal longer courses.

A significant shortage in skills is recognised nationally within horticulture and 18% of businesses in production horticulture report that their current employees are less than fully proficient in their current role. Organisations like Inward House and INSPIRE (rehabilitation from alcohol and substance misuse) have identified a need for accredited training in horticulture which the Prospects Foundation can facilitate in partnership with Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS). Prospect’s needs to research its ability to provide this type of training.

4.5 Development of food growing communities

Various community, self-help groups, schools and referral organisations have asked the Cultivate Project to support them in food growing. Over five years this has totalled 70. The Prospects Foundation provides a facilitators role:

- funding advice;
- growing / planting advice;
- organisational advice;
- site visits and audits;
- purchasing seeds, tools and materials if appropriate;
- organic growing courses and related one-off workshops;
- supported weekly, fortnightly or monthly sessions with participants;
- supplying volunteer labour initially with Bootstrap Enterprises and ongoing with the One Planet Planters group and
- identifying keys partners to support projects.

In total 45 organisations were consulted either via in-person interview, phone interview or online survey. In the online survey they were asked to rate their working relationship with the Prospects Foundation with 1 = poor, 2 = room for improvement, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good and 5 = very good.

- 10% said "satisfactory";
- 15% said "good";
- 75% said "very good".

95% said they would like to work with the Prospects Foundation again and one respondent who did not was because the project had ceased due to funding cuts.



Inward House

One particularly successful case study has been Inward House which delivers high quality housing support to those in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. It was borne out of some participants being also part of Maundy Relief (a homeless charity), who were already being supported by the Cultivate Project at Meadoway Allotments, identifying that work needed doing in the grounds of Inward House. Residents of Inward House were involved every step of the way with the redesign of their community garden into a food growing space and learned new skills, for example, planning a crop rotation.

Anthony Broderick, Supported Housing Officer said "new residents spend on average six months with us before we assist them into independent housing. Julie (Prospects Foundation) delivered food growing training which was accredited with ACCROSS college. This is great for confidence building. The training has enabled us to develop the grounds and we have two raised beds, herb garden, apple trees and wildlife area. We find many of our residents have transferable skills so this has helped with any construction work.

We were so proud to received a Britain in Bloom Level 3 "It's Your Neighbourhood Awards". Myself and one of the former residents, Gareth, attended the ceremony for Britain in Bloom. We are very much about changing lifestyles so we also do complementary activities like "cooking healthy food on a budget" and when we have our residents meetings two people have to cook for everyone else and we use produce from the garden when it is available."



4.6 Schools

Children's Centres and Youth groups are interested in food growing. Some have set up food growing areas on their own land with support and training in food growing from the Cultivate Project. Some schools supported run their growing activities as part of curriculum activities, others offer it in out of school hours clubs, and some have sold veg at school fairs or have links to their catering facilities to use the produce in school meals. Rishton Methodist School asked for support with a funding bid for development of their school grounds for staff and pupils to plant an orchard and grow veg in raised beds. Red Rose Recovery volunteers helped build the raised beds for the school.

St Christopher's CofE High School

St Christopher's Pledge4Veg campaign asked local people to promise to grow their own vegetables in return for a starter pot containing onions and garlic. They had already developed their own food growing facilities at the school including an orchard, polytunnel and raised beds. The Pledge4Veg scheme was devised by year seven (11 year old) children with one saying "the idea is really simple we wanted to do something that would change our community." The pledge was an agreement that "you will agree to grow one piece of veg this year."

A short film was created in 2011 and shows the recruitment of the local Accrington Stanley and Blackburn Rovers football teams, to promote their scheme. In all 2,000 starter pots were given

away, which the students estimate saved 3,000kg of carbon by reducing the need to import produce. The children were amazingly enthusiastic and met people at the supermarket and went into other primary and secondary schools, getting press coverage to over 100,000 people.

The campaign also led to local primary and secondary schools setting up the Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Eco Cluster Group which meet every half term to discuss ways of improving sustainability. These allow sharing of ideas and support between schools, and more than 20 schools attend. Lancashire County Council has adopted this as a best practice model to roll across the region.

In May 2012, the school held a workshop on food growing in schools for primary school teachers. The workshop, organised and delivered by the Prospects Foundation, focussed on giving teachers practical gardening skills in both school grounds and on local allotments and advice on raising funds. This aims to encourage food growing in schools across the area. A year later this was stepped up when they ran the very first Lancashire Sustainable Schools Conference. The event was attended by 250 school children, along with their teachers. They were visited by the local MP and a range of newspapers and radio presenters. Wendy Litherland, Sustainability Co-ordinator at the school said "the work of Prospects is invaluable to the future of Hyndburn. You cannot put a value on the uniqueness of Ian and Julie. It has become far more than an Eco Group. We are teaching skills for the future, both careers and survival. That information is taken away from the school gates by the children."

4.7 Back yard growing Hyndburn Asian Ladies Carer group

The evaluator attended a consultation of the women's carer group to review the successes of the previous year and to see what they would like to grow in 2014. Present was also Jay Khan of Lancashire Women's Network who is carrying out a heritage project focusing on recording the achievements of those women who arrived from the south Asian subcontinent. This provided a lively discussion and also opportunities for partnership working with the Prospects Foundation.

Carers project co-ordinator Kubra Begum said "the growing of tomatoes, chillies sunflowers and coriander in 2013 was brilliant. We met up and started the plants and then the ladies brought them back each session to pot on. I visited many of the ladies in their homes and saw these plants growing brilliantly on the windowsills." The tomatoes chosen were those suitable for this kind of growing including gardeners delight and tumbler. One woman said "when I had my salads I chopped in peppers" and all were in agreement that "razzamataz", a multi-coloured chilli, pepper was a winner. One woman confided that her plants had died but on discussion this was because they had been put outside.

The growing of produce to take home is really valuable to these women whose time is very tied because of their caring responsibilities. Cultivate co-ordinator, Julie Livesey talked with them about their willingness to take on a raised bed and a space in the polytunnel at the Hyndburn Resource Centre which is a 5 minute walk from the carers centre. She brought photos so they could get an idea about the commitment. Reticence was mainly around whether the women would have the time, one woman confided that her mum was very ill, and so it was agreed that the raised bed would be taken on and linked to the regular session when the women met anyway.

Then the consultation moved onto what produce they would like to grow and at this point everyone became animated. Food was obviously a real passion of all these women. Suggestions included tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, cucumber, kareli (bitter gourd), ladies fingers (okra), spinach, mint, coriander, garlic, mooli, radish, mustard leaf, methi (fenugreek), soye (dill) and the planting of fruit including cherries, plum and pear. Kubra spoke of how produce for your garden tastes so much better than from the shops. In summary the session was warm, friendly and there was lots of enthusiasm.



4.8 Events

The Cultivate Project regularly attends events and meetings around Hyndburn to promote and encourage food growing and healthy eating. For example: the annual Rishton Summer Festival, where they set up a stall with activities for children such as sowing salad seeds in pots to grow at home, displays of inspirational photos and signposting leaflets. Networking is also important at meetings such as the Health Operations Group to promote the work of the Cultivate Project and identify partnership opportunities. The project has also been active at Hyndburn Borough Council's Wellbeing week and Allotment Week.

Recommendations

The success factors for community food growing that need to continue include:

- **partners believing the partnership work with the Prospects Foundation brings benefit and real value to their existing activities;**
- **regular feedback mechanisms between partners about the progress, glitches, achievements and next steps for the partnership;**
- **communities are engaged in activities;**
- **the plots and gardens represent sociable space where newcomers and visitors are encouraged;**
- **the spaces are accessible;**
- **the plots and gardens have a good image and look like welcoming spaces and**
- **plots and gardens are maintained in the long-term.**

Feedback from Public Health East Lancashire is that the Prospects Foundation needs to shout about it successes to a wider audience especially at the regional commissioning level via a newsletter. The evaluation is also part of this process.

4.9 Increased wellbeing Five-ways-to-wellbeing and the One Planet Planters

The evaluator met with long-term participants from One Planet Planters. The group grew from a gardening project at the Community Re:Start building (known as the Manchester Road Wellbeing Centre) and most are mental health referrals. Volunteers now work on projects throughout Hyndburn. The participants remained anonymous but their backgrounds include recovery from a nervous breakdown, a diagnosis of schizophrenia, living with agoraphobia and low-self esteem and recovery for substance misuse.

Using a questionnaire based on the five-ways-to-wellbeing the following questions were asked:

How did you rate your wellbeing and mental health before you started working with Prospects?

- "I was in a bad way."
- "I couldn't trust people and I couldn't go out."
- "I felt paranoid but am much better."
- "I wasn't very tolerant of other people."

Do you feel more connected to other people?

- "Yes helping others gives purpose to your day."
- "Yes, I have made new friends."
- "Yes it keeps me occupied and it is not just talking it is actually doing."
- "Ian and Julie are so good at allowing people to be themselves and put forward their own ideas. We all feel included."

Are you more active?

- "Yes really active even being in the middle of nowhere shovelling manure!"
- "Yes and I volunteer on a farm aswell."
- "It is good to have more activity and it is giving me a routine."
- "It is giving me some get up and go."

Has your diet improved?

- Three of them admitted that their diet was poor and it hadn't changed their eating habits dramatically. However, one participant said that he always took veg and he had seen a big improvement.
- "I am now growing stuff on my balcony the basics you know lettuce and salads. This is all helping build my confidence and helping me to lose the weight after my illness. The drugs that I was prescribed made me put on weight."
- All of them recognised that they were willing to try new foods especially the soups that had been cooked from vegetables grown on the sites.

Do you take notice of nature more? For example the changing of seasons.

- "Yes. I hadn't thought about it. I used to walk the dog a lot and get that feeling. I am now getting out and about."
- "I've always liked nature. It is hard to put into words the feelings you get when you are outdoors."

Do you have more moments that you savour and feel grateful for the life you have?

- "I have learned so many new things and I love most of them."
- "My mind has been opened to new ways of gardening."
- "I think I have a good outlook on life and I suppose I am a bit new agey"
- "Yes I understand those moments when community works and it feels special."

Have you learned new skills?

- "Flagging, building raised beds, landscaping. I always smile when I see the transformation and knowing that I am helping people."
- "I like starting things from seed. It's that nurturing feeling."
- "I was quite practical anyway but it is such a buzz doing those little transformations that make such a big difference."

Are you able to give more to other people?

- "Yes and I am hoping to help out at food bank too."
- "It is wonderful to give of yourself and not expect anything in return."
- "Yes I really have an ability to give more."

As support worker Kat Green from Community Re:start says "sometimes people will come whilst they are supported but dip when you ask them to go on their own. This hasn't happened with One Planet Planters and so there is your proof that it works. Some have been coming for several years, they are building new friendships and socialising outside the group."



4.10 Increased physical activity

Similar to the five-ways-to-wellbeing, there is anecdotal evidence to show an increase in physical activity for participants of the Cultivate Project. Over the five year evaluation detailed statistics as to health improvement were kept for 214 participants (with over 300 filling in questionnaires) on allotments. For comparative purposes this evaluation is using the Hyndburn Health Report (NHS East Lancashire) 2008. Within this residents throughout the borough were asked How often do you take vigorous exercise – which lasts for more than thirty minutes and makes you breathless?

	Hyndburn Average (%)	Cultivate Project (%)
Never	36.8	1.4
< Once a month	13.1	8.4
Between once a month and once a week	14.2	12.1
1-3 times a week	26.2	34.6
4-6 times a week	6.6	23.4
Everyday	3.1	19.6

As the borough wide survey shows, Hyndburn exercise levels are low and the older a resident gets the more sedentary their lives become. The intervention shows an increase in physical exercise to participants although it should be noted for comparison purposes participants in the Cultivate Project were only asked about exercise generally and not vigorous exercise specifically. Nonetheless, it can be stated with certainty that the Cultivate Project participants are more physically active than the average Hyndburn resident.



4.11 Increased fruit and vegetable consumption

As with physical exercise, over the five year evaluation detailed statistics as to health improvement were kept for 214 participants (with over 300 filling in questionnaires). For comparative purpose data from the Hyndburn Health Report (NHS East Lancashire) 2008 was used. The borough was asked On a typical day, how many portions of fruit and vegetables do you eat?

Portions of fruit and vegetables	Hyndburn Average (%)	Cultivate Project (%)
0	1.4	0.9
1	12.2	3.3
2	19.6	2.8
3	25.6	15.9
4	19.6	16.8
5	13.4	34.6
6	5.9	25.7
7 or more	3.5	

In Hyndburn the consumption of at least five-a-day is extremely low with only 22.8% of the population achieving this. However, for the Cultivate Project participants 60.3% were achieving 5-a-day and over and, according to self rating, this percentage increase was mostly as a result of growing at the allotments.

In the One Planet Planters case study supported volunteers with complex needs were often still reporting poor diets, even though they had marked improvements in wellbeing and physical exercise. However, there have been success stories with one volunteer reporting growing salads on their balcony and improvements in reducing weight. Participants with complex needs require more signposting opportunities for healthy eating education, cooking skills and sharing communal meals together.

Recommendations for wellbeing, exercise and diet:

- Funders and public sector commissioners continue to recognise the wellbeing and health (diet and physical activity) aspects of community food growing.
- Commissioners look to evidence provided by other academic studies of community food growing especially Social Return on Investment (SROI) models to see the importance of preventative work on the public purse in line with recommendations of the Marmot review.



4.12 Conclusions

By developing different types of capacity, the Cultivate Project has contributed towards a sustainability legacy within Hyndburn through the development of community assets. In this process:

- allotments throughout Hyndburn have been successfully regenerated alongside investment in the local people offering them manageable plots of land;
- hard-to-reach communities are better able to manage land sustainably for food growing locally,
- awareness has been raised and local people are experiencing healthier diets, physical exercise and improved wellbeing;
- a wide range of learning opportunities and the development of skills have been created, leading onto some participants gaining employment and
- the Prospects Foundation is successful at partnership working.

The case studies, in particular, have revealed that the Cultivate Project enables individuals and communities to build capacity at a social level to access and afford local food. This is significant for hard-to-reach individuals and groups. It is important that the outcomes around health and wellbeing are recognised to enable the continued resilience and diversity of Hyndburn communities.

Recommendations

The final recommendations are based on the “commission readiness” of the project. It is important to foster continued, strong working relationships with Public Health East Lancashire commissioners as part of Lancashire County Council.

“The key from a commissioning perspective is linking community food growing to the wider issues especially around weight management and wellbeing for groups with complex needs. It is about the added value.”

Steve Owen, Commissioner Lancashire County Council.

“The Cultivate project has shown great skill at working with all groups in particular hard-to-reach groups. Following the transition of the Primary Care Trust to Lancashire County Council, the local footprint has changed from an East locality to the whole of Lancashire. Therefore, we would like to share this good practice and expertise, to work with a much broader range of groups, outside the geographical area of Hyndburn.”

Marie Demaine, Public Health Co-ordinator East Locality.

5.0 People Pods Project

5.1 Introduction

The Big Lottery Local Food Programme funded People Pods aimed to enable disadvantaged local communities to develop co-operative, self-management and community food growing skills focused on two previously derelict allotment sites Meadowway and Woodnook, and surrounding sites, located in highly deprived areas of Hyndburn. The People Pods is a well-loved concept, offering new tenants, including community groups, a ready-to-go accessible “bite-sized” plot which may be a raised bed or eleven metre-squared flat plot. The plots are manageable by individuals, families and groups of all abilities. The project also had the remit to go out into the nearby wider community. The scheme was more than just allotment regeneration, it became a wider community-led programme of food growing engaging with 981 direct beneficiaries (a 196% over achievement), from hard-to-reach groups, and thousands of indirect beneficiaries if you include local schools and awareness events.

5.2 Regeneration of Meadowway and Woodnook Allotments

The nine most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) all fall wholly, or partly, within a 1km walking distance of the two allotment sites in Accrington. These areas represent the wards of Church (Meadowway Allotments) and Barnfield (Woodnook Allotments) both with a predominantly white working class population. The allotments are also within walking distance of other wards including Peel, Milnshaw and Central Ward (the latter of which has a predominantly well-established South Asian population). This makes the number of beneficiaries engaged with outstanding when taking into account the size of the geographical area and the levels of disadvantage people in these areas live with on a day-to-day basis.

The five year allotment regeneration programme ran alongside the Cultivate project, devised by the now defunct Hyndburn Food Web in which NHS East Lancashire (where public health was then located), was instrumental. It ensured that allotment regeneration was high up Hyndburn Borough Council's agenda. There is a permanent revenue budget in place which has enabled a dedicated officer Ian Marfleet to come into post in 2011. He is well regarded and appreciates the wellbeing agenda.



All the allotments are surrounded by low-income neighbourhoods with high health deprivation statistics. Encouraging local people to take a plot has received widespread publicity across Hyndburn and as a result there are approximately 500 new allotment tenancies reducing waiting lists, an outline priority in this project. This does not reflect the fact that families and groups take on tenancies so the amount of people directly using allotments will be much higher, as reflected in the participation numbers. The plots were made “manageable” by either offering wheelchair accessible raised beds, boarded beds or 11-metre square quarter flat plots. Shared space in a communal polytunnel is offered on some allotment sites.

Prior to Local Food Funding several sites, including Heys in Oswaldtwistle and the east side of Meadowway, benefited from the input of five teams of unemployed trainees from Bootstrap Enterprises funded through the “Future Jobs Fund.” At this time the community development work was carried out by the Prospects Foundation through the Cultivate Project. With budget cuts, this in-kind workforce was no longer available to carry out the infrastructure development for the Local Food funded programme. For improvements to the west side of Meadowway and Woodnook, Bootstrap Enterprises had to be paid as a contractor for the costs of two supervisor salaries plus transport costs. With an additional £5000 match funding from social landlord Hyndburn Homes and gentle persistence, the programme of improvement works was not derailed. The improvements of sites equalled 10,020m2 directly and 12,412m2 indirectly which was an over achievement by 1,632m2.

The council provides a plot holders guide and a quarterly newsletter which reminds tenants of the duty and the policies of the council especially the “use it or loose it” with enforcement action during the third week of May. The per annum charges are £20 for the raised beds which can include a tool shed, paved footpaths and knee high fencing. The cost of the quarter plots is between £35 and £50 depending on the use of mains water and access to communal facilities. This is perceived as generally affordable, especially if you compare it to other council allotment rents. However, there have been occasions where the People Pods project has intervened to help very low-income households start out with seeds, tools and training.

Anne Hourican, Senior Environmental Initiatives Officer of Hyndburn Borough Council said “this is more than an allotment regeneration project as it would not have achieved a fraction of what it has without the investment in people. We can show to everyone that it is possible to produce more food locally and make it affordable. People investment and allotment investment is the magic combination. We are also encouraging an investment within the local economy as seeds and tools are bought from local family businesses.” Prospects gave away free seeds on Accrington Market on February 20th 2013 to publicise the allotments and were involved in publicity events during Wellbeing Week in July 2012 and 2013.

Allotment week activities 2013

Allotment week provided an extensive programme of activities which raised the profile, achieved good media coverage and was great fun too! Allotment Week had 160 attendees, 60 of which were new to the People Pods project. The Prospects Foundation aimed for a balance of practical sessions (raised bed construction), alternative medicine information (herbs for health), fun sessions for children (giant vegetable art workshops, child's eye photography), family events (bug hunting and community barbecue), art “happenings” (open air nature photography installation and graffiti art on shipping container at Woodnook) and the “Big Outing” which involved a coach trip to Hulme Community Garden. It was a chance to make good use of the new community spaces on both Woodnook and Meadowway and to enjoy the summer in two healthy and vibrant locales.



5.3 Towards self management of Meadowway and Woodnook Allotments

As more tenants came onto both sites the way the Prospects Foundation increased food growing skills and confidence was to run training sessions and engage with existing and new tenants. In July 2012 a four week “introduction to organic growing” was delivered on Meadowway. In March 2013 and June 2013 similar courses were delivered both on Meadowway and Woodnook. As several allotment holders pointed out this began a feeling of “community spirit” as tenants got to break the ice and know each other even before they started growing food. Other factors included the lack of fencing or knee high fencing so tenants are making eye contact and were naturally chatting with one another. Finally, the presence of groups, with participants with supported needs, engendered a culture of working together. For example, on the east side of Meadowway it was the establishment of the Stroke Association allotment which enabled a greater interaction between plot holders. Meadowway Allotment Association members Fred Holligan and John Radnedge helped the Stroke Association with path laying, building a compost bay, building a base for a shed and doing work once erected. Informal tool sharing also began to happen.

At the end of the first year Meadowway tenants’ capacity for becoming a cohesive group was evidenced by their self organised workshops. By this time Woodnook tenants were also beginning to think beyond the narrow confines of their “individual needs”. In part, some of this cohesion was initiated by the four week organic food growing course on Woodnook as lots of opportunities arose informally where ideas and developments were explored. During the second year at Woodnook two members of the allotment association attended an inspirational visit to Fir Tree Community Growers. They also self organised a community barbecue and wood work skills workshop and have agreed to take on the self management of a soon to be installed composting toilet.

By the completion of the project in March 2014 Meadowway was constituted and Woodnook was on its way to becoming a constituted group with monthly meetings. These things take time and often it requires the right people to come forward who are skilled at including others. These people within the People Pods project were called the “community champions.” Several community champions proved invaluable over the two years of the project and these became the first point of contact for new tenants including Colin Bayliss (who has sadly passed away in March 2013), Margot Bayliss, Fred Holligan, Paul Bentley, Kate



Farnell (formerly of Incredible Edible Accrington), Michael Clarkson (long standing member of Woodnook community plot), Dave Clegg and Mark Kerr. The evaluator went to meet two of the community champions, Dave and Mark, and Mark's story is presented in 4.4.

Community champion Dave Clegg, Meadowway Allotments

Dave Clegg has been acting allotment secretary since the passing of Colin Bayliss in March 2013 at Meadowway. It is important to acknowledge Colin's role in the support of development of community spaces on the east side of Meadowway. Dave, himself a relative newcomer, has stepped in with helping with the running of the newly regenerated west side of Meadowway especially with the organising of communal spaces (polytunnel and sheds) and communicating with the allotments officer and Prospects staff. Now retired, his engineering background has come to the fore and with other tenants he has created the most ingenious rainwater harvesting system off polytunnels and sheds which has become particularly important since there is no mains water on site. Of particular success has been the raised beds which Dave agrees “go like hot cakes and we need more”. Dave is supportive of the groups with supported participants like St Christopher's CofE High School, HARV (domestic violence), the Stroke Association and in the past Inward House (substance misuse) and Maundy Relief (homelessness). He also encourages all to help out when plot holders are struggling for example with a recent family bereavement. Leadership in acceptance is essential for feeling welcome. This help-out culture had begun previously on the east side of Meadowway with Fred Holligan and John Moss supporting infrastructure development on the Stroke Association's plot.

Dave's interaction on the west side of Meadowway with his fellow plot holders is helped enormously by his showcase model



vegetable plot, something for others to admire and strive for. Whilst the site is surrounded by low-income housing both Dave and Prospect's officer Ian Hodgson are amazed that they only suffer from minor vandalism. They put this down to the increased beauty of the site, lack of fencing between plots and community development work on nearby estates where Dave helped out with door-to-door leafleting. Dave said of Prospect's food growing officer “Ian is very approachable and helpful. He will run with any reasonable idea that is within his realm.” Ian said of Dave “we are lucky to have him he has become the eyes and ears of the site and these are the key to success.” Dave also cites the pragmatic decision making of Hyndburn council officers Ian Marfleet and the vision for regeneration by Anne Hourican as success factors.

Evaluator's comment

Prior to the Local Food Funding, the west side of Meadowway and Woodnook were mostly derelict, overgrown and an eyesore for local residents. People who attempted food-growing there complained bitterly about vandalism, theft, fly tipping, waterlogged soil, weed encroachment and unused plots. The improvements have been dramatic. Improving, securing, and using allotment space does indeed reduce vandalism and have a positive impact on neighbouring communities.

Critical to this has been the development of a food-growing community: local people who continue to watch over and care for the site and people who know their neighbours. Food-growing is a proven means of building capacity and changing lives. As seen from the experience of the tenants at Meadowway and Woodnook it is very easy to gain a sense of achievement from food growing, and this empowerment can help in other areas of life. This evaluation makes a convincing case for policy makers and funders that investment in allotment regeneration and community development, in tandem can deliver across a range of themes for more sustainable communities.

5.4 Health and social benefits

The target was for the project to engage with 500 direct beneficiaries to which end the People Pods had a 196% over achievement at 981 direct beneficiaries. From the outset this project hit the ground running. Within the first three months Meadowway and Woodnook were furnished with fruiting hedges and fruit trees around the perimeters and by the paths of sites. Local people will be able to pick these in future years encouraging healthy eating. Hundreds of new people, including many school children, were introduced to the idea of growing their own food. One of the key successes of the project has been working with the most marginalised members of society especially those living, recovering and surviving chronic health conditions, mental health conditions, disability, stroke, domestic violence, crime, substance misuse, unemployment, homelessness and general social isolation through living in low-income neighbourhoods.



Feedback on diet, activity and wellbeing

As part of the surveys individuals and groups were asked to comment on improvements in diet, physical activity and wellbeing of participants. All groups reported improvements. A selection of comments included:

- “We are increasing our veg consumption because we have grown our own, we have become more aware of the types of veg available and have stored surplus veg for later in the year.”
- “We are growing fruit and vegetables in our community gardens. Also we have linked into Change4life and some (Hyndburn Homes) residents have now attended a healthy eating cookery lessons.”
- “Our students were very keen to taste new things that they had grown and hadn't eaten before. They have discovered that they like fruit and vegetables that are new to them.”
- “(Women survivors of domestic violence)... commented on how nice it was to eat something that had been nurtured and brought to life in such a short space of time. As project coordinator, I also feel that it has benefited them in terms of improvements to their wellbeing. They chatted while they dug and laughed together in the rain.”
- “The sessions have proven the most successful way at engaging what has traditionally been a hard to engage client group (mental health recovery). With the fresh organically grown vegetables being shared diet and health is immediately given a chance to improve. It is also good to the people take away skills and pots to carry on growing in their own backyards / gardens.”

- “After my stroke.. I felt very helpless and alone which was hindering my recovery. One ray of light was the support and friendship I received from the Stroke Association.... The allotment, in my view, has been a major success for the Stroke Association and is one day in the week that myself and other stroke survivors look forward to. As well as planting crops, it has fast become a very social event. I have particularly enjoyed sharing stories and having a laugh and a joke... I look forward to spending many more enjoyable days over the coming years and watching the progress of the plot unfold.”
- “There are many people, with health or mobility needs, who are now active in the outdoors, in some cases for the first time in many years.”
- “All food grown is shared with the participants and listening to some of their comments it is obvious that they are eating what they produce.”
- “It is really in the informal chats... that it becomes clear how much people benefit from the food growing activities.... Someone said - its not in the written reports its in the smiles on people's faces, that you see the results.”

The People Pods increases health with:

- the feel-good factor of nature itself, which relaxes mind and body, relieves stress, with benefits to mental health;
- physical activity, which benefits both physical and mental health;
- access to healthy affordable vegetables, resulting in improvements to diet and
- more opportunities to socialise (people with good social networks enjoy better health).

5.5 Co-operative food-growing communities

The Prospect's Foundation works as a facilitator for co-operative food growing communities. The supported co-ordination has enabled three groups to access their own funding for community food growing including the Stroke Association, HARV and Accrington Academy. The effectiveness of the facilitators role is demonstrated by the extraordinary number of co-operative food growing communities that were supported in the just two years, many starting from scratch. The target was 15 and 25 food-growing communities were achieved.

The key to the prolific number of co-operative food growing communities is that Ian Hodgson engaged with groups that gained impetus quickly and ensured that they had their own ownership for the food growing. One example at engaging with a hard-to-reach community is Woodnook Community Garden and Wildlife Ponds. This is very much a collective of (mainly) local women residents on the Woodnook estate. The garden is situated on a former landlocked derelict bit of land in a predominantly white working class community. The women are ambassadors and gateways to their community.

Interview with Ann Forshaw, Woodnook Community Garden and Wildlife Ponds

We started as an idea four years ago on a derelict piece of land, owned by Hyndburn Homes. We are very much about local people. We want the garden to remain being run solely by the community, for the community. We are thrilled that the landlord Hyndburn Homes has given us a six year lease. It gives us security for the future, which we are hugely grateful for.

It has been good to have Ian's support. He has helped us to get tools and equipment, including a strimmer and a wheel barrow, when ours completely collapsed (the remains of which have been planted up). He was also behind getting sensory plants for around the pond. In our humble beginnings Prospects were supportive with our project. They initially commissioned Bootstrap Enterprises to install the first three raised beds in October 2010, which were planted up with winter veg. As it was a derelict piece of land (formally a playground), with the support of Woodnook Residents and Tenants Association, the locals agreed to put tester beds onto the garden to make sure nothing would be vandalised and stolen.

Over that winter nothing was touched and up until this point, there has been no vandalism and nothing other than a chilli plant



taken, proving that the reputation this area has received over time is unrealistic. The following year John, the local barber very kindly donated us a polytunnel, which was put together by local residents and the One Planet Planters volunteers helped us lay the paving slabs.

We encourage all age groups to use the garden and all we ask, is to respect the garden and to put any rubbish in the recycling bins. We want all local residents and community members to have an inviting space to go to, regardless of their background or interests. We feel that it is important for everyone to have a calm and peaceful place, which our community garden provides. A friendly face speaks volumes. We also never lock the garden.

Last year we were really grateful to have the Community Payback Team led by Steve and Andy (they were miracle workers!) Nothing was too much trouble to them and every task was met with enthusiasm. Some of the lads expressed a wish to come back and volunteer in their own time, which was a lovely surprise. They were given full access to the shed and all tools and equipment. We trusted them with everything and they never let us down. They did a wonderful job and they should be very proud of themselves.

We have already started to put bulbs and seeds in, ready for this year and the polytunnel is full to bursting. The local kids have an active role in this. We are somewhere for the kids to come over the school holidays. We also would like to encourage the mums and dads to get more involved.

As caretakers of the community garden; Kaisse (a local mum), Beth (my daughter) and I held our first open day, which was a huge success. We were up all night making bunting and baking. It was a surprise to have such an amazing turnout. People were saying “no one has ever done anything like this for us before”. Some neighbours had never spoken to each other before the open day. We do not charge for use of the garden, however a

lovely visitor offered a donation for the free burgers. We then put a donation box next to the BBQ, not expecting much more to be added, but by the end of the day we managed to raise just over £120, which was fantastic. We ploughed all the donations and money raised straight back into seeds and compost. Everyone loved the open day, it created such a wonderful community vibe and we were buzzing for weeks.

We have lots of plans for the future including bringing in wormeries, solar lighting for the sheds, more raised beds and water butts and other recycling projects. We are very into the “make do and mend” culture and we love crafting as a family and ideally would love to hold workshops in the future to pass on our skills. We love our little garden and we hope others will grow to love it too. Thanks to all who have given their time, donations and support. It means the world to us and we are very grateful.

Volunteers from all walks of life

The People Pods is proving a vehicle for regeneration, community cohesion, healthy eating, education, integrating disadvantaged groups into mainstream society. The developing of skills for some means that they are better able to get into paid employment. Volunteers often come from the most marginalised groups in society. The case study from the One Planet Planters has already been presented. Many other groups which have also used Peoples Pods are discussed in the Cultivate project evaluation. Here is a sample of the group volunteers.

Incredible Edibles Accrington

They meet on a monthly basis to identify and convert unused green spaces on estates, in parks and town centres to convert them into food growing land for the community to access as they see fit. Based in Woodnook the meetings were held in the Park public house. One of the key projects has been the installing of five food growing beds and two apple trees on Platform 1 of Accrington station. People Pods supplied advice, logistic support and material support for this to happen. As Brian Haworth of Community Rail Lancashire said “the raised beds are an introduction to food growing and as such are a catalyst to encourage others to do the same.”

HARV (Hyndburn and Ribble Valley) Domestic Violence Team

Working with survivors project co-ordinator, Laura Leverentz, said “the food growing experience has been thoroughly enjoyable, relaxing and very satisfying. Many of the women accessing the project are socially isolated – this was a good way to bring them together and provide a bit of ‘normality’ in a somewhat chaotic life.”



Stroke Association

Andrea Walsh said “For most of the service users who attend the allotment group, it is their only opportunity to get out and socialise with others. Many have lost their confidence and are trying to rebuild their lives after having had a stroke. May I just add my sincere thanks for all the help you have given so far Ian. I know this is your job, but you have gone above and beyond in all that you have supported us with. Waiting in the snow for the shed delivery linking us up with other groups so we can offer mutual support providing us with some man-power when working on difficult projects your constant uplifting, pleasant manner providing funding for the disabled tools. I could go on! You are brill.”

INSPIRE, Accrington

This is a fully integrated substance misuse service for people experiencing problems with drugs and/or alcohol. They took on a plot at Meadoway and helped with work at Woodnook Community plot. Project worker Mark Chimejczuk said “Prospects is a great asset to the community and has made a big impact to the development of our group in such a short time period. We would like to offer some accredited training and using your premises for training, especially on bad weather days, would mean that we would not let our clients down. Your training and support improves the health and well-being of our service users by showing them that they are included and accepted in our community. If your support had to be withdrawn this would really impact on our clients achieving the five ways to well being.”

Schools work

The project has also raised awareness of what is involved in the growing of food particularly amongst children. In this way the project is nurturing a new generation of people who knows where their food comes from. The People Pods has worked with over ten schools, predominantly delivering sessions in nearby primary schools. Ian has also engaged with the two nearby secondary schools St Christopher's and Accrington Academy. Ian has a long-standing relationship with St Christopher's and many of the achievements are charted separately in Cultivate project evaluation.

Evaluator's comment

The achievements generally for local people and groups have been:

- **an inspiring commitment from volunteers and co-ordinating staff;**
- **providing access to affordable locally-grown organic food;**
- **improving health and wellbeing;**
- **enriched lives, for example, creating more positive lives for those at the margin of our society;**
- **developing skills, knowledge and confidence in a non-threatening environment;**
- **creating informal networks of like-minded people;**
- **changed attitudes for the better;**
- **using derelict land and helping the environment and**
- **building and empowering communities.**



5.6 Training

The target was for 120 people to receive organic food-growing training and this figure was overachieved by 591% at 710. Informal training in organic food growing is offered to all the groups that Prospects works with from container to allotment growing. Beginners Organic Food Growing courses have been offered to groups and residents and have been held at various venues across Hyndburn, for example at target allotment sites (Heys, Meadoway and Woodnook), Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) and Accrington Women's Centre. Accredited training such as “healthy eating” and “how to grow herbs” has taken place across the borough and at various venues including ACCROSS College.

Dedicated volunteers, many sufferers from enduring mental health conditions and / or substance misuse have been taken on inspirational visits across the North West and have attended formal training. In July 2012 two training courses “train the trainers” and “developing a growing social enterprise” were held at Fir Tree Community Growers near Skelmersdale. The training was at capacity and participants learned how to train other food growers looking at sample activities and also how to run the business side of a growing enterprise.

During this project experienced food growers were very much in the minority and many people were coming to community food growing for the first time. All courses and workshops have focused on food growing potential in areas of high deprivation. A key to the success has been offering newcomers training and ongoing support. This has naturally encouraged co-operation, self-help and self-management amongst food growers. There has also been a programme of “peer mentoring”.

5.7 Conclusions

The conclusions for the People Pods project are the same as the Cultivate Project. The People Pods enables individuals and communities to build capacity at a social level to access and afford local food. This is significant for hard-to-reach individuals and groups. It is important that the outcomes around health and wellbeing are recognised to enable the continued resilience and diversity of Hyndburn communities.

6.0 Legacy Projects

The Social Enterprise Development Initiative (SEDI) completed in November 2011 but the Prospects Foundation has continued to support the enterprises which include the One Planet Shop, Woody (Hyndburn) CIC, Hyndburn Used Furniture Store (HUFS) and Hyndburn Bees. The One Planet Shop is a ‘community-owned’ ethical retail shop in Accrington where people can go to purchase environmentally friendly, local, ethical, Fairtrade, sustainable and innovative products. The co-op now has 118

members and is continuing to develop its product ranges. It has recently been successful with funding bids to The Big Lottery’s ‘Awards for All’ programme and also the new Hyndburn Windfall Fund. Although not strictly a new start up the Social Enterprise Programme was able to help Hyndburn Used Furniture (HUFS), an existing charity and social enterprise. SEDI was able to help with changes in personnel, overhauling the IT system, training in PAT testing and creating a business plan to support fund raising.

Case study – Woody

Woody is a woodland management social enterprise. It was incorporated as a community interest company (CIC) in March 2012. Woody aims to provide a number of benefits to Hyndburn. Firstly, actively managing woodlands for the benefit of the habitat helps to increase biodiversity. Secondly, making products from the woodland thinnings helps stimulate demand in sustainable woodland products in Hyndburn. Thirdly, Woody is keen to provide training and workshops in woodland crafts for local people. Finally, Woody wants to help increase woodland cover in the borough.



The independent evaluator met with three of the seven directors Phil Barwood, Michael Clarkson and Mike Stapleford. The social enterprise works on a voluntary basis with external support bought in as and when required. The company has already taken on a number of local authority contracts and has trained up volunteers in woodland management with hand tools as well as charcoal production. Woody has a mobile sawmill and rely on Phil’s Land Rover and trailer to move wood around. Mike does all the admin and finance side of the business as well as being a part time charity manager / social enterprise adviser at the Prospects Foundation. As of January 2014 eight directors and volunteers have now been trained to use chainsaws.

products using the mobile sawmill. They have made and then installed 25 bird boxes, 5 benches and 10 waymarkers so far. Charcoal is also sold in the One Planet Shop and Prospects Foundation Environment Centre on Broadway in Accrington. Woody is currently looking for a secure premises as they are currently drying wood in a friend’s field. As Phil Barwood said “this is what I really love. We are striving for a local economy and making local resources available to the local community.”

The volunteer directors are particularly enjoying working on the Coppice (which is also part of the Nature Walks project). Larch were planted on the Coppice by Lancashire County Council in 1970s and more recently a broadleaf woodland has been planted. Woody has secured the contract to thin some Larch (2012/13) and all the broadleaf areas (2013/14) on the Coppice.

All the social enterprises have an income generation stream but need a dedicated core of staff and / or volunteers to survive long-term. They are providing a benefit to Hyndburn by keeping money in the local economy and giving local people transferable skills. The legacy of the social enterprises is that they have helped raise awareness of the benefits that social enterprises can bring to the community.

On any Woody activities there always has to be two people when using chainsaws. Mike and Michael recounted tales of “handballing” chopped wood from a site with Michael saying “you just have to get on with it otherwise it can be too daunting.” Thinned wood is sold in short lengths for firewood. It is not split to keep the cost down to the consumer.

The Larch felling offers opportunities to make beautiful woodland

7.0 Conclusions

These recommendations are based on discussions at all levels from volunteers, project officers, managers and trustees:

- **The monitoring of beneficiaries to the projects at the Prospects Foundation is very good. However, rather than just having a snapshot evaluation at one point in time, more feedback on individual events or training could be collected along the way just to enable the tweaking of project delivery. This is happening at an informal level anyway but as resources, especially project officer time, become more scarce this will enable to highlight priorities for delivery.**
- **Delivery of the Windfall Fund – the fund is well managed and will support and influence the delivery of environmental sustainability in Hyndburn for the next two decades.**
- **Delivery of the community food projects – the challenge for the Cultivate Project is if its delivery is to go wider than Hyndburn. It is important for managers and trustees to engage with a dialogue with the commissioners of Public Health East Lancashire and this will also enable the dissemination of best practice. There is a twelve month lead in time.**

The mass participation elements of the community food growing in Hyndburn are unique and probably nationally important and there may be future opportunities for fundraising from Big Lottery (Heritage and Reaching Communities), Esmee Fairbairn Trust and Tudor Trust. There are also community learning funding avenues to explore as a “need” for accredited training for students with complex needs has been identified.

It has been an absolute pleasure evaluating the Prospects Foundation. Without exception, everyone interviewed or surveyed has spoke highly of the organisation. The strength of the organisation is that it is truly embedded within the local community. The Prospects Panels are true to the original concept of Agenda 21 of “think globally act locally”. The diversity of the Prospects Panels, where some are more active than others, also reflects that environmental sustainability depends on the dedication of the volunteers from different areas. The volunteer Panels interact well with the paid staff of the Prospects Foundation and they work towards common goals. A regular comment was that “we could not have achieved a fraction of what we have without their help.”

There is efficient management of projects at every level from the strategic, which has been particularly enhanced by partnership work with Hyndburn Borough Council, Public Health East Lancashire and EnergieKontor, through to the competence of dedicated project officers. This has presented opportunities for mass participation where it appears that between 1 in 5 and 1 in 10 of the population (there may be cross over beneficiaries) have been involved in environmental sustainability projects. This is really significant. The Prospects Foundation have been successful at engaging with all hard-to-reach groups e.g. mental health referrals, substance misuse and this is assisted by the Environment Centre now being based in Accrington Town Centre as it is extremely accessible. The true strength of the Prospects Foundation is that it is a facilitator and not an owner of projects and that is in essence why it works and achieves so much across the borough of Hyndburn.

- **Delivery of the Nature Walks – nature conservation activities goes to the heart of the Prospects Foundation so fundraising for future projects is a priority. There are opportunities for fundraising with the steering group of partners, community groups and schools and all these need to be explored. As part of the legacy of the project it is important to invest in the skills of dedicated volunteers to act as peer mentors.**
- **Supporting the legacy social enterprises – current support from Prospects for supporting social enterprises continues until the end of June 2014. However, the social enterprises still require substantial input from Prospects and there remains more work to be done in order for the enterprises to become self-sustaining.**
- **The continuation of projects is the most pressing issue for the management of the Prospects Foundation.**

Endorsements of the Prospects Foundation

"Prospects enables people to do good things."

Ann Hourican, Hyndburn Borough Council

"The Prospect Foundation are a unique organisation. They help to promote access to nature, sustainable and healthy living and protection of the world's resources at the local level through a variety of activities. They remain true to the original vision of Agenda 21."

Mark Pickup, Hyndburn Borough Council

"I have been impressed by the talent of the people from the Prospects Foundation, not just the paid staff but the volunteers and trustees and also that they are working with such a broad range of people, many with complex needs."

Steve Owen, Commissioner Lancashire County Council

"Prospects is a fantastic organisation and I feel that in the future they will need to show a willingness to think outside the box, work collaboratively with wider organisations and effectively promote their examples of best practice."

Marie Demaine, Public Health Co-ordinator East Locality

"The Prospects Foundation are very in tune with their local communities and if I want to know anything about starting a project in Hyndburn I would approach them first."

Kim Coverdale, Lancashire Wildlife Trust

"The Prospects Foundation create positive solutions and involve the community at every stage. They are empowering the community sector. There may be opportunities with the Windfall fund and I think the Nature Walks Festival has been key at raising the profile of the borough."

Fran Riley, Health Improvement Service

"The work of Prospects is invaluable to the future of Hyndburn. You cannot put a value on the uniqueness."

Wendy Litherland, Sustainability Director St Christopher's C of E High School

"Prospects Foundation has a good reputation across Hyndburn and their support with projects is always appreciated."

Hyndburn Homes, social landlord

"Invaluable. We couldn't have achieved anywhere near as much without the support from Prospects."

Stroke Association

"Prospects are so good at allowing people to be themselves and put forward their own ideas. We all feel included."

Graham, One Planet Planters

"The sessions have proven the most successful way at engaging what has traditionally been a hard to engage client group with mental health recovery."

Keith Gregson, Community Re:start

"Committed, thorough, forward thinking, locally involved, informative and helpful and supporting."

Glenys Oates, Harrington Street Community Project

"We have nothing but praise for all our dealings with the Prospects Foundation. They are totally professional and yet warm and friendly."

Lee Bentley, Broadfield Specialist School