

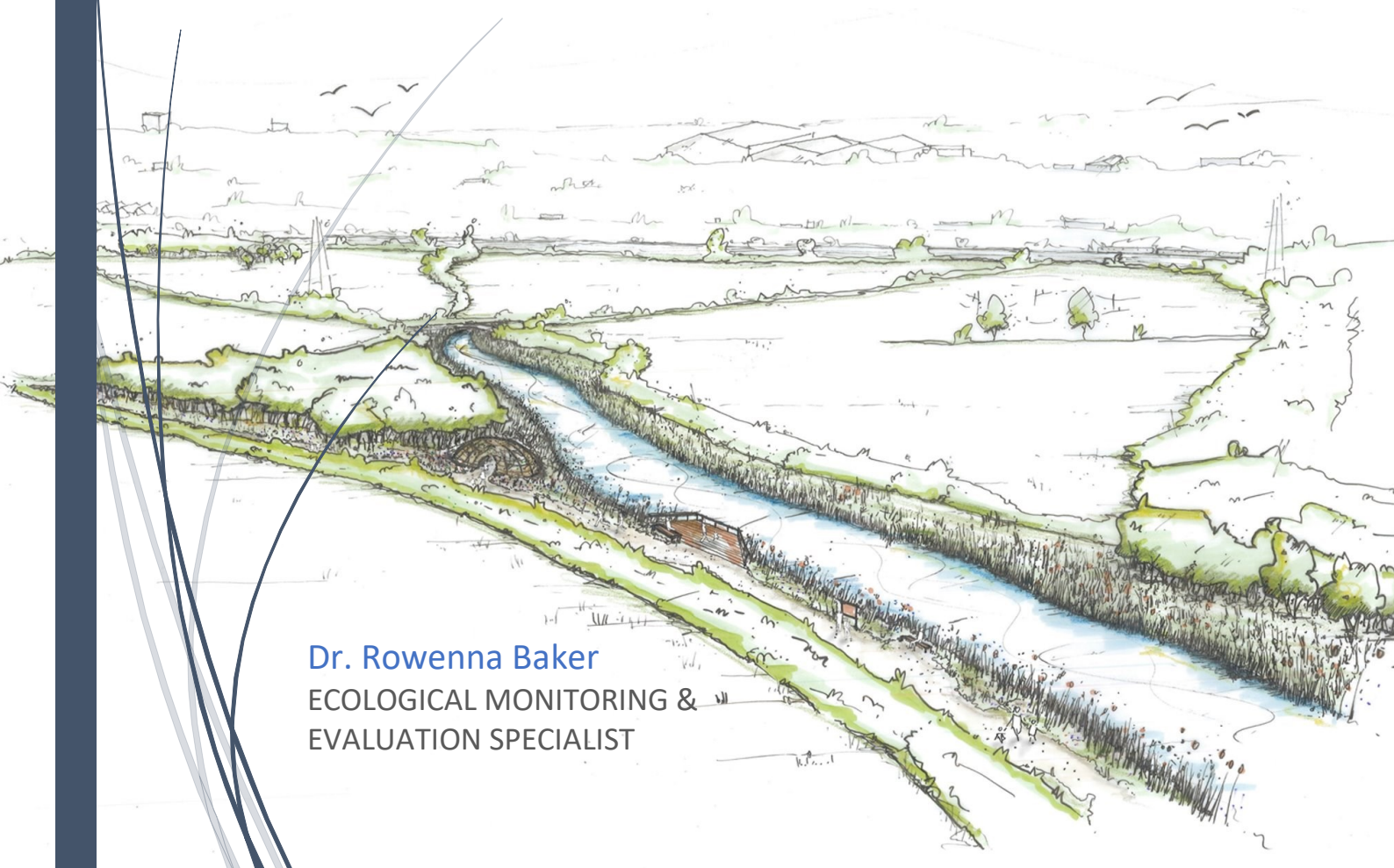


December 2021

Enhancing Places, Inspiring Communities

Final Evaluation Report

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The vision..

“To enhance and engage communities with the natural heritage of the Broadwater Brook as it flows through the urban fringe greenspace at Sompting. This will be achieved by opening c.900m of the currently culverted channel through Sompting Brooks, creating wetland habitat that is rich in wildlife and is accessible to all. Community involvement throughout the scheme will inspire individuals, community groups and landowners to become connected with their natural heritage for which they will have a sense of ownership, ensuring the lasting legacy of the project and future conservation of the site.”



PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS



1km

new river channel



8,500

trees/hedge plants



6.5ha

wildflower meadows



2ha

wetland



4

ponds



1.4 km

new public accessible
river trail



6,148

volunteer hours



316

Events & Activities held



594

new species recorded



4,745

participations in the
project



1,751

individuals directly
engaged with project



169

volunteers assisted with
the project



117

individuals in Citizen
Science Projects



133

people attending training
workshops



9

schools/universities
engaged with project



5

student projects / interns



1,159

school pupils
engaged



35,094

Engagements on Project
Facebook Page



182

urban habitats created
by 212 households



60k

people reached by Plastics
in Rivers Campaign



25

videos created, viewed
8.5k times

Chapter 1. Background & evaluation methodology

1.1. Introduction

In October 2018, the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust were awarded £871,400 from the Heritage Fund (National Lottery Heritage Fund) to support the Enhancing Places, Inspiring Communities (EPIC) project. This ambitious scheme aimed to restore the Broadwater Brook by diverting its underground course through the urban greenspace of Sompting Brooks. The project has been used as a catalyst to bring local residents and community groups together to make improvements to their local greenspace by providing a diverse range of opportunities for communities to learn, engage and connect with the natural and cultural heritage of the site. The project wanted to address various environmental and social issues:

- Degradation of chalk streams and associated water environment
- Loss of biodiversity due to intensive agriculture and urban development
- Lack of accessible green space due to urban expansion
- Local deprivation in terms of education, skills, and training

The project was completed in December 2021 and the purpose of the Final Review is to evaluate the project's performance having completed the three-year programme of activity and includes an assessment of the following:

- The achievements that have been made through delivering the outputs and outcomes set out at the start of the project.
- What learning has taken place to help the OART and others with future work.
- The achievement that has been made in relation to HLF objectives.
- Whether the intended outcomes, in terms of legacy, have been achieved to ensure the sustainability of the site into the future.



1.2. Achieving the vision – Aims & Objectives

The EPIC project has three key aims that fall under two main goals “Improve and enhance” and “Inspire and connect people and communities”. A set of objectives were developed under each aim broadly setting-out the range of activities and outputs that needed to be achieved in-order to meet each of the project aims. These aims and objectives are set out against their main goal in Table 1 below.

Table 1: EPIC project aims and objectives

Improve & enhance	Aim 1	To improve and conserve the Broadwater Brook and enhance wetland and hedgerow features within the Sompting Brooks Estate in-order to decrease water pollution and increase biodiversity value of the urban greenspace.	Obj 1	To divert the Broadwater Brook away from contaminated sources to reduce water pollution, sediment and increase freshwater biodiversity
			Obj 2	To work with the community to plant riparian and meadow habitat for terrestrial and aquatic biota
			Obj 3	To work with the community to restore 2 ponds
			Obj 4	To work with the community and stakeholders to plant 2km of hedgerows and plant 1000 trees
Inspire & connect people and communities	Aim 2	To connect the local community with the natural and cultural heritage of the Broadwater Brook and associated water environment by delivering community initiatives, events, activities, and access that will engage and involve people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities with their local green space, securing its legacy and helping increase its ecological resilience into the future.	Obj 1	To develop natural and cultural heritage themed trail across the Sompting Brooks Estate, allowing new permissive access to urban greenspace.
			Obj 2	To provide intellectual access to the site by developing an interactive web resource & social media platform that promotes the project & natural and cultural heritage
			Obj 3	To create a local volunteer task force that enables people to become actively involved in ongoing management and monitoring of the site
			Obj 4	To work with local experts to deliver a series of on- and off-site community events that will promote the natural and cultural heritage of the scheme
			Obj 5	To promote community initiatives and campaigns to educate and engage the community with conserving water resources and urban wildlife to increase the resilience of wetlands and biodiversity in urban greenspace environments

Inspire & connect people and communities	Aim 3	To provide opportunities for local people to develop new skills and knowledge across a range of heritage and conservation topics to enhance life opportunities, confidence, wellbeing, and cohesion amongst the community and provide a legacy for the project.	Obj 1	To deliver at least 40 training events/short courses on a range of topics including water quality testing, photography, biological recording, and archaeology that will result in at least 120 people having developed new skills and knowledge. This will include engaging with new audiences, disadvantaged groups, schools, and families
			Obj 2	To provide programmes tailored to strengthen skills, confidence, knowledge, and employability for the learner. To include provision of training, experience, and delivery of project activities relevant to the learner's personal circumstances and project needs
			Obj 3	To work with the British Trust for Ornithology and local organisations to create the first UK based accredited scheme for the blind/partially sighted and those with limited mobility to recognise bird song from sound recordings from the site.

Overarching the delivery of these key aims is a fourth aim, to establish an effective project board that shares, develops, and disseminates best practice and takes collective action and an adaptive management approach in-order to achieve the sustainable delivery of the project and ensure its legacy into the future.

In-order to understand how each of the aims were going to be achieved, logic models that detailed the following were created at the start of the project:

- **Strategy:** The approach taken to achieve each objective contributing to the aim
- **Inputs:** The resources that are put into the project to carry out an activity.
- **Activities and outputs:** The activities that are to be carried out and the direct outputs stemming from the activity
- **Outcomes:** The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of the activities and outputs and that contribute towards achieving the project objectives and overall aims. These were separated into:
 - **Immediate outcomes:** which are short-term outcomes directly attributable to the activities and outputs, and
 - **Impact** which are longer term outcomes that occur after immediate outcomes have been achieved.

This evaluation uses the logic models as the framework by which progress against the projects outputs and outcomes has been assessed. Targets and indicators that evidence whether intended outcomes have been achieved were agreed from the outset and these have provided the reference point by which the level of project successes, or otherwise, have been reviewed. A summary of each logic model is provided for each aim within the relevant sections in this report.

1.3. Evaluation methodology

This Final Evaluation aims to identify, analyse, and assess the progress of the EPIC project work from October 2018 until the end of November 2021. The evaluation has been designed to be a formative assessment that identifies key lessons to support the delivery of projects in the future as well as demonstrating what has been achieved.

A key part of the project has been the integration of a monitoring and evaluation system, developed by the evaluator for use by project staff from the start of the project. The system includes a range of forms designed to capture indicator data that will answer formative evaluation questions and track progress against the projects outputs and outcomes that are set out in the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy Document (Baker, 2018) which formed part of the Stage 2 application. The data is managed by the project manager using TolaData, a software package that consolidates and analyses indicator data assigned to the project's logic framework. Full details of the toolbox forms, TolaData software and questionnaires used by the project team to inform this report is provided in Appendix 1.

The evaluation draws on two key sources of data which are detailed in full in Table 1 Table 2:

- **Data gathered by the project team** including quarterly monitoring reports produced by the project manager, event attendance and registration forms, participant feedback questionnaires, emails & comments provided by participants and delivery partners, social media and website analytics, event, output, and monitoring data captured by the Monitoring and Evaluation toolbox.
- **Data gathered by the project evaluator** including surveys of participants, stakeholders, volunteer and student placements and feedback obtained from the project team by the evaluator. A copy of the participant, stakeholder and placement surveys are provided in Appendix 2.

Table 2: Main data sources used to evaluate progress including sample sizes

	Data source	Data type	What/who this includes	N =
Provided/Collected by EPIC project staff	Event tracking forms	Quantitative	Self-reporting of EPIC, partner, and outreach (exhibit) events	327
	Participant Feedback forms	Quantitative	Responses to questionnaire sent to event participants	442
	River Rangers Preliminary & 1-year on Survey	Quantitative/Qualitative	Responses to on-line questionnaires sent to new (n=12) and existing Rangers (N=11)	23
	Photography Course Survey	Quantitative/Qualitative	Responses to on-line questionnaires sent to participants	6
	School Feedback Form	Quantitative/Qualitative	Responses to questionnaires sent to teachers of 5 schools	3
	Biological monitoring data gathered by project staff, students, consultants and submitted by volunteers	Quantitative	Monthly species recording form	34
			eDNA survey results	3
			BMWP online survey form	29
			OART Chemical Water Quality results	27
			UoB Chemical Water Quality results	1
			MoRPH river survey results	1
	Biological monitoring reports undertaken by external partners/volunteers	Quantitative/Qualitative	Reports of surveys undertaken on the EPIC site and submitted by organisations/ independent surveyors/volunteer groups	12
	EPIC project case studies	Quantitative/Qualitative	Case studies of Archaeology, Photography, Urban Wildlife Campaign, River Rangers, Schools Programme & Bird ID Course	6
	Bird ID Course adaption assessment	Qualitative	Assessment of elements of course that could be used for people accessing support services	1
	EPIC Lockdown activities	Quantitative	Tables of activities and level of engagement in lockdown activities	1
	Quarterly reports	Qualitative and Quantitative	Reports submitted to HLF and provided by project manager and analysed by the evaluator	13
	Capital works & Environmental Enhancements report	Qualitative and Quantitative	Report written and provided to the evaluator by the Project Manager	1
	Registration forms	Quantitative	Registration forms completed by participants registered onto events	317
	Attendance sheet	Quantitative	Record of attendance of 414 participants over the life of the project	1
	Volunteer Time & In-Kind contributions spreadsheet	Quantitative	Record of volunteer hours and in-kind contributions	1
	Archaeology Report	Quantitative/Qualitative	Reports written by Worthing Archaeological Society detailing the activities and finds of the EPIC site	3
	Agecraft experience feedback forms	Quantitative	Rating forms submitted by Agecraft from 2 events	27
	Agecraft Project Reports	Quantitative/Qualitative	Reports provided by Agecraft	2
	Social media and website analytics (monthly)	Quantitative	Twitter (Feb 2019-Nov 21)	1
			Facebook (Sept 2019 –Nov 21)	1
	Social media and website summary report	Quantitative/Qualitative	Report written by Project Manager detailing the social media and website approach and related analytics over the life of the project	1
	Sompting Brooks River Trail ad-hoc monitoring data	Quantitative/Qualitative	No, site users, user types, dates and approx. age groups of users obtained on 27 occasions by project staff.	1
Interview responses (x 37) of users			1	

	Data source	Data type	What/who this includes	N =
Collected by Evaluator	Feedback from project team	Qualitative	Project manager and project staff interviews to inform the Mid-term and Final evaluation	6
	Mid-term Review participant questionnaire	Qualitative and Quantitative	Written responses provided by participants from a range of EPIC events	52
	Stakeholder Questionnaire	Qualitative and Quantitative	Written responses provided by key stakeholders for Mid-Term evaluation (N=8) and final evaluation (N=11)	19
	Student/volunteer placement Questionnaire	Qualitative and Quantitative	Responses to 5 questionnaires sent to persons who have or are undertaking placements for work or research	2

In addition, comments from social media, emails, photographs, and maps collated by both the project staff and evaluator have been used to tell the story of the project and provide a qualitative assessment of the project's achievements.

1.4. Findings of the Mid-term Review

A Mid-term Review was carried out in March 2020 to identify what progress had been made in the first 18 months of the project, what lessons could be learned, and what priorities needed to be addressed in-order to achieve the aims of the project. The review also set out to identify the performance of the monitoring and evaluation system and where improvements could be made to strengthen the final evaluation.

The Review found that the capital works to divert the Broadwater Brook had been completed 3-months ahead of schedule and that targets for reduced levels of pollutants had already been met. Considerable progress had also been made in creating other habitat on and off the site with 80% of the hedgerows and 11% of trees planted, a new pond created and over 50 new bird boxes built to create wildlife features in the urban habitat surrounding the scheme. The planned wildflower meadow and restoration of two dew ponds in the wider landscape had been postponed for delivery in the second phase and evidence of urban enhancements, other than bird boxes, outside of the scheme was limited. Some progress had also been made on providing access to the site with the footpath and fencing work underway and community workshops creating artwork for the bench and sculptures completed.

The project had already delivered 117 events which was 43% of planned activities and was also well on its way to achieving the targets for community engagement with 63% of the project targets for both participant opportunities and number of individuals having been met. All target groups were being reached, however, people accessing support services and <25-year-old

dependents were under-represented. The number of school pupils engaged, and the school events held was low (18% and 19% of target achieved, respectively) and the BTO scheme was proving difficult to deliver and, as such, both of these were highlighted as priorities during the second phase. Two of four planned campaigns had been delivered however data on positive changes resulting from these was limited.

In terms of the evaluation data, the report highlighted several indicators that were data deficient and had resulted in limitations for measuring progress against outcomes. This included:

- Volunteer feedback forms that measure demographic, disability and enjoyment/learning were not being sent to eligible participants
- Learning outcomes for schools and projects run by external partners were not being monitored
- Surveys/Focus groups that capture other benefits from participation including behavioural changes and increased skills, confidence and wellbeing had not been undertaken/considered.

In addition, the report highlighted that the purpose and intended outcomes of some events was difficult to determine and recommended that the project team provide case studies on some of the main project components to provide more clarity on how outcomes were being achieved, or otherwise.

The completion of the Mid-term Review came at the start of the Covid Pandemic and, as such, there was a high level of risk associated with the whole project. It was unclear as to how long the pandemic would last and what elements of the project could still be delivered. It is, therefore, of great interest to the evaluator as to how the project was impacted, overcame difficulties, and adapted in response to government restrictions. This has been looked at in detail in Chapter 2 of this report and referred to, where necessary, throughout.

Chapter 2. EPIC during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic has been ongoing throughout the second phase of the EPIC project and this chapter assesses the impact it has had, setting out to answer the following questions;

- Did the pandemic cause delays or affect the implementation of the project?
- What adjustments needed to be made to the project design and its evaluation, and what mechanisms and tools were adopted in-order to deliver these adjustments?
- What impacts did the adapted programme of activities have on measuring outcomes?
- What best practice lessons can be drawn from your model for engagement and monitoring going into the future

To answer these questions, the evaluator conducted interviews with the project staff and has drawn on data presented in Lockdown activity and engagement tables produced by the project manager (Appendix 3).

2.1. Impacts on project delivery

Since the Coronavirus outbreak in March 2020, the project has had to contend with three national lockdowns and approximately 7 months of restrictions on the number of people mixing outdoors (Figure 1). At the time of the 1st National Lockdown, the project team had no idea how long restrictions would last and, following discussions decided that, rather than stopping the project and putting the staff on furlough, they would initially move as much of it as possible on-line, albeit in a radically different way. There were, however, going to be inevitable impacts on some aspects of the project and these were as follows:

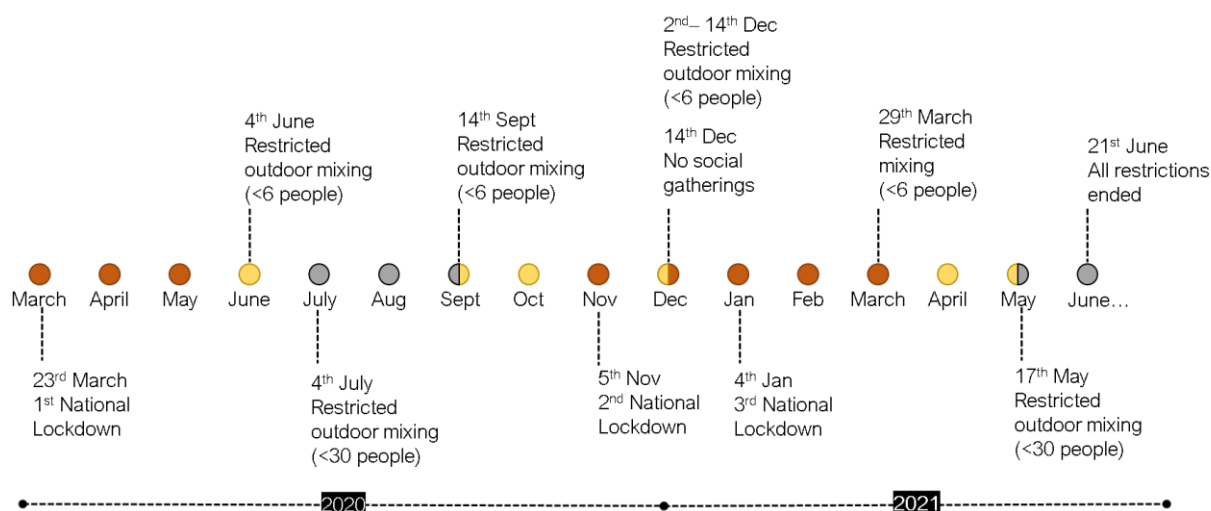


Figure 1: Timeline of Coronavirus restrictions between March 2020 and June 2021

- **Campaigns:** The two campaigns planned for the second phase were focused on water resources and were to be delivered with the help of Southern Water. Both were multi-faceted, requiring attendance at local events and the use of high impact messaging in town centres and local venues, giving talks and offering home visits.
- **Photography course:** This course was ongoing and including delivering a series of physical workshops with hands on experience and guidance from a professional.
- **Agecraft Intergenerational project:** A large part of this project involved connecting residents of care homes with school children. This would no longer be possible in its existing format which included visits and creative workshops in care homes and schools.
- **Schools programme:** This was highlighted as a priority for the second phase; however, the closure of schools and subsequent restrictions meant the on-site and in-school activities that formed the schools programme would either not be possible or limited.
- **BTO accredited sound course:** This course aimed to train visually impaired and other people accessing support service in bird song identification. This course was a priority for the second phase of the project, however, given the vulnerability of this group, the course was unlikely to be achieved in its current form.
- **Ecological training:** Training of volunteers to undertake the ongoing monitoring of the site was an important part of building the legacy for the project, however, the lockdown restrictions spanned two field seasons in which volunteers could gain adequate experience.
- **General site activities and events:** These would be unable to be undertaken during lockdowns and were restricted by social distancing, mixing of households and by the risks of sharing of equipment, refreshments etc.
- **Target groups:** Persons accessing support services and, to some degree the >60-year-olds were in the vulnerable category for Covid and therefore less likely to engage in onsite activities, when restrictions would allow.
- **Student/work placements:** The closure of universities meant that engaging new students to undertake research or work placements was unlikely. One individual on a work placement was also classified as vulnerable and therefore, their role would need to be adapted which may impact the intended benefits to them and the project.
- **Site opening:** The site was planned to be open in May 2021, marked by a large event. This would not be possible if there was a lockdown or outdoor mixing restrictions were enforced.

Alongside the impact on the approved purposes of the funding, the project team was also concerned that halting the project would result in losing the momentum of volunteer

engagements and community cohesion which had been built up over the first 18 months of delivery.

During the third National Lockdown (January to April 2021), the decision was made to extend the end date of the project by 3-months in light of the government's plans to ease restrictions over the coming spring and summer. To maintain the required budget for staff time, two of the project team were placed on part-time furlough (0.4FTE remaining). This gave the project time to catch-up with activities, engage with a wider audience and deliver the on-site aspects which could not be done virtually.

2.2. How the project adapted

2.2.1 Community engagement and training

During the National lockdowns, the project moved many of their activities online. The idea was to maintain the existing project themes and create resources and materials which could be "drip-fed" across various media platforms to continue the approach of structured learning and engagement over time. Each week, the project team created new material to share, this included a total of 27 videos and 23 posts that were categorized into general engagement, tutorials, challenges, quizzes, advice and activities. Each resource was assigned to the relevant Aim and Objective of the project based on the intended outcomes. A set of indicators were developed so the project could monitor the success, or otherwise, of different resources and their contribution towards the overall aims of the project. These included:

- Number of views, comments, and likes generated across platforms
- Number of species records generated
- Evidence of Habitat created
- Comments and feedback posted online

Moving to a virtual project meant adapting existing, and creating new, digital tools with a broader reach and increased ability to form two-way interactions with participants. This included creating a YouTube channel for posting videos and a community Facebook Group which allowed for a more interactive hub for members. The resources were also available through the website to ensure they were accessible to people who did not use social media. These platforms are discussed in full in Section 4.2.2 of this report. A table summarizing the different resources that were produced, the total engagement (based on number of views) for the platform in which it was shared, and what aim and objective the resource contributed to is provided in Table 3 overleaf.

Table 3: Table of resources produced during the Covid-19 lockdowns

Category	Type	Title	Theme	Aim.Obj	Engagement (No. views)		
					YouTube	Facebook	Total
Tutorial	Video	Introduction to biological recording	Biological recording (community)	2.4	77	x	77
General engagement	Video	Bat walk & equipment	Biological recording (community)	2.4	50	77	127
General engagement	Video	Recording of Bioblitz x 2	Biological recording (community)	2.4	142	27	169
General engagement	Video	Reptile survey recording	Biological recording (community)	2.4	x	73	73
Tutorial	Video	Introduction to Bird Recording Series x 4	Biological recording (training)	3.1	994	107	1101
Tutorial	Video	Hedgerow survey	Biological recording (training)	3.1	42	x	42
General engagement	Video	The story so far	Engagement (general)	2.4	359	41	400
Activity	Video	Flower smashing (how to)	Engagement (general)	2.4	103	64	167
Activity	Video	Plaster cast footprints (how to)	Engagement (general)	2.4	278	54	332
General engagement	Video	Woodmice at Sompting	Engagement (general)	2.4	66	64	130
General engagement	Video	Agecraft project update	Engagement (general)	2.4	26	x	26
General engagement	Video	Archaeology compilation of finds	Engagement (general)	2.4	689	x	689
General engagement	Video	Building the Sompting water dragon	Engagement (general)	2.4	100	x	100
General engagement	Video	Volunteer thank you	Engagement (general)	2.4	57	x	57
General engagement	Video	Site update	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	50	50
General engagement	Post	Species factsheets and infographics x 12	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	712	712
Quiz	Post	Ecological themed quizzes x 6	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	325	325
Challenge	Post	Send a bug photo	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	70	70
Challenge	Post	Wildflower spotting	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	77	77
Activity	Post	Make a flying kingfisher	Engagement (general)	2.4	x	52	52
General engagement	Video	Guided walk series x 3	Guided walk	2.4	813	118	931
Tutorial	Video	Introduction to photography	Skills-based workshop	3.1	95	56	151
Tutorial	Video	Introduction to macrophotography	Skills-based workshop	3.1	69	70	139
Activity	Video	How to make a bird box	Urban wildlife	2.5	217	56	273
Activity	Video	Make a Solitary bee hotel	Urban wildlife	2.5	3916	69	3985
Activity	Video	Make a hedgehog tunnel	Urban wildlife	2.5	610	70	680
Advice	Post	Make your garden wildlife friendly	Urban wildlife	2.5	x	59	59
General engagement	Post	Hedgehog sightings	Urban wildlife	2.5	x	87	87

To understand what was successful, or not, the data has been analysed by type (category) of resource produced and by the theme in which it was classified (Figure 2). This shows that engagement, based on average number of views, was highest for activities (e.g. build a box) and resources themed around urban wildlife to which half of the activities were assigned. This made a large contribution to the Urban wildlife campaign which aimed to increase the awareness of, and habitats for, wildlife in urban areas (Aim 2.5). Videos of guided walks undertaken by the project officer were also popular and contributed the most towards engaging and inspiring the community in natural heritage of the site (Aim 2.4). The least popular were resources providing advice, those setting challenges and skills-based workshops.

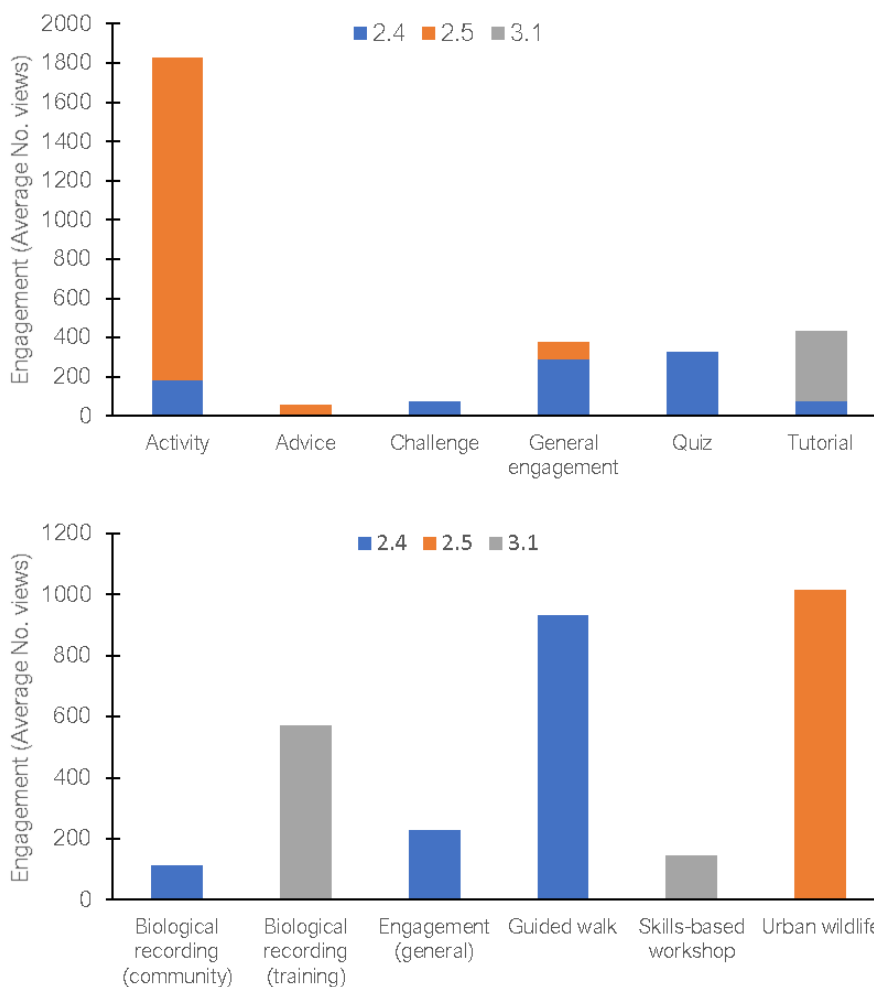


Figure 2: Average number of views for Covid-19 Lockdown activities by type (top) and theme (bottom)

In addition to providing online resources, the team also undertook some planned activities via Zoom. This included nine Agecraft project activities which virtually connected families and older volunteers, two bioblitz sessions which engaged the community in the second year of bio-

blitzing on the site, one talk on harvest mice, and five biological recording training events for the River Rangers so they are better equipped to take on monitoring beyond the life of the project. As these events allowed for a full evaluation of intended outcomes (e.g number and diversity of participants, number of people trained/upskilled, enjoyment and fulfilment), these were recorded as events on the event tracking form and are included in the overall figures and content of the main report. They are therefore, not evaluated further here.

Several other aspects of the project were also adapted. This included the Agecraft intergenerational project, BTO Bird Song course and the school's programme. A full description of the new approaches are provided in the full report. Elements of the project that were not completed due to the Pandemic were two of planned campaigns and the recruitment of student placements due to universities being closed.

2.2.2 Ongoing monitoring

During the lockdowns and following guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the project team continued to independently undertake monitoring and record footage that could be used for online engagement.

2.2.3 Restrictions on outdoor mixing

Outside of lockdowns, the project restarted physical activities on the site and a total of 70 events were undertaken when restrictions were in place for the number of people that could mix outside. A total of 39 events were undertaken under the Rule of Six and many events were run over multiple sessions in-order to meet demand. Events involving tools or equipment had to be carefully planned and, in most cases, participants were asked to bring their own equipment if they could. Refreshments were also not provided.

The restrictions on outdoor mixing also resulted in the delay in the site opening as the project team wanted to use the event as a thank you to all the dedicated participants that had helped over the life of the project. The opening finally took place in September 2021 after all restrictions on mixing had been lifted.

2.3. Impacts of adapted programme on measuring outcomes

The project team made a conscious effort to collate monitoring data for evaluating lockdown activities, including number of views, likes and comments, and tried to encourage people to post responses to challenges and activities. This resulted in a total of 11,000 views of resources

across all platforms, and 318 likes, 219 comments, 13 wildlife features created, and 63 species recorded from Facebook.

However, there was inevitably going to be some information that could not be measured or was not wholly represented. This includes:

- Demographic groups - Whilst some demographic data could be collated by cross referencing Facebook with the projects own mailing list, this was too time consuming for the project team and therefore there was no indication as to whether target audiences being reached.
- Number of individuals engaged - views do not correspond to individuals in all cases as the same person may view the same video on the same or different platforms more than once.
- How engaged were people and did they learn? As the identify of viewers is not known, feedback forms on engagement levels and skills/knowledge learnt could not be gathered other than from peoples own social media posts. It was also unclear from the data gathered whether people had watched or viewed posts in their entirety which would help understand the level of engagement.
- The number of people posting evidence was unlikely to be representative as many people may not want to use social media in an interactive way.

This has resulted in having to evaluate the “Lockdown Activities” from media platforms (Facebook, website, and YouTube) separately then those undertaken pre- and post-pandemic as to merge the two together risks skewing the project achievements. The evaluation has, however, provided the measured outcomes from the lockdown resources that contribute to different aims within the main text of the report, but they are not included in the final figures for number of events, participants, and individuals, or used in evaluation of target groups.

For on-site activities during the outdoor mixing restrictions, the number of people being able to attend events was restricted and whilst some events were run more than once to try and meet demand, it is likely that the level of participation was impacted. It is also considered likely that more vulnerable groups who would otherwise have attended events, chose not to, which could have limited the ability to reach more vulnerable target groups (people accessing support services and >60s) during the pandemic.

2.4. Best practice and lessons learnt

The adapted programme for delivering the project during the Coronavirus pandemic required some rapid learning in respect to new engagement mediums and required the development of new indicators to measure achievements against. Following interviews with the project staff and drawing from a self-reported evaluation of lockdown activities provided by the project manager, the following outlines the best practice lessons that can be drawn from the projects model for engagement and monitoring:

- **Videos:** Making videos was a successful approach for engaging with audiences, enabling the project to continue many of their themed activities including guided walks, the urban wildlife campaign, and workshops. However, without technical equipment, the project team found it very hard to generate good sound quality, particularly with footage filmed on the site. Creating and editing videos was also time-consuming with limited equipment, IT support or expertise in the field. Future projects should consider the purchase of technical equipment and training in video editing software so that staff are better equipped.
- **Activities:** This was by far the most successful type of remote engagement and asking for direct engagement (e.g post their responses/creations) provided a valuable, albeit approximate, indicator to measure outputs against.
- **Zoom:** The video conferencing platform was also a successful way of engaging remotely, however feedback from a number of 'less tech savvy' participants found using the platform difficult and made them feel worried. A training session on using Zoom was provided as part of a series workshops held specifically for the River Rangers, however, this was not applied, or feasible, for all Zoom events or participants. Future projects should consider that the use of Zoom or similar platforms may discourage certain demographic groups to attend events and, if feasible, training or guidance for users (e.g inviting inexperienced participants to sign in 10-minutes prior to an event for training), may be useful.
- **Framework & Target Indicators:** The project made considerable effort to keep the adapted programme within the scope of the original engagement framework, which has enabled the lockdown activities to be evaluated against the original aims and objectives. However, there are inevitably outputs and outcomes that were not measured and there were no benchmarks in which to measure engagement rates against. Target group engagement, geographic reach and upskilling/learning/enjoyment outputs were difficult to capture beyond the standard analytics. Future projects should seek to set benchmarks to measure success and utilize third party platforms that can provide additional insights into social media analytics such as sentiment analysis, demographics, and location.

Chapter 3. Aim 1: Improve and Enhance Habitats

Aim

1

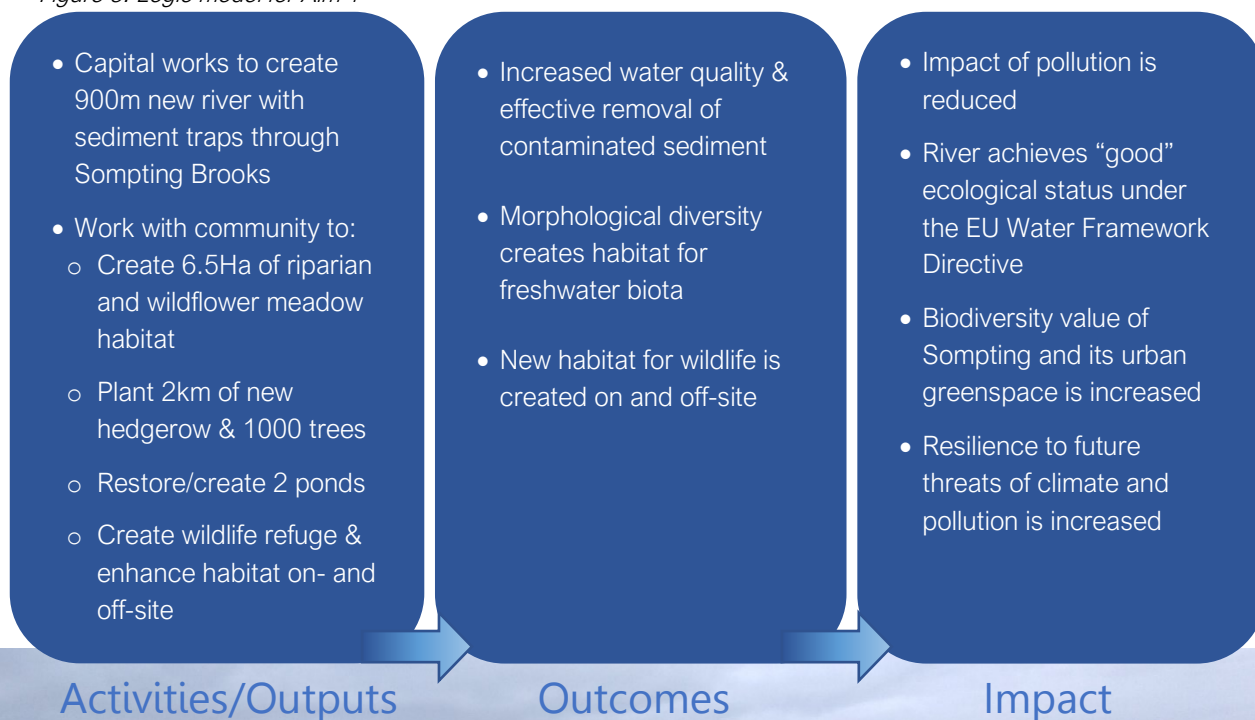
“To improve and conserve the Broadwater Brook and enhance wetland and hedgerow features within the Sompting Brooks Estate in-order to decrease water pollution and increase biodiversity value of the urban greenspace.”

This chapter presents the outputs and outcomes relevant to the first aim of the EPIC project described above and includes the direct environmental benefits that are expected from habitat enhancements as shown in the logic model presented in Figure 3. The chapter is split into the following two sections:

1. Redirecting the Broadwater Brook
2. Other habitat creation and enhancement works

Although some impacts may not be seen within the timeframe of the project, the team has integrated a variety of participatory surveys into their programme to monitor environmental change and to train volunteers so that benefits can be measured beyond the life of the Heritage Fund grant period. Participation of people in these surveys has been assessed under the “Inspire and connect people and communities” goal of the project (Chapter 4), however the outcomes of these surveys and events have contributed to the evaluation of this aim.

Figure 3: Logic model for Aim 1




3.1. Redirecting the Broadwater Brook

One of the first milestones for the project was the completion of capital works to redirect a culverted section of the chalk fed Broadwater Brook through Sompting Brooks, a mixed farmland site owned and managed by the Sompting Estate Trust. There were a number of complications prior to the delivery phase that resulted in changes to the final designs. These included the presence of an undocumented high voltage power cable and land contamination that resulted in changes having to be made to the bed level of the new channel and a considerable rise in costs compared to those provided by the contractor involved in the project during the development phase. This resulted in one of the three silt traps and two bridge crossing being removed from the scope of works. Full details are provided in the Capital Works Report in Appendix 4.

The final designs included excavating a new 900m river channel and installing two sediment traps to reduce pollution, from roads and industry, entering the new watercourse. Construction began on 6 June 2019 and involved shifting 12,765 cubic meters of earth (the same as 5 Olympic sized swimming pools) to form the new channel. Due to the contamination, surplus soil was retained on site and used to re-landscape the adjoining field, creating an altered vista for future generations to enjoy. The construction was completed nearly 3 months ahead of schedule on 16 August 2019.

The main environmental outcomes associated with the capital works include increased water quality and creating morphologically diverse habitat for freshwater biota which both contribute towards the aim of increasing biodiversity. Achievements towards these outcomes are assessed below and illustrated in Figure 4.



"Great to be on site again - an amazing change since we were last here"

3.1.1 Water quality

Chemical water quality

Since 2019, chemical water testing has been carried out monthly at four locations along the new river channel by project staff and a trained volunteer from the University of Brighton. The data shows that annual mean levels of both phosphate and ammonia have declined between 2017 and 2021 and are now below the threshold levels needed to obtain “good” ecological status under the Water Framework Directive. The average level of sediment (measured by turbidity) downstream of the silt traps has also decreased by 36% compared to levels upstream. An investigation into the effectiveness of the silt traps has also been undertaken by master’s students and staff at the University of Brighton. Their data shows that the silt traps are trapping both phosphate and ammonia as well as faecal and viral bacteria. These data shows that the intended outcomes to reduce water pollution and effective sediment removal have been met.



“Interesting that the levels of faecal indicator bacteria and the viral indicator were 25 and 700 times higher, respectively in the sediment of silt trap 2 compared to the overlying water and that phosphate and ammonia were highest in sediment from silt trap 1. So, the silt traps are obviously trapping something! 😊”

Prof James Ebdon, University of Brighton

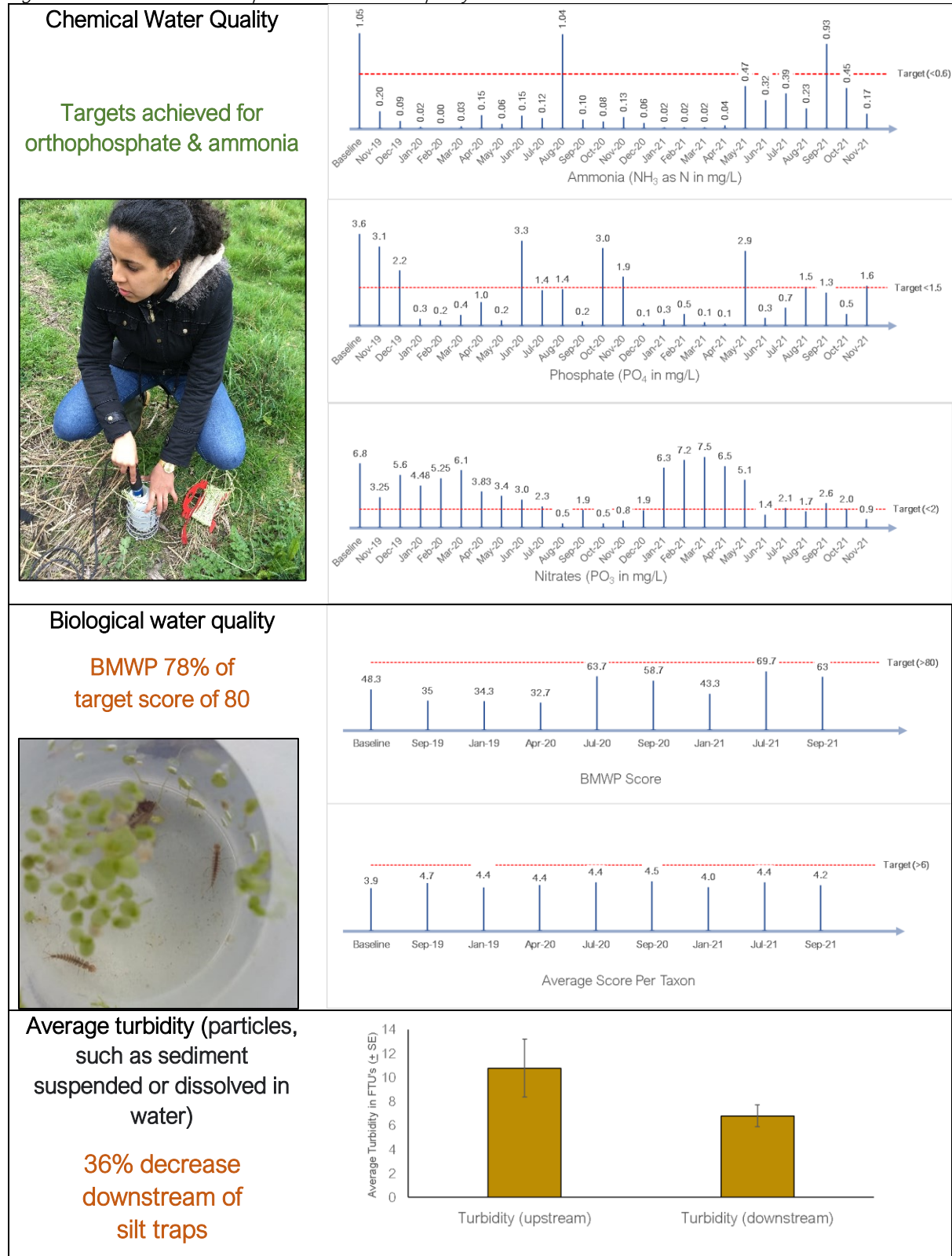
The monthly averages of nitrate as ($\text{NO}_3 - \text{N}$ in mg/L) show a seasonal pattern that peaks during spring and troughs during summer which coincides with when the chalk springs, that provide the new river channels base flow, are flowing from the South Downs. Feedback from the project manager has suggested that “this is due to the high concentrations of nitrate that are present in the groundwater. Whilst this means that the level of nitrate remains above our targeted threshold, the data gives us robust evidence of the impact of pollution in our wider catchment that can be used to engage stakeholders to make improvements in the future.”

Biological water quality (BMWP)

With the help of a dedicated group of “Bug Club” volunteers, quarterly samples of freshwater invertebrates have been collected from three locations along the new channel and scored based on their tolerance to pollutants. Since the Mid-term report, when results comprised a high number of low scoring species (tolerant to pollutants), the average score per taxon (ASPT) has remained relatively stable. The biological water quality score (BMWP), however, has been increasing steadily with the latest sampling in September 2021 achieving 78% of the BMWP

target of 80. Feedback from the project manager suggests that “this is likely the result of the habitat still establishing or that the original target of 80, may not be realistic for this channel form”.

Figure 4: Main outcomes of capital works on water quality



3.1.2 Morphological diversity provides habitat for freshwater biota

Morphological diversity

Morphological diversity has been measured once during the life of the project using the Modular River Survey (MoRPh) technique developed by Queen Mary University, London, and the Environment Agency. The survey provides 14 indices of the local physical structure of rivers that can be monitored over time and are intended to be used as a baseline for future surveys.

Freshwater biota

The natural colonization of the new river channel by freshwater and riparian species has attracted a lot of interest from local recording groups including plant, dragonfly, amphibian, and bird experts. These surveys, together with data obtained from monitoring surveys (eDNA & BMWP sampling) and anecdotal sightings show a total of 295 species have been recorded utilizing the habitat along the new channel. This



© Dave Sadler. Scarce Blue-tailed Damselflies mating 10.8.20

includes 18 dragonfly, 3 amphibian, 1 reptile, 37 bird, 7 fish, 5 mammal, 140 plant and 86 invertebrate species. The most notable finds have included;

- The unexpected discovery of a breeding population of Scarce blue-tailed damselfly in 2019, a species that has not been recorded in Sussex for 120 years.
- Cetti's Warbler, a Schedule 1 bird species, has a breeding territory along the new channel and grasshopper warblers, kingfishers and green sandpipers have all been seen foraging along the channels course.
- A rare mining bee *Nomada zonata* was recorded during the 2021 bioblitz, contributing one of only 93 records of the species in the UK.
- Three amphibian species are present and are the first amphibian records for the project site.
- Five chalk stream/river indicator species have naturally colonized the new channel.
- Seven fish species are now present in the channel including the European eel which is classified as 'Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List.

© Dave Sadler

"I don't think there's anything more exciting, engaging and uplifting for the soul than seeing wildlife colonising newly restored habitat. Well done to all of you, hard work paying off!"
Rachel Bicker, Facebook

3.2. Other habitat creation and enhancement works

Alongside creating the new river channel, the EPIC project aimed to plant 2km of new hedgerow & 1000 trees, 6.5ha of riparian and meadow habitat and restore/create 2 ponds. In addition, the project has undertaken other enhancements to habitat on and off site which were not included in the original plan but have been implemented as the project evolved. These outputs were intended to result in increased biodiversity and resilience both on and off-site and achievements against these targets and outputs have been evaluated using Event Tracking Forms, Quarterly reports, the Management Plan for the site (Appendix 5), biological records and case studies of event themes submitted by the project staff (Appendix 6). A map showing the original and new habitat that is now present on site is provided on Page 30 of this report.

3.2.1 Hedgerow and Trees

Based on data from event tracking forms and quarterly reports, 180 participants have helped to plant over **8000 trees** on site throughout the project. This includes **2.4km of hedgerow** and **240 trees** showing that the project has achieved its hedgerow target, but not the target of 1000 trees. Feedback from the project manager revealed that this was due to them “running out of space” and that “as the site developed, some interesting and valuable wetland habitats were naturally establishing and made for a more interesting mosaic of habitats across the site.”

3.2.2 Pond creation

The project aimed to restore two historic dew ponds at Lower Trudgeons and The Mountain which are in the wider landscape of Church Farm surrounding the site. Both ponds were restored using locally sourced clay (Shoreham) after the Mid-term Review. Two other ponds have also been created on the site including one pond adjacent to the new river channel (to open a segment of ditch left following the capital works) and one seasonal shallow pond within the new picnic area of the site (to assist with flood relief in the picnic area). The River Rangers have been involved in planting plug plants around the banks of the ponds at Lower Trudgeons and the pond adjacent to the new river. Planting of The

Mountain dew pond is planned but will not be undertaken during the life of the project as it was



only completed at the end of October 2021. The picnic area pond is being left to naturally establish.

All ponds are still in their infancy, however, a PSYM survey which is used to determine the ecological quality of freshwater ponds in England and Wales was undertaken by the River Rangers in summer 2021 and further surveys of all ponds are part of the continued monitoring of the site as detailed in the 10-yr Management Plan. As such, the target indicator of achieving good ecological status of ponds will be taken forward into the legacy of the project.

3.2.3 Plant riparian and meadow habitat

With the help of 50 participants from the local community, 3000 plug plants, comprising 17 locally occurring native species, have been planted along 1km of marginal shelves in the new channel. A total of 0.48Ha of the new riverbanks were also hydroseeded with 23 native species as part of the capital works. Three hundred and 50 cowslips have also been planted by



the River Rangers across the site and a new wildflower meadow covering 6.9Ha of previously arable land was sown by the farmer over winter in 2020/21. This area is fenced off from the public and through consultation with local experts and the landowner, the meadow will be managed for hay with traditional aftermath grazing.

3.2.4 Wildlife features and habitat improvements on- and off-site

A total of 67 events have been undertaken with over 200 community participants and River Ranger volunteers to improve and maintain the habitat on site. This has included litter picks, bramble control and pulling blue water-speedwell which impedes flow within the channel. Three refugia for reptiles and amphibians have also been created and brushwood bundles created by the community have been installed in erosion gullies along the new river.



"Wow that is a really special discovery!!!! Congratulations - you are obviously doing a lot of things right over there! This discovery has underlined the hard work that goes on to make wonderful habitat for butterflies across Sussex."

Butterfly Conservation Sussex: Spotting a Long Tailed Blue butterfly social media post

Off-site, young adults and the River Ranger volunteers have laid 600m of hedgerow, along a track 500m north of the site. This reduces gaps and stimulates growth from the base resulting in denser hedges that benefit perennial plants, small mammals, farmland birds and some invertebrates (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, 2015).

The Urban Wildlife Campaign has also been instrumental in driving positive change for wildlife in the wider area of Sompting, Lancing and Worthing. The “build a box” physical and online events resulted in the creation of 72 bird boxes, 104 bee hotels and six hedgehog houses.












The campaign also raised awareness of how to improve gardens for hedgehogs by distributing fliers to 400 homes identified as being hedgehog hotspots in the Sompting and Lancing area.

The campaign also engaged with Adur & Worthing Council who have now put hedgehog warning stickers on their strimmer’s and maintenance equipment used for management of the district’s greenspaces. These are intended to raise awareness of nesting hedgehogs so that they are not impacted by management works. The Urban Wildlife Campaign is reviewed in full in Section 4.2.5 of this report and a case study written by the project officer running the campaign can be found in Appendix 6.



Following recommendations in the Mid-term report to collate evidence that off-site features have been installed so that the increase and enhancement of habitat off-site can be better evaluated, the project team have encouraged people to comment or post photos of their newly created wildlife features on social media. A range of these were collected by the project team and are provided in a collage overleaf. However, feedback from the project officer highlighted that using social media to monitor and measure wildlife enhancements and associated behavioural change is “near impossible as they were reliant on inputs and observations from those participating”. Despite this, qualitative evidence from social media, photos, and feedback from the Mid-term evaluation questionnaire show that people have been making positive changes and installing wildlife features across Sompting and the wider area.

Habitat has been created, enhanced and biodiversity and resilience has increased...

<p>"That was really informative thank you. I realised that the bird box we have has never been nested in by our wrens and robins because it's the wrong type of box. We will make them a new box for the tree." <i>Karin Virtue, Facebook</i></p>	<p>EPIC Sompting Aug 31 · 🌐</p> <p>So lovely to see some of our community made #hedgehog boxes getting ready for new occupants and placed in gardens!... See More</p>		
<p> 633 species have been recorded on site</p>			
 <p>"A lockdown activity we enjoyed over the weekend - 'How to make a bird box' " <i>Ben Baruch Facebook</i></p>	<p>"I too was inspired by Tom's video on solitary bees - so simple but effective. I made four "homes" in one day and they are now south-facing, on the end of my garden workshop. The bees won't be so "solitary" after this!" <i>Mark Lambert, Facebook post</i></p>		
<p>91% of respondents to the Mid-term questionnaire (n=11) are more motivated to make a difference to the environment</p>	<p>Heather Finch · EPIC Sompting May 28, 2019 · 🌐</p> <p>Bird box is up - my son couldn't wait to show me when I got home!</p>  <p>"We have 5/6 hedgehogs visit, we are in Sompting. They have moved into the house we have made them." <i>Natalie Philip</i></p> <p>Three respondents to the Mid-term questionnaire were making improvements to their garden (n=2) for wildlife or are picking up rubbish when out (n=1)</p>		
<p> Pauline Cory we made our tin can bee house today, really enjoyed doing it, thanks for the idea!</p>  <p>1y Like Reply 3 🍷❤️</p>	<p>" I have now located a spot where there is evidence that a hedgehog has been, and I have positioned a homemade house with a feeding plate inside. I have been putting the food down as dusk falls now once the birds have stopped feeding. Last night I left a bowl with worm rich compost from the composter on the lawn and today I could see that the hedgehog had been there, thank you for the link." <i>Gillian Bull, Facebook</i></p>		
<p> Plastic waste reduced on-site As a result of 5 litter picks and 14 site clear up days</p>	<p>45 species of conservation concern in the UK recorded</p>		
<p>97% Increase in species of taxa surveyed pre- and post-works</p>	<p>455 New species recorded on site</p>	<p> Increased distribution in slow worms & priority bird spp.</p>	<p> Increased diversity in bats & birds</p>

Chapter 4. Aims 2 & 3: Inspire and connect people & communities

To 'inspire and connect people and communities' was the second goal of the EPIC project and included two main aims (Aims 2 & 3, Table 1). These comprise eight objectives focused on providing opportunities for the local community to engage, learn, access, and take ownership of their local greenspace. This section begins with reviewing the overall community involvement in the project and then goes on to assess the outputs and outcomes relevant to Aims 2 and 3.



4.1. Overall participation

4.1.1 Structure for measuring participation

A range of activities have been delivered to provide participant opportunities to engage and learn about the natural and cultural heritage of Sompting Brooks and the wider environment. These activities have been categorized under 13 themes which were allocated to the dominant objective and aim to which they contribute. In practice, some of the events/activities held under each theme crosscut more than one aim or objective. For instance, some biological recording events were used to engage the community (Aim 2.4), some were volunteer groups (Aim 2.3), and others were specifically focused on training (Aim 3.1). A graph showing the number of events held under each theme and the contribution of these towards different aims is provided in Figure 5.

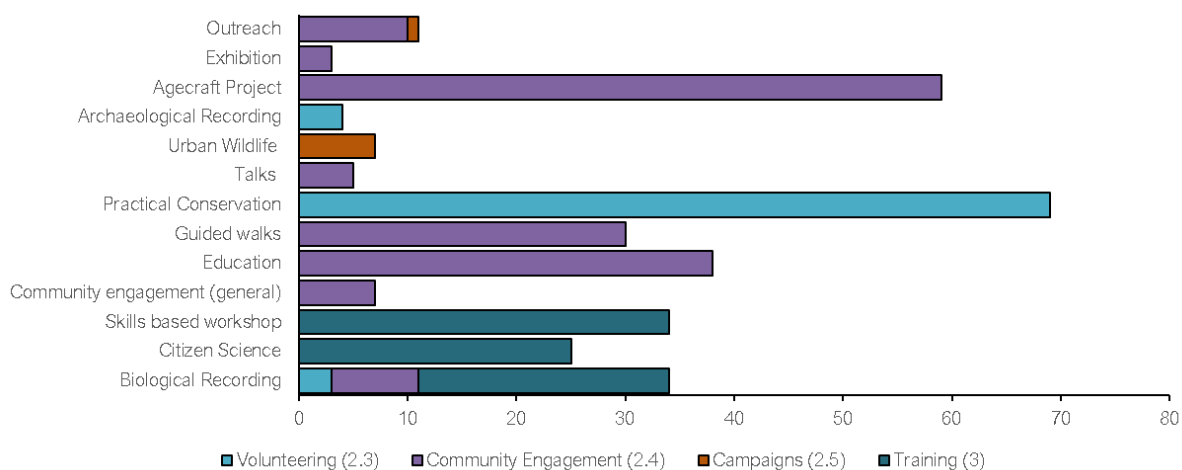


Figure 5: Chart showing number of events delivered under each main theme and the contribution of these to the Aims and Objectives of the project (shown in legend parenthesis).

The following discusses overall participation across the main themed activities of the project. Assessment for Aims 2 and 3 uses events that have been broken down and allocated to their respective aims and objectives.

Evaluation questions for measuring overall participation

This section sets out to answer the following questions relevant to the overall participation by people and communities in the EPIC project.

1. What is the volume of participation in the projects activities and have targets been met for overall engagement?
2. Have events and activities engaged the “local community”, a “wide range” of people and have “target groups” been reached?
3. What is the overall feedback from participants and the community regarding the project and its activities?

4.1.2 What is the volume of participation in the project’s activities, and have targets been met for overall engagement?

The EPIC team have delivered 316 events/activities to engage people, communities, and schools in the natural and cultural heritage of Sompting Brooks which is 117% of the projects target of 269 (participant & volunteer events). This includes 17 sign-up on-line zoom events undertaken during the Covid-19 lockdowns but excludes 11 outreach/ promotional events that the project attended. The total number of participants (not individuals) across these same events was 4,745, which is 134% of the projects target of delivering 3,490 participant and volunteer opportunities (excluding volunteer placement targets, outreach events and additional people reached through the urban wildlife initiative). The total number of participants across these events is provided in Figure 6.

This shows that education activities for schools and universities have provided the highest level of participation alongside the Agecraft project, which also engaged with schools. Discounting activities involving schools, the highest number of participants have attended practical conservation tasks, skills-based workshops, and general community engagement events.



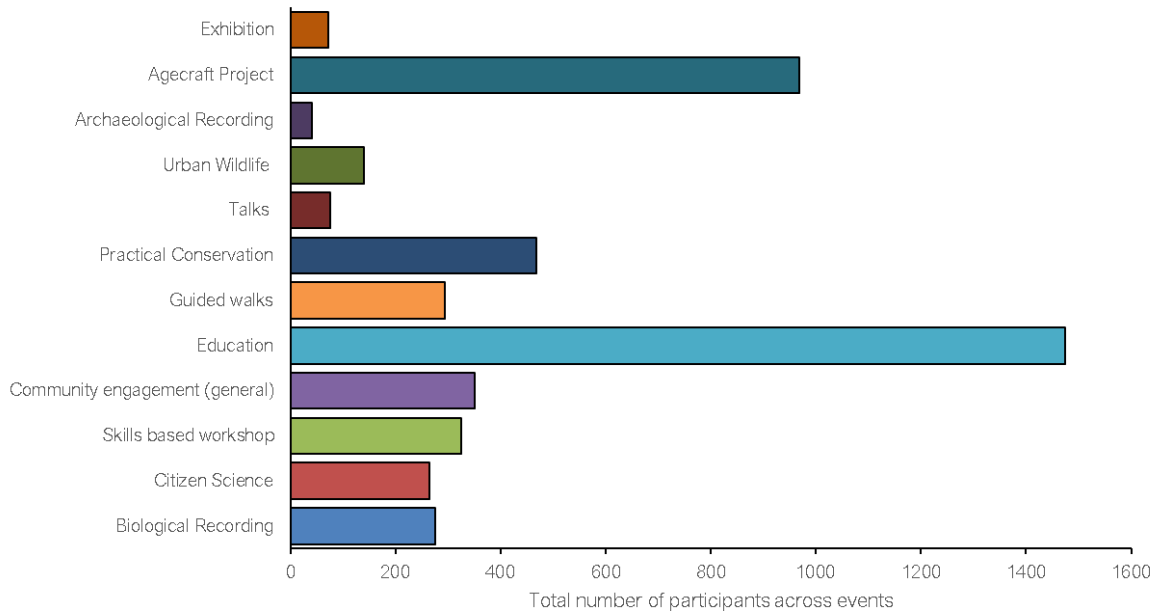


Figure 6: Number of participants attending events categorized by each main theme (excluding outreach activities).

Excluding education activities, outreach events, and the launch and site opening events, community activities have attracted an average of 13 participants per event, this is despite 39 events being undertaken following the Coronavirus “Rule of Six” restrictions on outdoor settings. The most popular type of event based on the average number of participants were those themed around Urban Wildlife (Figure 7).

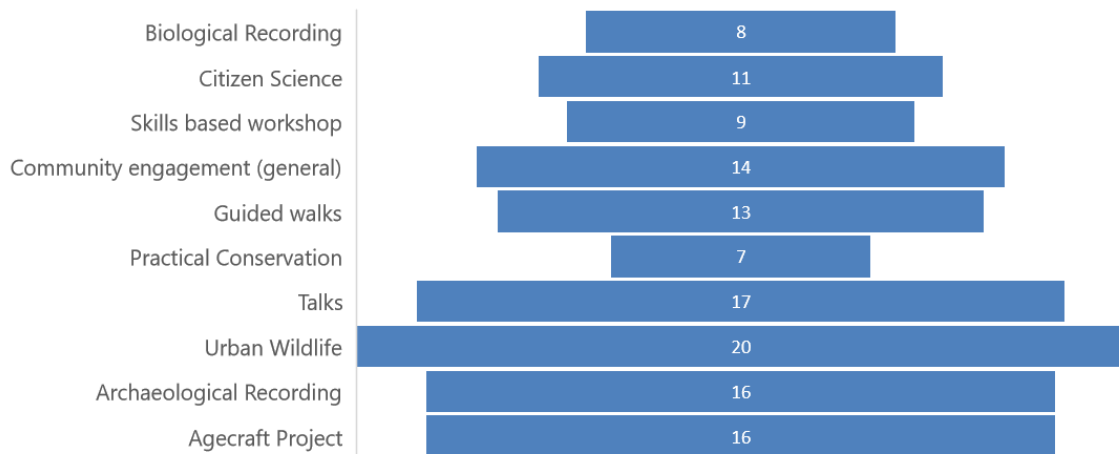


Figure 7: Chart showing the average number of participants attending events delivered under each main theme based on self-reported data from Event tracking forms

Over its course, 1,751 individuals have directly engaged with the project (1,159 school pupils and 592 from the local community) which is 109% of the project’s target of 1,600. These figures

are based on the project's records of attendance and self-reporting carried out after each event and includes individuals participating in community events, school activities, stakeholder events, activities run by external partners (e.g. Agecraft), and individuals undertaking research or volunteer placements. As attendance sheets were not completed, or are missing for some activities (e.g. drop-in activities and some events run by external partners), these figures represent a best-estimate but indicate that the project has surpassed its target for the number of people directly engaged.

4.1.3 Are events and activities engaging the "local community", a "wide range of people" and have "target groups" been reached?

Geographic reach of project

The community surrounding the project site is considered one of the most deprived in the country in terms of employment, health, education, and access to greenspace. To address this, the EPIC team wanted to develop a project that would inspire and improve opportunities for local residents. Post-code data from participant registration forms (n = 405) show 78% of people attending events come from within 5km of the project site and 86% are from the Adur and Worthing district (Figure 8). Some posts taken from Facebook also provide a flavour of how local participants valued the EPIC events and activities.

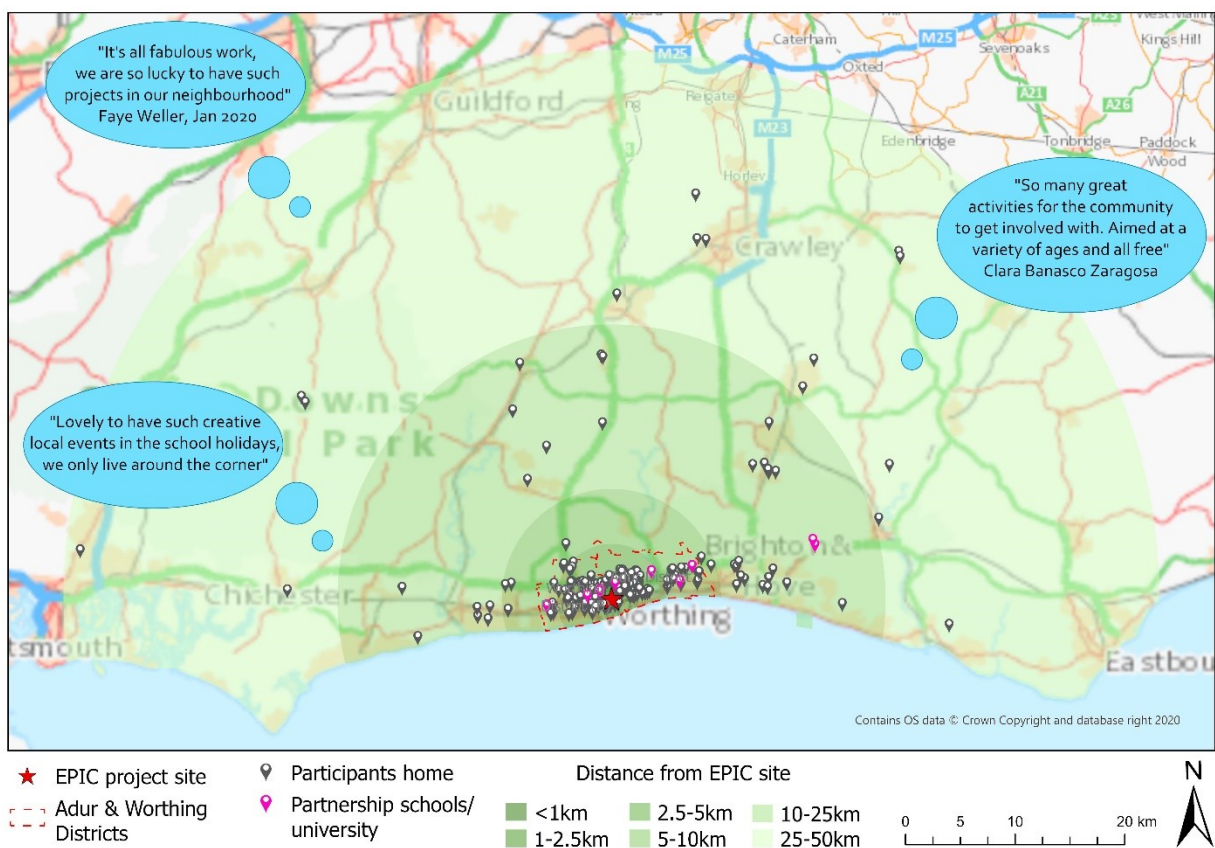


Figure 8: Map showing where participants attending events are residing based on post-code data provided from 405 participant registration forms, persons contributing to the Urban Wildlife campaign and school details logged on event tracking forms.

Based on event tracking forms and the schools case study, the project has also engaged with seven local schools from the Adur and Worthing District and two Universities from Brighton & Hove District. In addition, events for 16 local organizations including charities, interest groups, councils and care homes have also been undertaken.

The geographic reach of the project has surpassed what was expected with 55 people from outside of the Adur and Worthing district having attended 168 events. These include practical conservation activities, skills-based workshops, urban wildlife events, family just-for-fun events and educational walks and talks suggesting that the diversity of events and profile of the project attracted people from a wide geographical area.

Diversity of participants and Target Groups

From the outset, the project aimed to develop a programme of events and activities which allowed for participation by all sectors of community and aimed to specifically target five groups:

- people accessing support services
- families
- >60-year-olds
- <25-year-old independents, and
- women

The characteristics of participants based on data collected from event reporting and volunteer feedback forms is provided in Figure 9 and the number of events that each target group was represented at is provided in Figure 10.



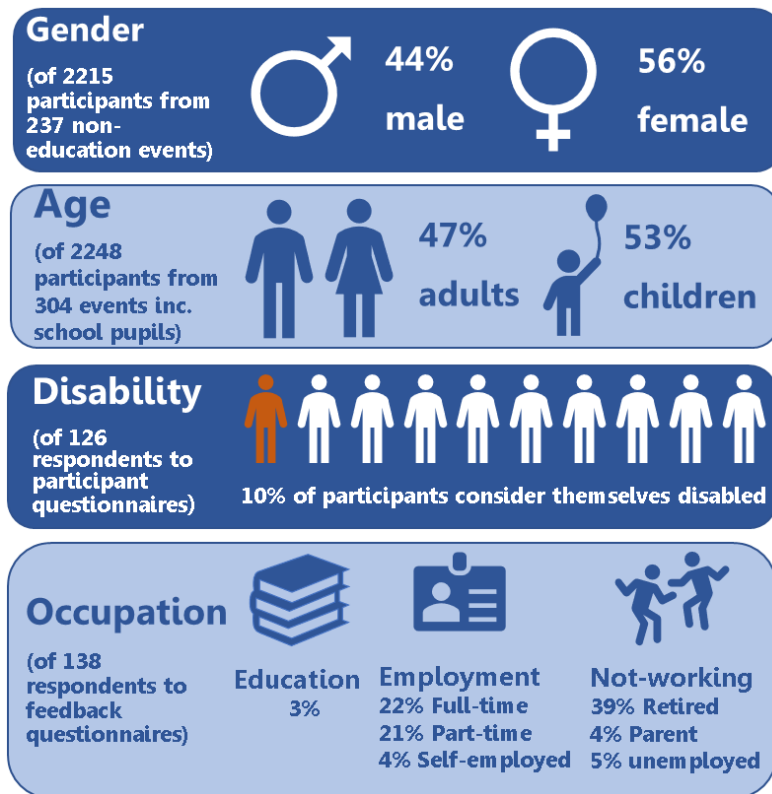


Figure 9: Demographic information on participants based on event tracking form self-reported data (gender & age) and participant feedback forms (disability and occupation)

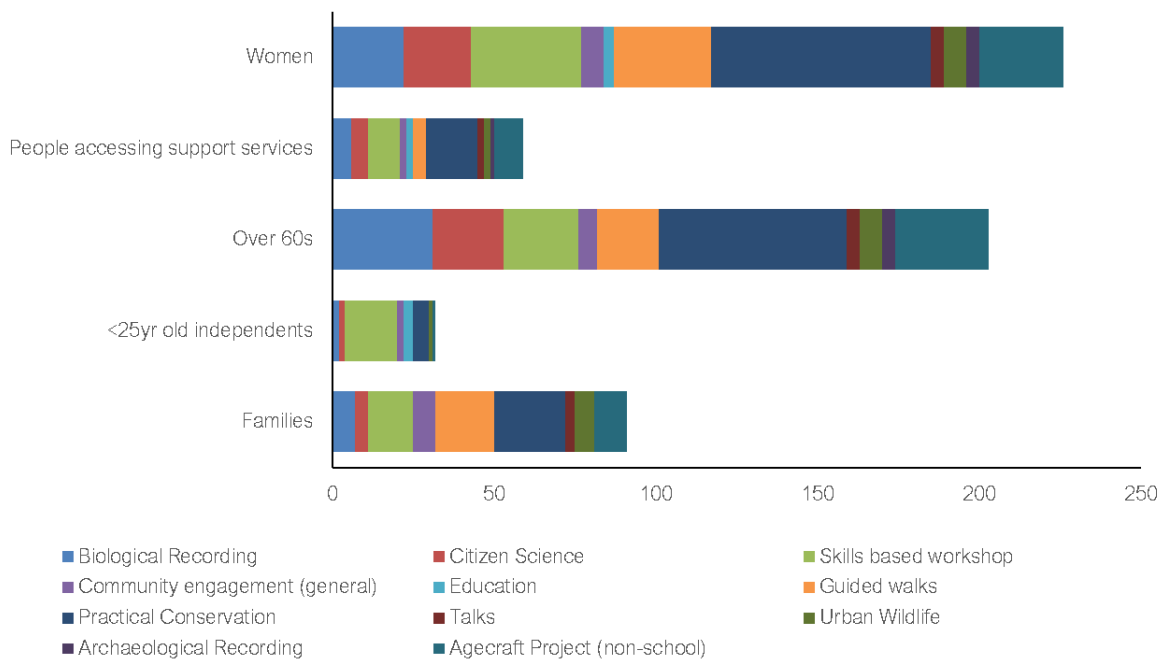


Figure 10: Number of events, categorized by themes, that have been attended by each target group.

Women

Data collected from event tracking forms show that over half of all participants at EPIC events were female (Figure 10) and that woman participated in the most events (94% of non-educational events) compared to other target groups. Whilst there were no direct targets associated with women, the data shows that the project provided over 1000 participant opportunities for women to get involved in cultural and heritage themed events and activities.



"A huge thank you to the epic team for holding these events, I never would have had the opportunity otherwise."

Nikki Orchard, email

Families

The project had an initial target of delivering 9 family events and by the end of the project,



EPIC Project @EPIC_Sompting · Aug 18
 Hog house heaven! 🐷🐷🐷

Cracking afternoon making homes for our prickly pals.

Thanks to everyone who got stuck in, [#hedgehogs](#) need all the help we can give them! [@hedgehogsociety](#)



participation was 10 times this, with families attending a total of 91 events. This includes 40 that directly targeted families including skills-based workshops, 'big draw' activities, 'bugs on the brook's' events, 'build a box' activities, and Agecraft events. Families were also present at a further 51 events that included citizen science, biological recording, guided walks, and practical conservation. Across all these events, 25% of participants were children and the number of families participating equated to 53. Based on data from attendance sheets, the total participant opportunities provided for families (based on the number of events each family attended) was 156 which is 130% of the project initial target of 120.

Great time this afternoon with our children undertaking the bird house making workshop. A wonderful time, very informative about wildlife and excellently run!

Charlotte Doddington, Facebook post

Over 60s

Initial investigations by the EPIC project during the development phase showed that the Adur District has a high proportion of over 60s. The project chose to target this group as it was considered that they had the most amount of time to volunteer, would benefit from decreased isolation and would be fundamental to taking on the legacy of the project. Data from event tracking forms shows that



this age group attended 203 events across all the project themes with the most popular activities being those themed around biological recording (91% of events attended), citizen science (88% of events attended), community engagement (86% of events attended), urban wildlife (88% of events attended) and practical conservation (84% of events attended).

Participant feedback forms show that retired people made up the highest proportion (39%) of all respondents. In terms of legacy, the River Rangers case study shows that 15 rangers are over 60 indicating that this age group, as intended, will contribute towards the ongoing management of the site.

"Thank you so much, this means so much. I don't know how much my Nan remembers but she had the biggest smile."

Participant, guided walk

<25yr-old dependents

This target group has attended 32 events in total which includes three voluntary university field days and four hedge laying training events specifically for <25yr-olds. Data from event tracking forms suggest the most popular type of event were skills-based workshops (47% of events



attended), suggesting this age group are most likely to get involved to develop new skills and knowledge. Over the life of the project, this group has been the hardest to reach and feedback from the project officer suggest the main limitations for this age group include transport (there are limited bus services and no local train station near the site) and other educational commitments.

"Brilliant (hedge laying) session. I'm going to use the hedge laying skills to lay hedge at my Mum's bit of ancient woodland."

Josh Menzies, Young Adults Hedge Laying participant

"Loved the hedge laying workshop. Thanks to Mark and you for organising this. I love that this skill is a part of our countryside heritage. I want to get into a nature-based job after my Geography degree so this should come in useful."

David Adams, Young Adults Hedge Laying participant

People accessing support services

At the start of the project, the team intended to provide 400 participant opportunities to people accessing support services which included delivering a sound-based bird identification course and reconnecting generations through the Agecraft project. Understandably, this part of the project was significantly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic,



and both had to be adapted. Despite these limitations, the project has delivered 18 events specifically for people accessing support services and include residents of Rectory House care home (9 events), volunteers from Sustainable Sussex (4 events), Princes Trust (2 events), SCOPE (1 event) and Herons Dale Special Needs Primary School (2 events). Together these events have provided 107 participant opportunities which is just 27% of the projects target. However, 10% of respondents to the volunteer feedback form consider themselves to have a disability and data from event tracking forms suggest people from this target group have been present at a further 41 events taking the total number of events for this target group to 59 which is 148% of the project initial target of 40. As the absolute number of persons in this target group are not recorded at these events. it is not possible to evaluate achievements for participant opportunities overall. However, given the limitations for vulnerable people during the project, it is evident that the group was reached by the project, even outside of targeted events.

"We really enjoyed making the stakes and are very happy to make more! The volunteers seemed to like the challenge of making so many. The group was our usual mix of volunteers who find access to the workplace difficult, including long term unemployed people, people with learning disabilities and people with mental and physical health difficulties."

Keith Collin, Sustainable Sussex Email

"A really great project, the residents really engaged and enjoyed the kids coming around."

Rectory House Care Home

"The kids were kept interested throughout the whole session. I liked how she asked them questions on facts she had given them on her prior visit at school, so they had to recall the information and so were able to give answers. It was a totally sensory experience for them, and she encouraged them to touch, listen and look all around them and verbalise what they were experiencing. She never rushed the children into the next part of the tour and spoke to them at their level. She was just as excited for the children to show her things they had found, which I really liked. I really can't think of a negative."

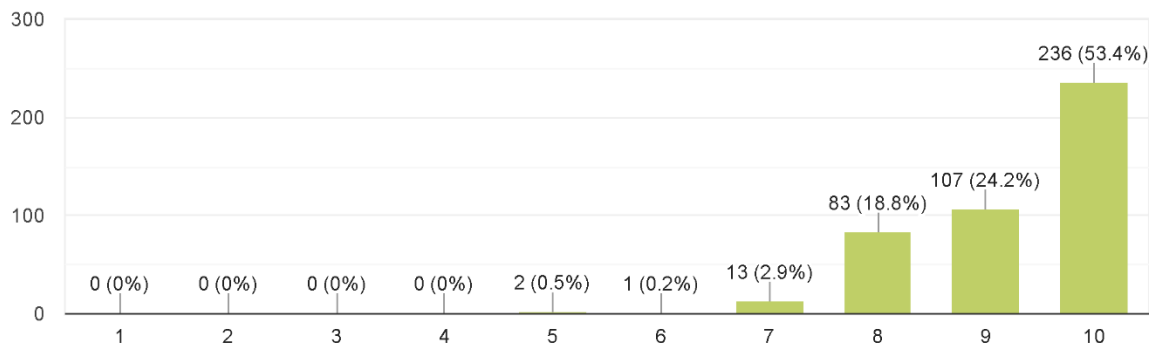
Tracy Vise, Learning Outside the Classroom Lead (LOtC), Herons Dale School

4.1.4 What is the overall feedback from participants and the community regarding the project and its activities?

Capturing engagement is not just about the number of people, and online volunteer feedback forms have been used to capture the overall satisfaction of participants at events. The following (Figure 11) provides a summary of the responses from 442 forms completed during the life of the project.

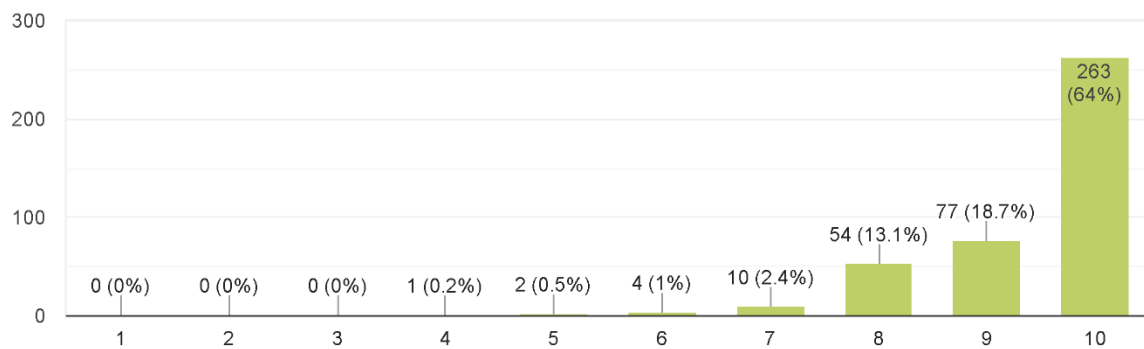
Overall, how much did you enjoy the event?

442 responses



If training and support was provided during the event you attended, how helpful was it?

411 responses



Would you recommend a similar activity run by the EPIC project to a friend?

442 responses

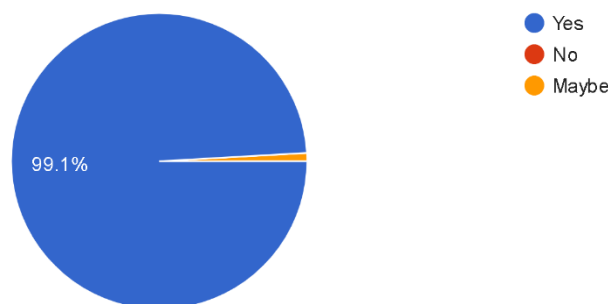
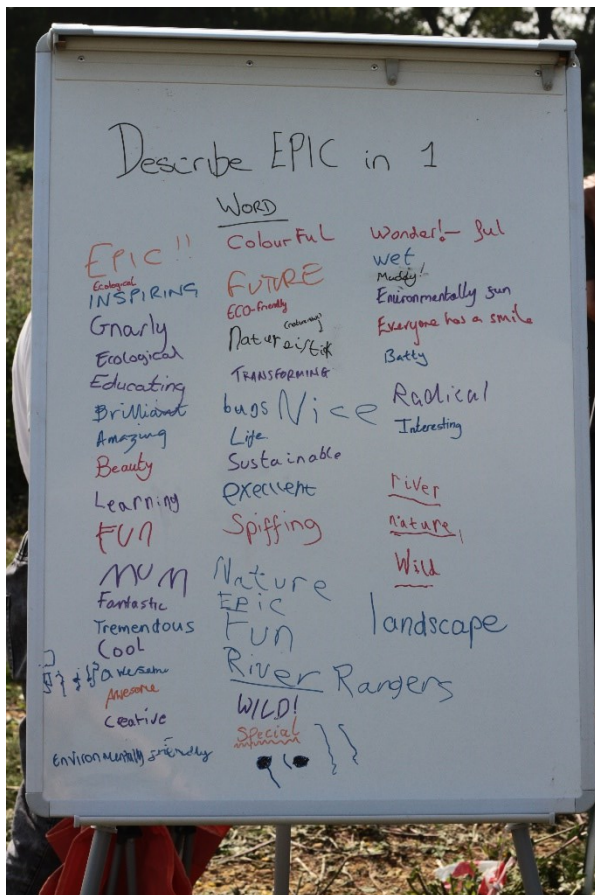


Figure 11: Charts showing responses to participant feedback questionnaire (n=442) where top shows rating for enjoyment of event, middle shows rating of training and support at event, and bottom shows whether participants would recommend events.

The project staff have also collated comments and feedback from participants, the community, and visitors of which a selection are provided below.



"I used to be your biggest critic, thought it was a waste of money. It's brilliant what you've done down there"

"Thank you so much for giving me this marvellous opportunity to help, support a worthy cause, and to grow in confidence around people."

"You guys should be so proud of what's happened at the EPIC site. The transformation from when I first visited until now is astonishing."

"Love, love, love Sompting Brooks! Went for a little potter after work tonight and it's truly lovely, such a wildlife haven. Can't wait to see how it progresses in the future."

"Me and my family have been truly blessed to have been part of this. Cannot thank you both enough!!!"

"Being part of the Epic project in Sompting has been really rewarding, seeing the site grow into a true nature and wildlife habitat for so many species is awesome"

"Well done to all concerned for the vision and hard work that's made EPIC truly epic in every way."

Rolf Løndal
 Stunning footage! I'm diggin' the 'Land of hope and glory...wider still and wider'. Seriously, My father and grandfathers who served would have loved to see how we are trying to take care of this land now 😊

Pauline Cory recommends EPIC Sompting. Nov 13, 2019

Love the project idea, those who run it are the loveliest people and it's always interesting and fun to take part as a volunteer.

1

2 Comments

Emma Kendon recommends EPIC Sompting. Nov 17, 2019

It's great how EPIC is galvanising such a wide range of the community's skills into action, while teaching us even more skills so we can care for the estate and its nature. Love it, EPIC!

1

4.2. Aim 2: Engage and connect people and communities

Aim 2

“To connect the local community with the natural and cultural heritage of the Broadwater Brook and associated water environment by delivering community initiatives, events, activities, and access that will engage and involve people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities with their local green space, securing its legacy and helping increase its ecological resilience into the future.”

This section reviews the outputs and outcomes relevant to Aim 2 of the project described above. This aim includes five objectives (Table 1) that broadly align to the main activities and outputs detailed in the logic model provided in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Logic model for Aim 2



4.2.1 Sompting Brooks River Trail

Other than the South Downs National Park and beach, access to greenspace for the local community was limited. To address this, the EPIC project has created a new permissive River Trail which officially opened on 4th September 2021. The opening of the site was marked by a thank you event with key stakeholders and 150 volunteers invited to celebrate the new trail and disseminate the cultural and natural heritage findings that had been gathered over the project life.



The 1.4km long river trail follows the new route of the Broadwater Brook next to the new wildflower meadow and hedgerows planted by the local community and stakeholders. The trail ends at a picnic area where visitors can enjoy views of the river, two newly created ponds and the South Downs. The trail includes a living willow hide and five interpretation boards that include a welcome board containing a site map and project information, one on the ecology of chalk rivers and three boards that explain the results of the archaeological investigations with visual representations of the landscape across thousands of years. Along the trail are artwork and sculptures that have been inspired and created by 117 participants of the EPIC's series of "Big Draw" events (see Plate 1). These include three green oak waymarker posts, a "fossil water dragon" sculpture that was constructed by the community and sits on the banks of the river and a "water bench" that features cement droplets made by the community.



The main outcomes associated with the River Trail were to provide new, well maintained, accessible greenspace that provides opportunities for the local community to engage with natural and cultural heritage. Evidence of these outcomes are presented against indicators overleaf and have been assessed using ad-hoc data on visitor numbers collected on 28 occasions by volunteers and staff, interviews with 37 visitors by project staff, feedback from local resident monitoring site access, social media posts and analytic data provided by project staff.

Trail and guide is created and advertised online...

VISITING SOMPTING BROOKS
Everything You Need to Know to Enjoy Your Visit

The Sompting Brooks River Trail has been created as part of the Enhancing Places, Inspiring Communities (EPIC) project. Follow the trail along the brand new route of the Broadwater Brook next to establishing wildflower meadows. Take in the artwork and sculptures created by the local community, stop in our living willow hide to observe the sites fascinating bird life and end up at our seating and picnic area with fantastic views of the South Downs.

On-site interpretation explains the results of archaeological investigations on site, giving visual representations of the landscape of thousands of years.

There is plenty to see here and we hope you enjoy your visit.

- Site Information
- Opening Times
- Getting Here
- Accessibility
- The Hide
- Dogs
- Get Involved
- Project Partners

SOMPTING BROOKS TRAIL

Worthing Herald
News
Sompting Brooks: Opening date for hidden gem between Sompting and Worthing revealed after river rerouted
A hidden gem between Sompting and Worthing will soon be open to the public after two years of work re-routing an urban chalk stream to create a flourishing area for wildlife.

Worthing Herald
27,422 Page likes

Interactive trail map has had **21% (1567 views)** of total website page views

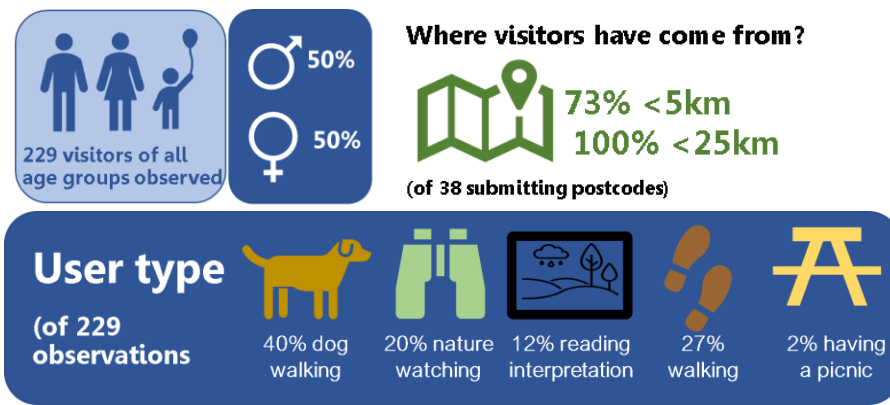
Over half (**56%**) of website views in 2021 have been since site opened

Trail is well maintained...

Maintenance of the trail has been incorporated into the management plan (Appendix 5) with actions including litter picks, control of weeds along the access track and ensuring art sculptures and interpretation boards remain undamaged and safe for public display.



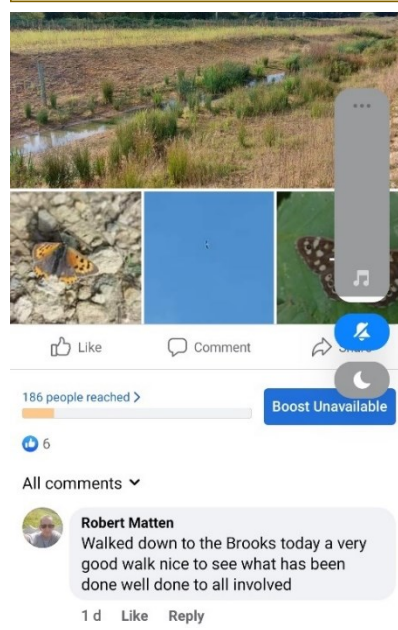
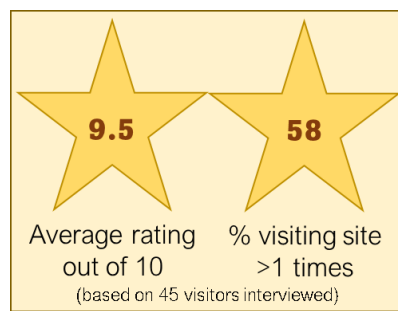
Local and wider community are accessing and engaging with the site...



An average of "10 visitors a day" have been observed by a local resident, with this "doubling at weekends when more families have been visiting the site"



Community satisfaction and wellbeing...



"We are so excited to have this right on our doorstep. Brilliant!"

"Wonderful to see green space I'd not seen before"

The best bits are "adding a new walk to our local patch"

THE BIG DRAW

The Big Draw workshops were run by local artist Janine Creaye who was commissioned to design and build the artwork along the river trail that will feature along the river trail. Janine ran six workshops in total, three on the water bench and three on the water dragon.

The Water Bench:

These workshops looked at the stories, wildlife, history, and future of Sompting Brooks and participants made drawings symbolizing elements of the river's past, present, and future. These were then sculpted into cement droplets that were later embedded into the bench that now sits in the picnic area of the trail.



Dan Curtis: Big Draw 3, 2.11.19

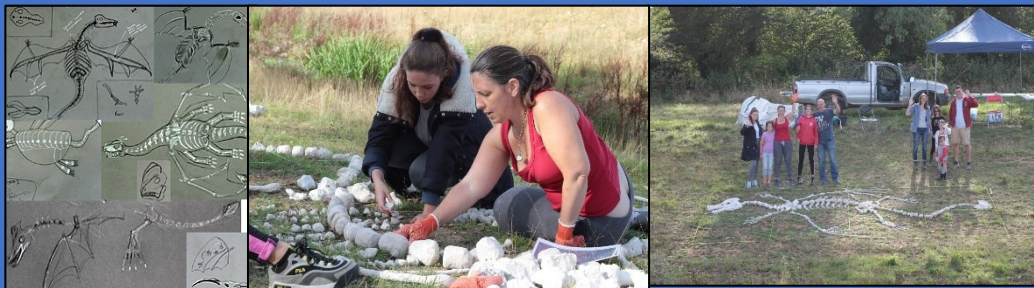
"Me and my daughter had a great time. Lovely to be involved in a bit of public art. My years at art college weren't wasted!"



The Fossil Water Dragon:



According to ancient Sussex legend the Sompting 'Knucker Hole' (and other rare 'bottomless' pools of water in chalk landscapes) is associated with water dragons called 'Knuckers'. These workshops explored the dragon legends with the local community who drew their vision of a Knucker, sculpted cement and chalk bones and then finally installed a 6m long fossilised sculpture along the new river banks. .



Daniel Ardern: Dragon Building Event 12.09.20

"Check out that dragon! It was amazing to be involved in making it"

LESSONS LEARNT: Access

Despite the infancy of the new Sompting Brooks River Trail, it is evident that it is being successfully advertised and used by the local community with feedback being positive. Feedback from the project staff has shown that there have been a few lessons learnt regarding access and monitoring its success that are reflected upon here.

Parking



Parking for the site has been an issue since the project started. The area is residential and those living adjacent to the site had continuing issues accessing their driveways. Parked vehicles also caused problems for local buses turning into the road. To overcome this, in September 2020, the project invested in “No Parking” cones, which were left in the care of the neighbourhood warden who was also given a schedule of events so that he could place the cones out when participants were coming to the site. These were found to be effective. Since the site opened, the project team has erected signs on fences and the main gate directing people where they can park to access the site. Feedback from the neighbourhood warden suggests that “there are still a few issues with people from out the area coming in cars and parking badly and being rude about the parking”. Going forward this will continue to be monitored and further actions taken where required.

Disabled access



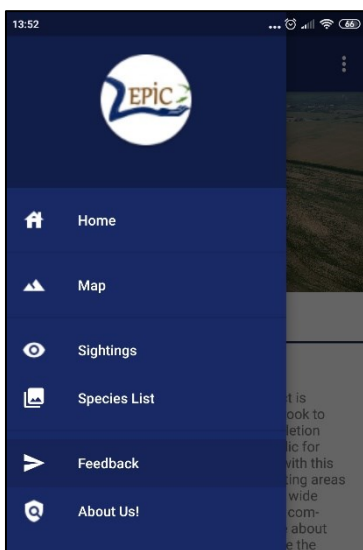
Part of the objective of providing a new river trail was that it was accessible to all. Initially the project was going to be running concurrently with a housing development located at the access point for the site and there was agreement that a surfaced track would be built as part of the development to adjoin the river trails path. The development, however, was postponed which has resulted in the top 300m of access down to the site being inaccessible for people that are wheelchair bound. This has been raised by several residents who were keen to access the site. The housing development is now starting and, as such, it is hoped that within the next year, the track will be fully accessible for those with limited mobility. Those who raised concern have been engaged with and this limitation has been advertised on the website so that people are aware.

The project also intended to purchase two electric Trumper buggies to allow access for people with limited mobility. Further investigation during the project and wider conversations with organisations offering this facility on sites, however, raised a number of logistical concerns as to how this might work. These included:

- A booking system would need to be created, maintained, and monitored
- Siting accessible storage close enough to the footpath was not possible
- Infrastructure requirements of charging of buggies in an off-grid manner proved expensive and complex
- Concerns over logistics of ongoing maintenance for the buggies as well as cost and expertise in doing so.

It was therefore, decided to remove this element from the project, with the money saved being spent on a longer access track, surfacing within the picnic area, better interpretation on site and improving on-line resources including the website.

Location aware app



Part of creating the river trail was to have an accompanying, location aware, mobile phone app that would inform people about the site, the sculptures and heritage and allow people to submit records of their sightings, contributing towards the ongoing biological monitoring of the site. It would also be used as a tool for monitoring visitor numbers and feedback.

The initial budget for the app was too low to commission its professional development. However, a computing and technology university student agreed to develop the app for his required coursework. The app was developed to the specification, however, to make it more user friendly, the project team wanted to include pictures of species that could be recorded on site. This is still being undertaken by a volunteer but is a far larger task than originally anticipated. The app is available for download onto android devices via GooglePlay store, however, will not be advertised until this final stage is complete.

Monitoring access



The project team were going to install a battery-operated counter to log the number of visitors using the trail. However, concerns over security on an unmanned site and the requirement of constant maintenance, it was decided that the benefits did not outweigh the risks and costs of such a device. Instead, project staff and volunteers are, and will continue to, monitor the site to give an indication of use.

4.2.2 Developing a web resource and social platform

From the outset, the website and social media platforms were intended to promote the project, generate participation in the project activities, enable users to share experiences and sightings and, through this, provide the project team with data that can help them adapt to problems, monitor the site, and provide evidence of outcomes. These platforms also became a primary source of community engagement during the pandemic. Evaluation of this output has been assessed using data provided in a summary report of social media approaches provided by the project officer, interviews with project staff, participant feedback forms and website analytics. A summary showing the reach and participation on social platforms is shown below and an evaluation against targets and intentions is provided overleaf.



Project Website

The website for the EPIC project launched in December 2019 and, by the end of year one, had had twice as many views than the original target of 500 in the first year. Since then, the website has had over 2,500 entrances to the site and over 7,500 page views. Over half of the website views for 2021 have been since the site opened with the most popular pages being the home page and the EPIC interactive map. The average bounce rate across the EPIC pages (as of November 21) is 49% (49% of page views do not generate an interaction with the website) which is higher than target indicator of <35%, set out at the start of the project. Feedback from the project officer suggests that “this is likely a result of the website not being interactive enough, or because the content on pages is not grabbing attention to inspire a wider look around the site”. In terms of conversion rate of website traffic to site participant/visitors, data from the volunteer feedback form (N=422) shows that just 4% of respondents heard about an event through the website. Furthermore, analytic data provided by the project team shows that the highest % of website users are within the 25–34-year-old age bracket (Figure 13), yet this age group has been one of the harder to reach audiences for the project. There have, however, been over 350 views of the “Visit Us” page of the website (added when the River Trial opened in September 2021) and 1620-page visits of the trail map. This suggests that the website may be generating site visitors, however, the visitor feedback questionnaire (accessible by a QR code displayed on the welcome board to the trail) which aims to provide this data, had not been completed by any visitors at the time of writing of this report.

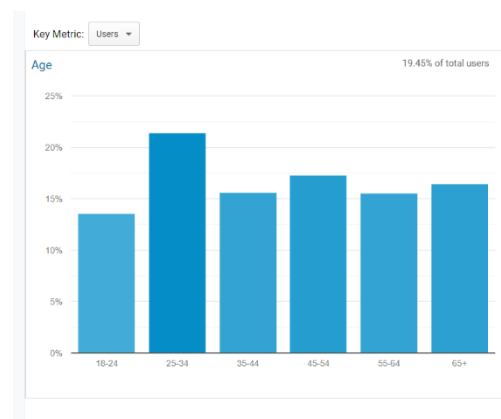


Figure 13: Website users by age

EPIC Facebook & Twitter

The EPIC Facebook and Twitter accounts have been the primary media platforms for the project and formed an integral part of the project campaigns, and engagement during the Covid pandemic. Both have approximately 800 followers and analytic data shows the EPIC twitter page has accumulated a total of 480,000 twitter impressions (the number of times a tweet is seen) and post reaches through Facebook have reached 87,000. Based on volunteer feedback forms (N=422) seven respondents heard about the event through Twitter, and 46 through Facebook which, together with the website, shows that 16% of respondents attended an event from advertising on media platforms.



The EPIC Facebook page has had an average of 1,300 post engagements per month, and a total of 35,000 post engagements over the life of the project. Video posts generated the highest reaction, but had a lower reach, whilst photographs had the highest reach (Table 4), suggesting both these mediums are valuable to engaging with a wider audience.

Table 4: showing average reach, post clicks and shares/reactions for type of media content posted by the team on the EPIC Facebook page.

Content	Average Reach	Average Post Clicks	Average Share/Reaction
Photographs	614	70 (11.4%)	58 (9.4%)
External Link	342	23 (6%)	50 (14.6%)
Video	211	47 (22%)	38 (18%)



The number of impressions per tweet has, on average, been over 14,000 and given twitter impressions equating to 20% of your audience (followers) is considered 'good', this shows that the project posts have engaged a far wider audience than might have been expected.

Community Facebook Group & YouTube

During the first Covid lockdown, the EPIC project went 'virtual', which meant creating new digital tools with a broader reach, increased accessibility, and increased ability to form two-way interactions with participants. The team set up a new YouTube channel and Community Facebook Page.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPKQd8V-4fRXUlu5wzEgKA/videos>)

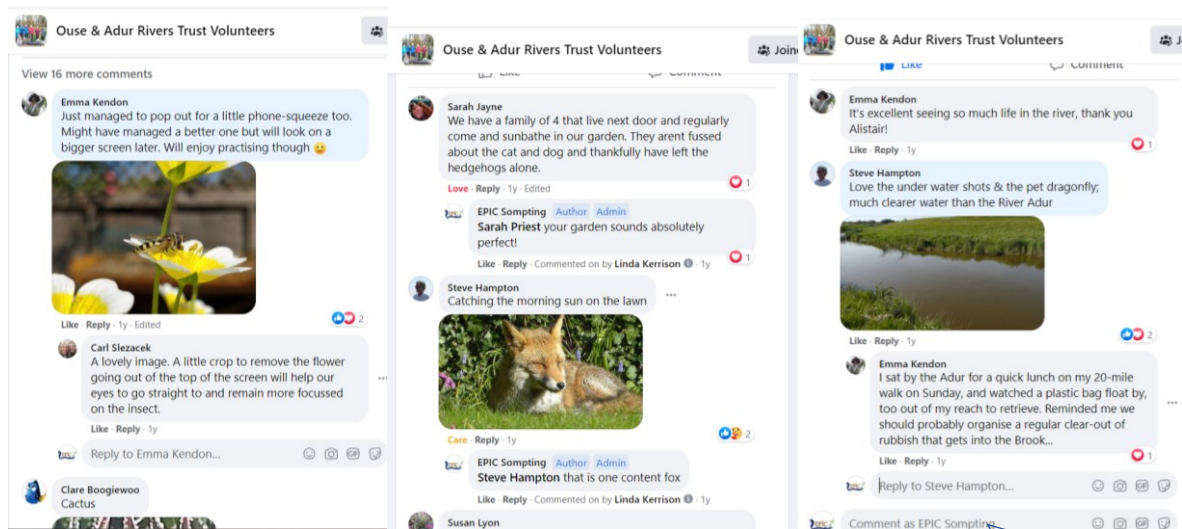


was set up as a host site for videos that were then shared via the project's other social media accounts. A total of 25 videos across the project's main themes (guided walks, archaeology, build a box and skills-based workshops) have been posted across both lockdowns and together these had over 8,500 views. The most popular videos were those themed around the Urban Wildlife "build a box" events indicating that people were most attracted to practical activities.

The Ouse & Adur Volunteer Facebook Group was set up in March 2020 in-order to provide existing and new audiences with a higher level of interaction between members. The main EPIC Facebook page does not allow interactions and posts by members, so this group was set up to share photos, start discussions and maintain relationships.



Initially, 66 individuals joined the group, and since then, **membership has grown to 248**. During lockdown, this page was used to engage and upskill people in ecological monitoring (bird ID course, fact sheets, weekly ID quizzes, survey technique videos), photography (online tutorials and live Q&A sessions with an instructor), promote the urban wildlife campaign (hedgehog sightings and build and box activities) and to just have fun and interact with other people. The activities posted by the project were seen by 2561 people (total combined, not individuals) and resulted in 63 additional species records, 13 new urban wildlife habitats being created, 46 new members and six organizations who had not previously engaged with the project. Some examples and quotes from posts are provided below and a full list of Lockdown activities shared across all social media platforms in provided in Appendix 3.



“A lockdown activity we enjoyed over the weekend” - 'How to make a bird box' Courtesy of @AlistairWhitby @OuseAdurRT @EPIC_Sompting – Ben Baruch (How to make a bird box)

“This challenge came at the same time that I picked my camera back up for the first time in a decade! It's been great motivation. I've collated my favourite weekend shots here: <https://inductible.myportfolio.com/lockdown-safari>” - Alan Owen (Introduction to Photography)

“Thanks for all the useful starter links and inspiration from you guys. I'm joining the BSBI (Botanical) and getting involved there-it's just what I needed.” – Trina Hunter (Bioblitz 1)

LESSONS LEARNT: Media platforms

The website and social media platforms have formed an integral part of the project, particularly during Covid lockdowns, and it is evident that they have been used effectively to promote the project and engage existing and new audiences. The on-line participation has also helped upskill people, create new urban wildlife habitats and has provided new records for wildlife (reviewed elsewhere in this report). Feedback from the project staff shows that there have been several lessons learnt regarding this element of the project.

Time & Resources

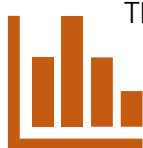


Producing videos and other social media content is a time-consuming process.

For example, a 5-minute video initially took between two and three hours to film and up to two days to edit. This was further limited by equipment, IT support and expertise in the field. Whilst the time spent on creating videos was halved as the team became more familiar with editing software, other projects would benefit from better sound recording equipment and software, particularly given the high level of engagement that videos can generate.

Managing the website and keeping it updated was also time-consuming and often overlooked in favour of other project activities which likely limited people's engagement across website pages. The project's website had a budget of £7,200 to develop and a further £50/month for maintaining, which restricted time spent on this resource.

Tools for generating and evaluating outputs



The project team set out to use different media platforms as a tool for generating participants and site visitors. Whilst this data can be obtained from feedback forms (site and volunteer), this only represents a small proportion of individuals and therefore understanding the usefulness of different medias in converting project engagement is limited. Furthermore, due to a limited budget, the website was not set up in a manner whereby automatic enrolment onto events or the projects mailing list could happen, meaning this source of evaluation data was not available.

The team also set out to use social media posts to help evaluate different project outcomes such as number of species recorded, urban wildlife improvements and people engaged/upskilled. This was particularly important when the project turned 'virtual' during lockdown. However, recording and monitoring this data is both time-consuming and ever-changing such that the number of people engaged, for example, can only ever be an estimate. During lockdown, the team encouraged people to post in response to their engagement with an

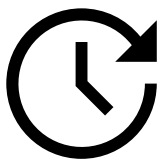
activity, however, this relies on people remembering and being inclined to do so (e.g. 3,916 people viewed 'how to make a bee hotel', but we do not know how many made a bee hotel). It has also been very difficult to evaluate this data against particular engagement targets such as geographic reach, target groups and how engaged people were with the content (did they learn, make, or change their behaviour). Future projects should look at how social media analytics could be better used to capture information required for evaluating online content.

Media platform content and structure



The project team has learnt that the type of content is important to increasing engagement. Based on the data collated by the project staff, photographs were a useful tool for increasing the projects reach and videos provided the highest level of interaction. The community Facebook page also generated a far greater interaction between people involved in the project (and wider OART activities) and built, and continues to provide, a hub for discussion and those seeking advice. Future projects should utilize this type of set-up over a closed page where posting is limited to administrators.

Legacy



The separation of the project (EPIC) and the organizational (OART) social media pages has created a situation whereby the project is not as connected to the organization as was hoped. There is still a sense that EPIC is an organization rather than a singular project being delivered by OART. Therefore, future projects should seek to maintain only the organizational pages and promote the project via these, rather than creating separate accounts. Improving the website so that it can be used to generate membership and engage participants directly, and so that it entices more people to look around the site will help both monitor and increase engagement in future projects and promote the work of the OART as a whole.

4.2.3 Volunteering and the River Rangers

The involvement of the community in creating, maintaining, and monitoring the natural and cultural heritage of the site was an important part of the project and expected to contribute towards the following outcomes:

- enjoyment and well-being for people
- a sense of ownership by the community
- habitat will be in better condition

The relationship between these outcomes based on the participation of the community is provided in Figure 14.



Figure 14: flow diagram showing the expected outcomes following people's participation in building access

To achieve these outcomes, the project initially aimed to deliver a regular programme of volunteer opportunities which would lead to the formation of the River Rangers task force. This group was founded at the time of the Mid-term Review when it was intended that they would continue the ongoing management and monitoring of the site. Since then, however, volunteering outside of this group has continued to meet a high demand and interest in the site. As such, this section begins by reviewing achievements against volunteer targets and then goes on to evaluate general volunteering (excluding the River Rangers) followed by a review of the River Rangers volunteer group.



Volunteering targets

The original activity plan for the project set out to provide volunteer opportunities for 150 people which included 680 participant opportunities for involvement in practical conservation activities and archaeology, as well as citizen science projects and work placements. As both citizen science and individual work placements contribute to Aim 3 of the project, they are not considered in this section and the overall contribution of volunteers is presented in Section 6.1.1. Additional volunteering opportunities that include the contributions of local recording groups/individuals that were not considered in the original plan, are included.

Data from Event Tracking Forms and attendance sheets show that a total of **166 individuals have volunteered on the project**. This includes people attending practical conservation task days, River Rangers, members of the Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS) who have undertaken site investigations, and recorders/recording groups that have undertaken voluntary species surveys on the site. This shows that the project has exceeded its target to provide volunteer opportunities for 150 people, even before considering the contribution of volunteers on placements or undertaking citizen science projects.

Across these same events, the project has provided 585 volunteer participant opportunities across 136 events. A summary of the number of events and participant opportunities by activity type and achievements against original targets are shown in Table 5. This shows that the project has achieved or surpassed its targeted activities, other than opportunities at tree planting events, which is due to the number of trees being reduced as the project progressed.

Table 5: showing volunteering achievements against targets for number of events and participant opportunities.

Activity	Number of events		Volunteer participant opportunities	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
Tree planting	5	7	50	40
Hedge planting	8	17	80	140
River Feature creation	3	3	24	27
Plug planting	none	12	none	60
Wildlife refugia	none	4	none	19
Litter picks	none	5	none	38
General habitat and site maintenance	none	25	none	158
WAS site investigations	3	4	36	39
Local Recording group/individual surveys	none	63	none	79
TOTAL	19	136	190	585

General volunteering

Practical Conservation

Over the life of the project, **331 participants**, comprising **141 individuals** have volunteered time across 50 events to create and manage habitats across the site. Together, these volunteers have contributed over 1,231 hours (175 volunteer days) to the project. These events have attracted an average of 7 volunteers (range: 2 – 18) which is lower than the projects target of 10. This is partly due to the Covid Rule of Six restrictions that impacted over half of events (n = 26). A total of 44 people volunteered more than once, with 10 attending more than 5 events.



Data obtained from the event tracking forms show that volunteers included families (16 events), people accessing support services (16 events), <25-year-old independents (5 events) and the over 60's (40 events) showing these events provided opportunities for all target groups. Two events were organized for the Prince's Trust that help young people facing adversity gain experience to build confidence and pathways to employment.



Local Biological Recording Groups/Individuals



The colonization of species along the new river channel and habitats across the site has attracted interest from several biological recorders including the Wild Thymes volunteer group and local dragonfly expert Dave Sadler. These recorders have provided **310 volunteer hours (44 volunteer days)** to the project generating valuable data and contributions to the management plan for the site.

"Every trip is so different due to the changing nature, in both senses, of the area. You must feel a great deal of satisfaction in how the wildlife has found a new home." *John Hall, Wild Thymes Group*

Worthing Archaeological Society (WAS)

At the start of the project, the archaeological investigations were intended to be community engagement events where people could join professional site digs. However, land contamination resulted in the investigations being undertaken at a smaller scale by volunteers from the Worthing



Archaeological Society. The group undertook four digs of the site and have provided illustrations and content for three interpretation boards as well as detailed reports on their findings. They have also delivered talks and flint tool making workshops to the general public. In total this work has contributed **1886 volunteer hours (225 volunteer days)** to the project.

General volunteering outcomes

Data from 111 feedback forms completed by volunteers across these activities show that 91 (82%) wanted to do something for their community and of these, 95% stated that their expectations had been met. The feedback forms also showed that people enjoyed volunteering, with the average enjoyment level (scaled from 1 low to 10 high) being 9.2 (range: 7 – 10).



"It was brilliant being back on site with you all again. As you say it is incredibly satisfying to pick up the rubbish left in the environment, plus it is incredibly addictive as well. When I am out walking with my dog in the mornings I pick up rubbish every day"



Hi Linda

Thank you again for today it was fantastic to see the hedgerow grow. Thank you for the opportunity to help and be a part of what is going to be an amazing space. Please let me know when I can come along to help in the future.
Thanks Jackie

EPIC Sompting shared a post. Admin · Nov 16 · 📷

Absolutely amazing to get the very last of the hedge planting at the EPIC site finished today! 🥰🌳🌳🌳

120 more trees now filling the gaps in this wonderful wildlife habitat.

Many thanks to our brilliant volunteers! 🙌



All comments ▾

Kevin and Rae Photography Professional Services
Follow
that's quite a number great work

2w Like Reply 1 🗨️

Trina Hunter
Well done! Lovely weather for it too 😊

2w Like Reply 1 🗨️

Paul Robards
Its looking great there now. Thanks for all your hard work..

2w Like Reply

"Absolutely thrilling to be out finding flints again at EPIC. It's so therapeutic after so long cooped up indoors."

River Rangers

The “River Rangers” task force (originally called Sompting Environment Partnership) was



formerly launched in March 2020. Since then, the task force has grown from 20 to 42 people who meet once a month to undertake a range of practical conservation tasks including river management, scrub clearance, site maintenance and anything else that is needed. Excluding training, **19 practical conservation events** have been carried out over the past year, providing **136 participant opportunities**, and contributing **over 515 volunteer hours (73 days)** to the project.

From the outset it was intended that the River Rangers group would provide opportunities for a diverse range of people to get involved in practical conservation of the site, leading to enjoyment, development of skills and knowledge and an increase in well-being. This would then lead to the group being self-sustaining and adequately trained to continue maintaining the site beyond the life of the project. Achievements towards these outcomes are discussed below using data obtained from event tracking forms, volunteer feedback forms, volunteer registration forms, questionnaire responses from Rangers when they joined the group and 1-year on, and the River Rangers case study provided by project staff (Appendix 6).

Diversity of volunteers

The River Rangers group is well represented within the local community of Sompting, Lancing and East Worthing (over 75%) with 10 members living further afield such as Shoreham-by-Sea, Hove, and Goring by Sea. Of the 42 members 18 are men (43%) and 24 are woman (57%) and range from 33 to 74-yrs of age (Figure 15). The group also includes people in full and part-time employment, carers, stay at home parents and those that are retired (Figure 16).



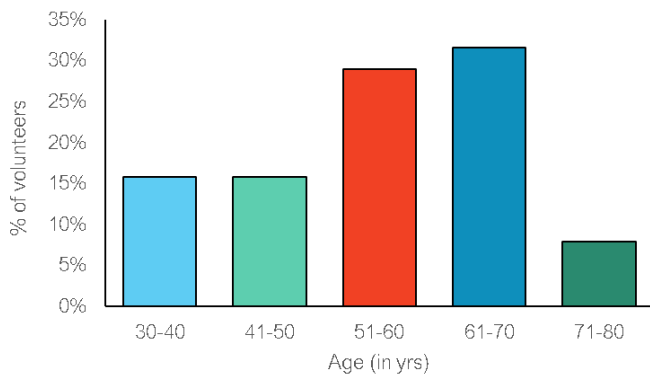


Figure 16: Chart showing the percentage of 38 Rangers (that have completed registration forms) that fall within different age groups (data from volunteer registration forms)

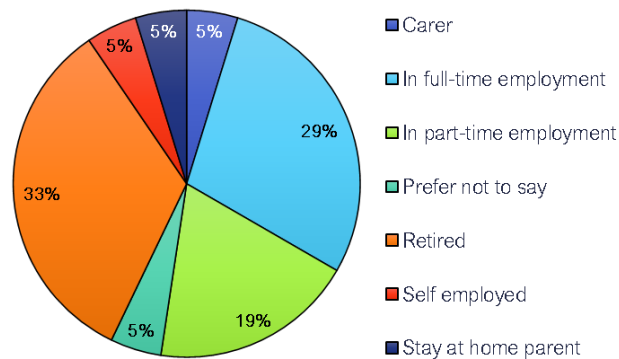


Figure 15 Chart showing work status (in percentage) of 21 Rangers submitting volunteer feedback forms

Enjoyment and increased well-being

“Having fun and enjoying themselves is a very important part of volunteering. It is immensely important that the team feel happy as well as engaged. As leader of the group, it is my job to ensure that they have fun. If they have fun, they will come back.”

Linda Kerrison, EPIC volunteer coordinator

People’s enjoyment has been a primary focus of the volunteer coordinator for the project and the feedback and comments submitted by Rangers suggests that this has been achieved. Data from 52 responses to the volunteer feedback form, show the average enjoyment scale across nine River Ranger activities was 9 out of 10, and all respondents suggested that they would recommend volunteering for EPIC. Of the 13 people that responded to the Rangers questionnaire, nine said an important part of the River Rangers was having fun. The enjoyment and well-being shared by the group is also articulated in people’s comments that have been shared with the project team...

“Being part of the River Rangers group...”has given me the opportunity to meet new people and have a sense of belonging to an important cause.”

Lee Manvell, Rangers Questionnaire

“Thank you so much for giving me this marvellous opportunity to help, support a worthy cause, and to grow in confidence around people.”

Jackie, River Ranger email

“You’ve done a tremendous job on the project and keeping us (the River Rangers), all engaged over an ever-changing and pesky year. Your positivity and friendship has also helped me a lot personally, and I thank you greatly for that – it has made a big difference.”

Anne, River Ranger email during Lockdown

Is there anything you would do to improve the event...

“I don’t think you could improve events for me because I think that they are perfect, especially today, it was fantastic, I was so happy that I couldn’t stop beaming.

Jackie Hands, River Rangers plug planting

“This project has been one of the best things I’ve done. I gain so much joy in coming and benefits my mental health as well as physical. It’s great to be doing something for my community in which my children will grow up in. Thank you”

Development of skills

When the River Rangers group was formed, 12 volunteers who submitted responses to the Ranger Questionnaire all wanted to gain skills in species identification and/or habitat management, suggesting learning was important to them. Data from event tracking forms and feedback from the volunteer engagement officer shows that the rangers have undertaken a range of activities that provide new skills including creating refugia for reptiles, invertebrates and amphibians, in-channel features, natural erosion control along the channel and controlling plants such as bramble and water speedwell to maintain diversity of terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The group has also had on-line training sessions during lockdown on topics chosen by them including hedgerows, freshwater invertebrates, and aquatic plants. Most recently, they have been trained on hedge laying which was led by one of the River Rangers.



When asked to rate their skills/knowledge when becoming a Ranger and one-year on, all seven of the original 12 volunteers that responded rated their knowledge in at least one topic as higher than when they started. Across all respondents the average knowledge scores in all topics has increased with aquatic habitat management showing the largest increase (Figure 17).

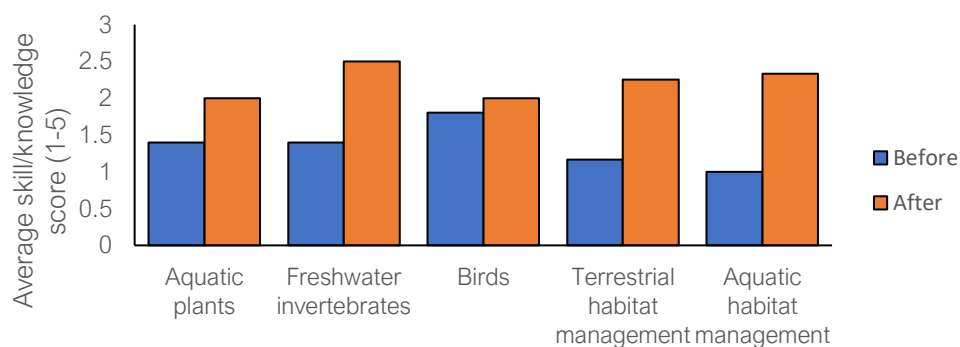


Figure 17: Chart showing average skill/knowledge (scaled 1=novice to 5 = expert) reported by 12 Rangers when joining the group and for one year after their involvement.

Data from the volunteer feedback forms also suggest that people have gained or improved knowledge. Of 52 responses by rangers at events, 43 attended the event to gain, or improve existing, skills/knowledge and of these, 41 (95%) stated that their expectations had been met.

"I am not sure to what extent my knowledge has increased but I know that experiences gained on the site have given me a greater understanding of how different actions impact on ecosystems and biodiversity."

Mark Hilton, Ranger Questionnaire

Self-sustaining and legacy

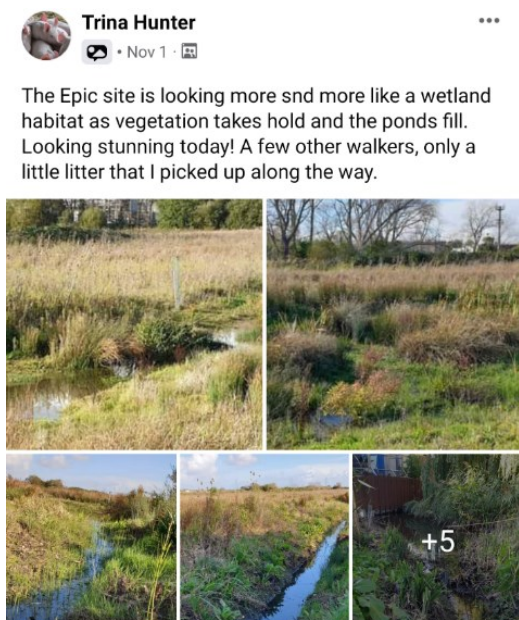
It is hoped that the benefits of having fun, increased well-being and skills and knowledge gained by the River Rangers over the past year has put them in good stead to continue volunteering on the EPIC site. The group has an average attendance of eight volunteers per session (range: 2 – 16) which includes those limited in number due to Coronavirus restrictions. Over half the volunteers have come to more than one session and, of the original members, the average number of sessions attended is 8 (range: 1 – 15). This suggests that there is a willingness within the group to regularly volunteer as a Ranger for EPIC.

Monthly tasks for the group, including maintaining the river trail, habitat management and monitoring, have been included in the 10-year management plan and feedback from the volunteer engagement officer suggests that the group are keen to continue their work on the site. The case study shows that several Rangers are already volunteering for the OART on other sites across the catchment and “since opening (the site) several team members have requested a list of activities they can carry out when on site at other times. So far two Rangers have carried out general maintenance on four occasions independent of the main River Rangers Group.”

Volunteering generates sense of ownership.

When I see litter here it's like it's been dumped in my own garden, I feel this is so much part of me"

Lee Manvell Email



Gayle Foggon

Planning on heading down this weekend for a stroll with our litter pickers 😊

8w Like Reply

1 ❤️



Ian White Author

Also the front gate post looked a bit damaged



8w Like Reply

1 😞



EPIC Sompting

Ian White Thanks for the info Ian.

4.2.4 Events promoting awareness and appreciation of natural and cultural heritage

The project has delivered a range of engagement events to promote the natural and cultural heritage of the site. Evaluation of this output has included events recorded under the following main themes:



- Community engagement (general)
- Talks (cultural and natural themed)
- Guided walks (cultural and natural themed)
- Biological recording (community only)
- Agecraft project
- Education

Over the life of the project, 149 events/activities have been delivered by the EPIC team and local partners/experts, providing opportunities for 3,311 participants to engage and learn about the areas natural and cultural heritage. These figures include 10 on-line Zoom events, and eight school lesson boxes that engaged participants/classes remotely during lockdown. They do not include other engagement resources produced by the team during lockdown which are evaluated separately in Chapter 2 and summarized against this objective in Plate 2.

A graph showing the number of events and participants by theme is provided in Figure 18.

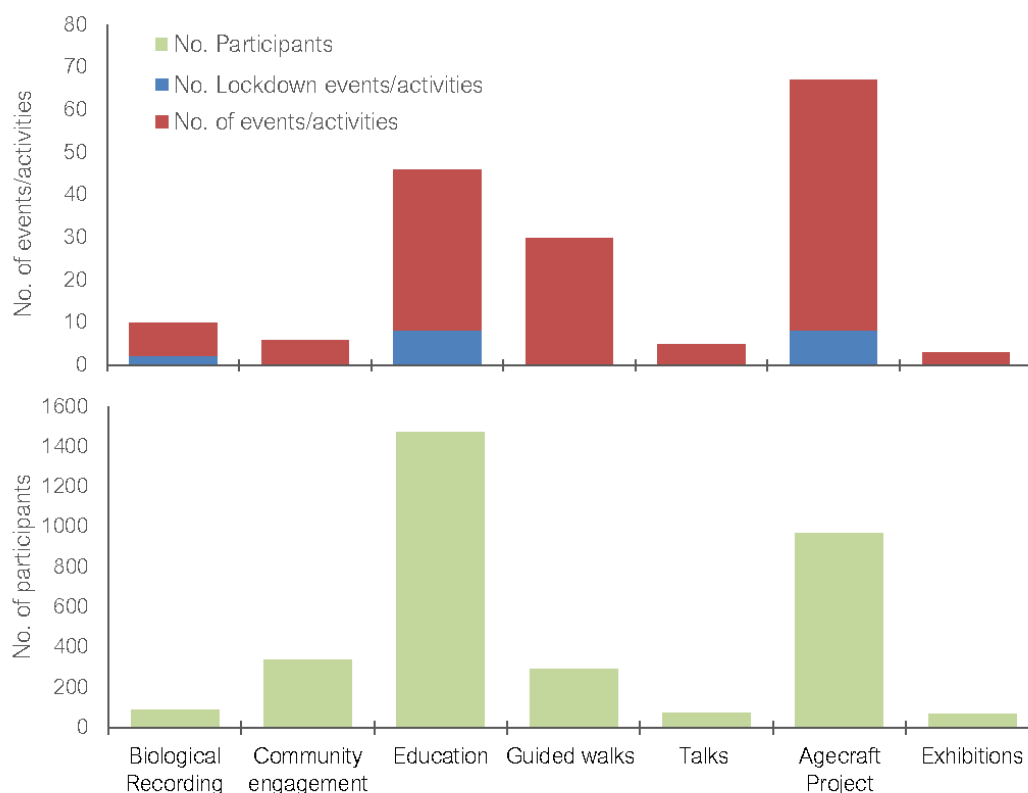


Figure 18: number of events (top) and participants (bottom) of themed activities contributing towards Aim 2.4

Promoting awareness and appreciation of natural and cultural heritage during Lockdown

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the project produced a range of online materials, of which 38 aimed to engage people with natural and cultural heritage of the site and in general. Based on data presented in the Lockdown Activity Tables (Appendix 3), this included 17 videos comprising virtual guided walks, archaeology finds documentary, footage of the water dragon building, community themed biological recording events and other just for fun activities. The videos along with 21 other resources including quizzes and fact sheets, were shared across YouTube & the OART volunteer face book page, generating over 4,500 views

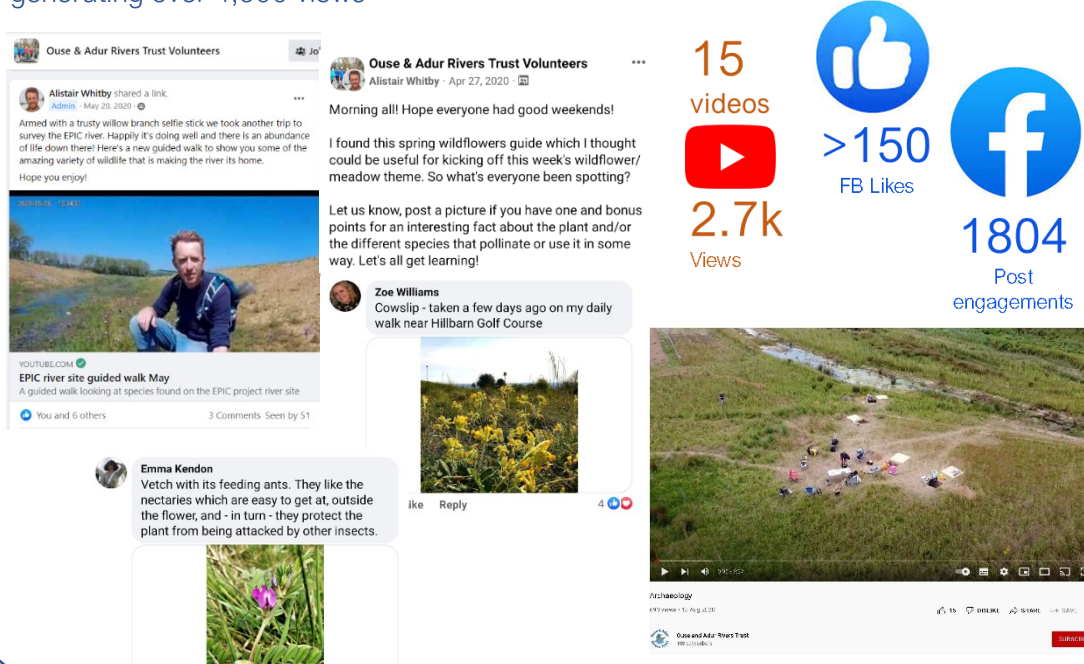


Plate 2: Summary of on-line activities delivered by the team during Covid-19 lockdowns and their level of engagement

Based on the projects self-reporting (event tracking forms & case studies) and attendance sheets, a total of 1580 individuals have participated across these events. In addition, the project staff have exhibited at 11 community events allowing them to engage with an estimated 2850 people. These figures are taken from the estimated number of people visiting exhibits at outreach events (event tracking forms). As some people are likely to attend and visit the exhibits at more than one event and may already be participating in engagement activities, these numbers represent a best-estimate and have not been included in the overall participation figures provided in Section 4.1.

As the type and range of events have altered and expanded since the development of the project's activity plan, there is not an *overall* engagement target against this objective. However, targets were assigned to six types of engagement activities from the outset and achievements against each is provided in Table 6.

Table 6: Achievements for engagement targets for Aim 2.4 based on event tracking form data.

Engagement type	Target	Achieved
Guided walks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. held Participant opportunities 	15 180	30 (200%) 294 (163%)
Archaeology community events¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community events Participant opportunities 	1 30	1 (100%) 20 (67%)
Agecraft project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. events Participant opportunities 	30 300	59 (197%) 968 (323%)
EPIC School programmes² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. schools No. events No. Pupils engaged School participant opportunities 	3 54 500 1710	9 (300%) 38 (70%) 1159 (232%) 1475 (86%)
Exhibitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agecraft heritage Archaeological Photography 	1 1 1	2 (200%) 0 (0%) 1 (100%)

¹ This target includes an archaeology event intended for community and not the archaeological investigations which were closed to the public due to land contamination and subsequently contributed towards volunteering (Aim 2.3).

² The schools programme initially intended to engage local schools, but as the project evolved, two Universities got involved with the project, and these activities and participants are included in the figures.

This shows that the project surpassed its target for guided walks and the Agecraft project and also trebled the intended number of schools and pupils engaged in the project. Exhibitions for Agecraft and the photography course (detailed fully on pages 67 and 78 of this report) were also delivered as intended. Targets for the archaeology participation and exhibition and number of school events and participant opportunities were not reached, and these are discussed under the relevant sections below.

Archaeology

The participation target for archaeology was not reached as field investigations involving the public had to be cancelled due to land contamination.



Instead, the Worthing Archaeology Society held a talk about their finds along with two flint tool making workshops of which the latter contribute towards Aim 3 and are not considered further here. It was also intended that the exhibits would be displayed at Worthing Museum as part of their restructuring of displays. However,

feedback from the Project Manager states that the “lack of funding and the closure of the museum during Covid restrictions resulted in the Museum overhaul being cancelled”. As the finds were not as deep as initially intended due to soil contamination, many of the exhibits found were akin to those already displayed and the museum quoted that they had “limited interest in taking more of what they already have in house”.

Regardless of the limitations, the archaeological study has uncovered elements of unknown history from the area along with a number of rare/unusual finds. This has enabled two artworks depicting the landscape of the site in the Neolithic and Mesolithic periods to be created and displayed on interpretation boards along the sites River Trail. Two reports have also been produced which will be disseminated to a wider audience by EPIC, WAS and the Sompting Estate Trust (SET) (Appendix 7). The SET and WAS have indicated to the Project Manager that they plan to collaborate to display, and store, finds within the Estates facilities so that they may be accessible, alongside the other cultural heritage materials owned by SET, for use in future research and education. As such, the engagement in the site’s cultural history through interpretation, displays and education will continue beyond the scope of this report. Full details of the Archaeology project is provided Appendix 6 & 7.



Agecraft – reconnecting generations through heritage project

Agecraft Sussex have worked with the EPIC project from the start. The initial scope of Agecraft included connecting local schools, families, and residential care homes by collating stories and running creative workshops that celebrate and recognize the cultural heritage of the Sompting area. The events included reminiscence sessions at Rectory House care home, site visits with two local primary schools, sharing experiences with schools and care home residents, history days at the local Harriet Johnson Centre and creative



workshops where participants constructed 3D models of features (cultural and natural) in and around the Sompting site. From March 2020, Agecraft adapted its plan to include online zoom sessions between families and elderly volunteers. Mini museums and photos that depicted life in lockdown were made and shared between generations.

This developed into an idea of creating materials that could be buried in a time capsule. Once restrictions were eased, the project continued to work with schools and undertake workshops focused on creating artwork and maps of life now. This work, along with artwork, stories and the 3D model of the area created pre-pandemic, was displayed at 2 pop-up exhibitions. In November 2021, all the messages, photos and creations were buried in a time capsule on the EPIC site to mark the end of the Agecraft and EPIC projects. A full description of the Agecraft project is provided in Appendix 8.



EPIC Schools Programme

At the time of the Mid-term Review, the schools programme had achieved less than 20% of its target for school activities and pupils engaged, and data evidencing engagement and learning was limited. Since then, the project has prioritized their programme of activities and by December 2021 had connected with seven schools and two universities (300% of target) and engaged a total of 1159 pupils (232% of target) including undergraduate and master's students and pupils from higher, secondary, primary, and special needs schools. The target for number of activities and participant opportunities were not met and feedback from the engagement officer suggests this was due to school closures and limitations on site visits due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Across the seven schools, 35 events/activities were delivered, engaging 1,111 pupils in environmental topics including pollution, climate, habitats, and species and have included two interactive school assemblies, 22 site visits to see progress at the site and 11 classroom-based



activities. The site visits undertaken by a total of 338 pupils from one school were used as part of their John Muir Discovery Award. Nine of the 12 classroom-based activities were delivered remotely due to Covid restrictions and included one zoom lesson to 122 year-11 students and two lessons in a box which were distributed across eight classes

from four different schools. The first box "A year in the life of Broadwater Brook" encouraged children to look at changes and monitoring over time and included all the equipment needed to produce a poster depicting the timeline of the river. The

second box "Puzzled about Rivers" included different features of the River Adur, and, in teams, the pupils had to learn about their puzzle piece and present it to the class by attaching their piece to the main puzzle. The boxes were a great success



with some teachers commenting that the class continued to use the boxes over multiple lessons, and some were shared with pupils who were having to self-isolate at home. This additional participation was not measured and is, therefore, not reflected in the overall figures for school engagement.

The project also delivered three field course days on the EPIC site for six master's students from the University of Brighton and 42 undergraduate students from Sussex University. The Brighton

students undertook freshwater invertebrate sampling and water testing of the silt traps providing valuable data for assessing their effectiveness at trapping pollutants. The Sussex University students undertook various ecological monitoring activities to gain practical experience.

The OART aim to continue their work with the schools and Universities both on and off the EPIC site and whilst the number of events did not meet the intended target, this legacy provides opportunities for future engagement events beyond the life of the project. A full description of the EPIC education programme is provided in the school's case study (Appendix 6).

Outcomes for engagement events

The engagement of people in heritage themed events is intended to promote enjoyment and to increase knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of heritage so that it is better conserved in the future. Evidence of each of these outcomes is detailed below.


Enjoyment of events

<p>Average enjoyment = 9.2</p>	<p>95% Events included repeat volunteers (46 events excl. schools, Agecraft & drop-ins)</p> <p>"Thanks so much for a great bat walk last night - we all learnt so much and really enjoyed it"</p>	
<p>"My son had a go at the project set by the EPIC team and really enjoyed surveying his garden and spending time through Lockdown thinking about nature, his younger siblings also got involved. We have a hedgehog house now which we use a camera on to capture the night's adventures." A Year 8 parent, school box</p>	<p>92% School children 100% Care home residents Rated their enjoyment of Agecraft Project</p> <p>3/3 Based on Experience forms from 2 events</p>	
	<p>All three schools responding to the questionnaire, stated they had enjoyed their involvement with the project</p>	<p>"I have enjoyed the camaraderie of the various activities I have participated in, the way people of all different ages and backgrounds come together with smiles on their faces no matter what time of day it is or how bad the weather is." (Respondent to Mid-term Review questionnaire)</p>
<p>"It's so peaceful sitting by the river painting. Theo mentioned how much he had enjoyed it". Diane Formoy, Get Creative event</p>	<p>"I enjoyed the tour very much and learned so much...The event helped me feel connected to this area of the local landscape and I definitely feel more empowered to visit again in the future and perhaps get involved by volunteering." EcoHouses Site Tour participant.</p>	<p>Great to have a tour around the EPIC site this morning, so much has changed. Can't wait to get back to some doing 😊</p>

Learning from events

100%


of respondents wanting to learn said their expectations had been met
(based on 90 volunteer feedback forms)



SOMPTING- JOHN MUIR

Wildlife and connectivity at Sompting:

Wild life is slowly being restored at Sompting. Since the workers and volunteers have created a river that runs all the way through the land that they own, many animals and insects have taken a liking to the land there in Sompting. There have been spotted many dragonflies and little fish that have been thrown out of bird's mouths whilst flying.



Animal life and connectivity:

Planting many trees and plants at Sompting is very important for animal life. For example if a hedgehog was searching for food, out in an open space then it is very easy for a fox or a badger to come along and eat it. However if the plants and trees are connected then the hedgehogs can hunt for food close to the plants and feel safer than what they would out in the open (connectivity)

I had a fantastic time today; it was truly wonderful just how many species have found their way onto the Site...I think I definitely learned many interesting things.
Jackie. Amphibian guided walk

"Brilliant, I didn't know anything about harvest mice prior to this talk and it's amazing to hear they are here in Sompting." Participant, Harvest mouse Zoom talk

100%

of 11 respondents to the Mid-term questionnaire stated the project had **taught them new things about wildlife & given them new skills and knowledge**

We have had a great response for the project. I asked the children to make a poster about climate change and what we can do to help. Some of them even included ideas about the epic project.
Whytemead School, email

338

school pupils learning to achieve John Muir Discovery Award

"Thanks to all involved today. It was brilliant; saw loads and learnt even more!"
Lee Manvell, Community Bioblitz


88%

100%

School children Care home residents

Agreed that they had learnt lots about the new river and nature reserve. Agecraft Project
Based on Experience forms from 2 events

All three schools that responded to the school questionnaire, stated that the projects activities fitted within their curriculums learning objectives



Time	Practical skill level (1 low -5 experienced)
Before field course	2.4
After field course	4.1

"Many thanks Alistair – "it was a great event. I learned a lot and saw some lovely odonata. Dave was really knowledgeable, great at spotting odonata and at answering our many questions. Always a pleasure to spend time with someone who is so passionate and enthusiastic, as well as knowledgeable, about wildlife."

Anne Stirland, Dragonfly guided walk



Awareness and appreciation of heritage

"I was amazed at the number of species found, especially birds I didn't realise how many were around, considering that you often can only see them from a distance. When I was walking the dogs this morning, I heard a chiff-chaff, but I realised that I didn't know most of the bird calls. Can you recommend an app for me to use?"

Participant on the Bioblitz

An affinity with nature, reflection & connection with green spaces had been gained by pupils from 3 schools responding to questionnaire

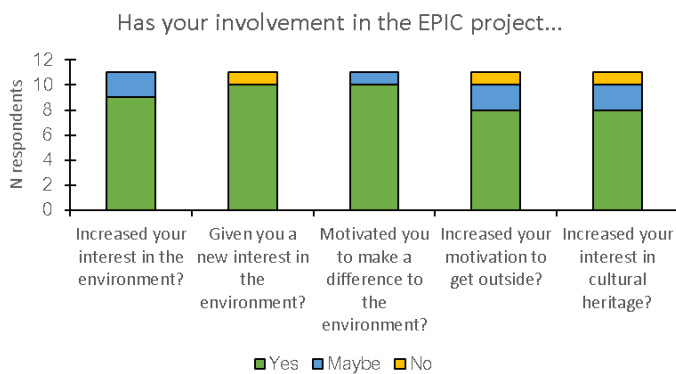
"Thanks for all the useful starter links and inspiration from you guys. I'm joining the BSBI (Botanical) and getting involved there-it's just what I needed."

Trina Hunter, participant & volunteer



"We are more aware of what we see and hear in our own environments away from the project."

The Foggon Family, Mid-term Review questionnaire



Based on 11 responses to the Mid-term Review questionnaire



"Thank you for organising the bat walk, which was just as enjoyable as the one in May. I'm definitely a convert to bats and see them in a new light after your walks."

Susan Stamp, email

"The children had a fantastic time and really engaged with the tour and activities. The children are already asking about dates for their next visit as they are keen to continue their involvement with the project."

Phil Boulding, teacher at Downsbrook Primary School

"I have been inspired by this project to write a book about my times, not to publish but for my grandkids so they can read about my life and my adventures"

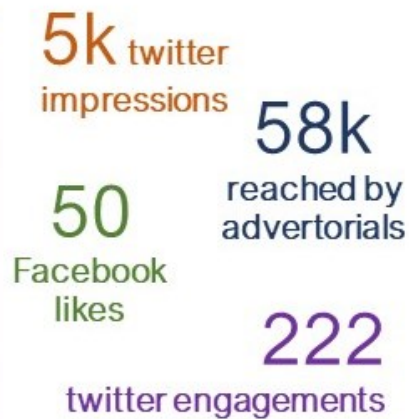
Barry Agecraft volunteer

4.2.5 Campaigns and initiatives

At the start, the project intended to run three campaigns to educate and engage the community with conserving water resources, improving water quality and an urban wildlife initiative to make the community more wildlife friendly. The campaigns had an initial target of reaching 10,000 people and result in behavioural changes benefitting water, wildlife, and people.

Plastics in rivers campaign

In November 2019, the EPIC project launched their first water campaign to educate communities on plastic pollution in rivers and the environment. The campaign messages were disseminated on the project’s website and social media accounts and were posted by the Worthing Herald local newspaper in the form of four advertorials and a video. Based on data provided by Worthing Herald and social media analytics, the campaign reached over 60,000 people which surpasses the projects engagement target of 10,000 people.



To try and measure the impact of the campaign, people were encouraged to share and like the social media posts and comment with ideas or tips for reducing plastic the campaign. This resulted in 50 Facebook likes, 41 shares and 2 comments. People were also asked to join in on the EPIC litter picks, however, none of the 20 people attending litter picks that responded to the feedback forms stated that they had heard about the event through the campaign. This shows that whilst the reach of the campaign surpassed the overall engagement target and likely educated readers, there is limited evidence to suggest behavioural changes occurred.

Misconnections and water saving campaigns

Two campaigns relating to misconnections and water saving were planned but not delivered. Feedback from the project officer suggests that both would have required a long-term approach to a multi-faceted campaign which would have required attendance at a number of local events, use of high impact messaging in town centers and local venues, giving talks and offering home visits.

- Southern Water whose support would have ensured a higher impact have only been functional in an operational basis since March 2020 and, therefore, have not been able to provide the support and data to ensure the campaigns were meaningful.
- the delivery of campaigns was impacted by Covid-19 and once restrictions were lifted enough to allow the campaigns to begin, we had to make decisions as to which bits of the project could and could not be delivered. It was agreed that the physical engagement with the community through hosting events and activities was of greater value to the project than the campaigns.

Urban wildlife initiative

In May 2019, the EPIC project began its urban wildlife initiative, comprising a series of hands-on workshops, talks and awareness raising activities to increase engagement, knowledge and understanding of urban wildlife. The initiative engaged with 202 households which is 4-times the initial target of 50 and delivered 8 physical events which surpasses the project target of 6. A summary of the initiative and evidence of outcomes is provided below, and full detail is provided in the Case Study provided in Appendix 6.



"It made me excited to come home every day to see what the camera had captured" Gary Shepherd, MyNatureWatch participant

31 people engaged in MyNatureWatch Camera (Loan) Scheme, a partnership project with the London's Royal College of Art, to provide opportunities for people to build and deploy camera traps in their own gardens

18 people attended a talk by urban wildlife expert Professor Dawn Scott, who provided insights into the species living within our communities





102 people submitted records of hedgehogs following a social media campaign

3.5k people reached by sharing hedgehog hotspot maps and related tips and making gardens hedgehog friendly

400 leaflets on hedgehog awareness distributed

1 local council have adopted hedgehog friendly approach in maintaining urban greenspace

Helping Hands for hedgehogs

172 participants made houses for bee's, birds, and hedgehogs across 5 events

4.8k views of three lockdown tutorials on how to build a hedgehog monitoring tunnel, bird box and solitary bee hotel

182 wildlife homes created from physical and online build a box events.



"Great time this afternoon with our children undertaking the bird house making workshop. A wonderful time, very informative about wildlife and excellently run!" **Charlotte Doddington, 26.01.2020**

Jill Cox
Jul 30, 2020 · 🌐

I was advised to join your group, and report that I have been fortunate enough this year, to be feeding a hedgehog in the garden. He, she, has been enjoying the dog/ cat food I have been feeding, and has certainly been growing! Have also seen, and heard, mating and fighting! Live next to busy high street, so amazing to see such activity!

3 Comments · Seen by 81



EPIC Sompting
Aug 31 · 🌐

So lovely to see some of our community made #hedgehog boxes getting ready for new occupants and placed in gardens!... See More

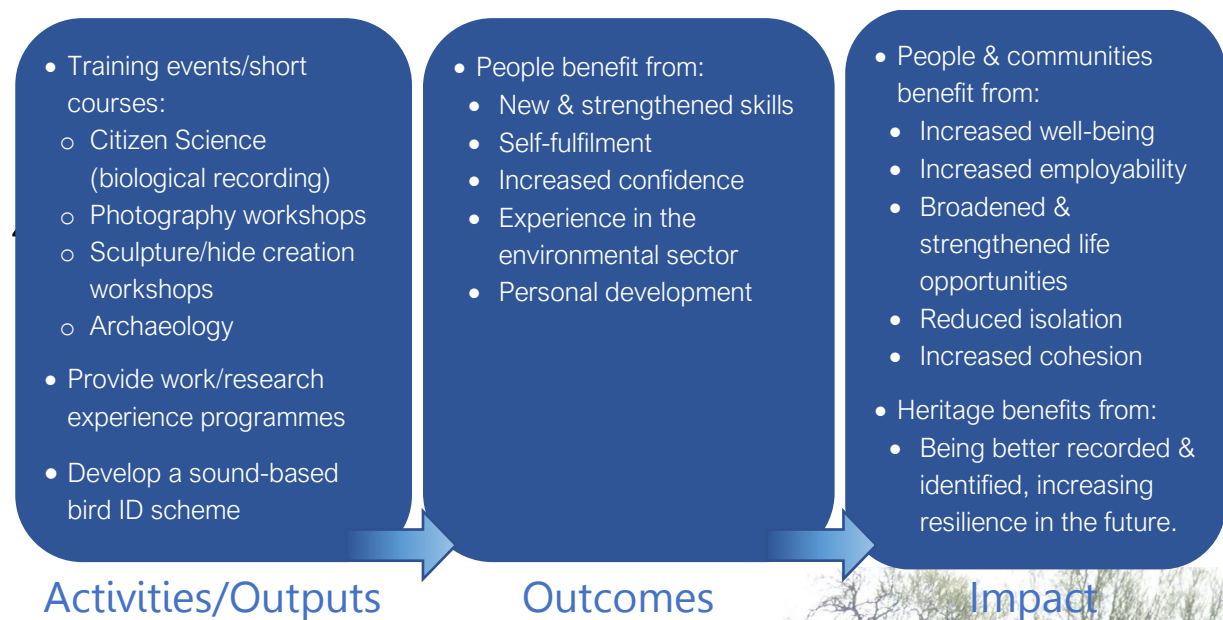
4.3. Aim 3: Skills, learning & enhancing life opportunities

Aim 3

“To provide opportunities for local people to develop new skills and knowledge across a range of heritage and conservation topics to enhance life opportunities, confidence, wellbeing and cohesion amongst the community and provide a lasting legacy for the project.”

This section reviews the outputs and outcomes relating to Aim 3 of the project detailed above. This aim includes three objectives that broadly align with the main activities and outputs detailed in the Logic Model provided in Figure 19. A description of each of the main activities is provided followed by an assessment of achievements towards intended targets and outcomes for each objective.

Figure 19: Logic model for Aim 3



4.3.1 Training events/short courses

The EPIC project aimed to deliver at least 40 training events/short courses to provide opportunities for at least 120 people to gain new skills and knowledge across a range of heritage topics including photography, craft skills, biological monitoring, and conservation. The training courses were intended to upskill new audiences, disadvantaged groups, and families, to increase confidence, self-fulfillment and broaden future opportunities. Evaluation of this output has included physical and on-line zoom events recorded under the following main themes:

- Citizen Science
- Skills-based workshops
- Biological Recording Workshops & Training

Training-based resources that were produced and shared on social media platforms during Lockdown have not been included in the evaluation target figures but are discussed under the relevant theme/workshop and are summarised in Plate 3.

Upskilling the community during Lockdown

During the coronavirus pandemic, the project continued with their ambition to upskill audiences by producing online tutorials. Based on data provided in the Lockdown activity tables (Appendix 3) and the bird and photography case studies (Appendix 6) this included 7 videos comprising four bird identification tutorials, two photography tutorials and one workshop on the importance of and how to survey hedgerows. These will be available to upskill a wider audience into the future. The videos along with challenges were shared across YouTube, Facebook and Twitter generating 1,500 views.

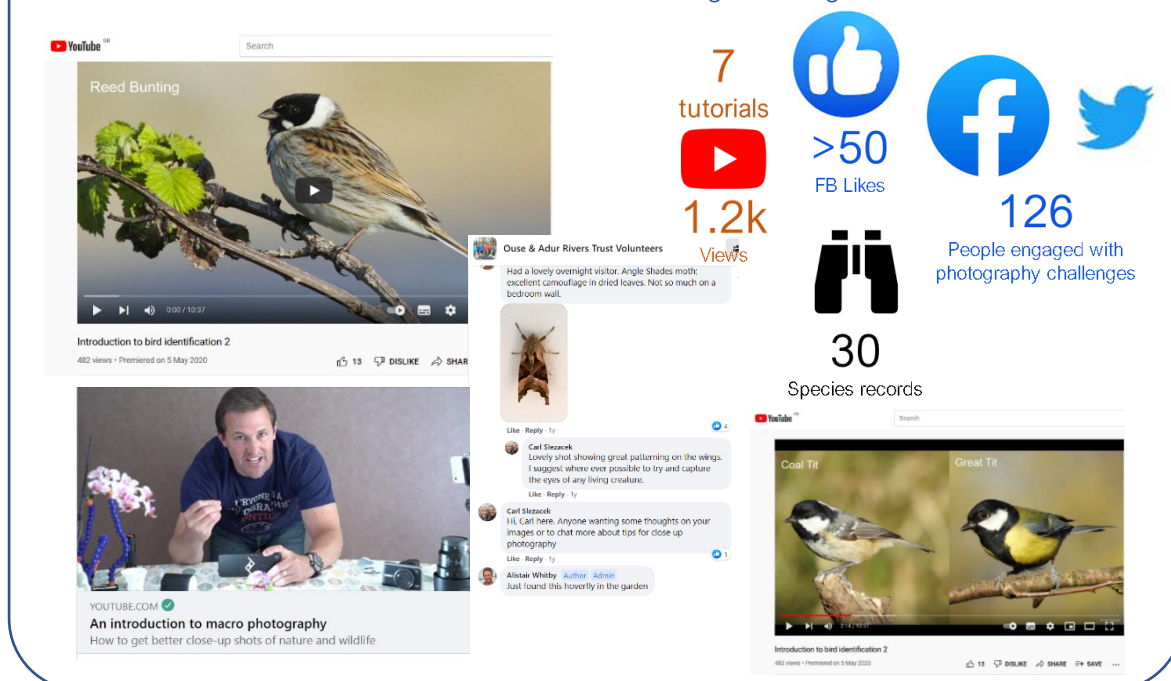


Plate 3: Summary of on-line courses delivered by the team during the Covid-19 Lockdowns and the overall level of engagement

Citizen Science

Helping Hands for Harvest Mice and Bug Club are two citizen science projects that have been delivered by the project team, and local experts, to train and engage people in ongoing biological research. Over the life of the project, 24 citizen science events have been undertaken and have provided a total of 264 participant opportunities.

The Helping Hands for Harvest Mouse project has monitored harvest mice on the site following their discovery on a mammal surveying weekend during the development phase of the project. The project has undertaken 12 training events for 117 individuals. This includes six nest searches to look at distribution over time and three live trapping studies (over multiple days) to investigate their response to habitat clearance (undertaken in preparation for the new river channel), and to take hair samples for genetic analysis to infer population connectivity. The live trapping study is currently being written up into a scientific publication. The project has also engaged with volunteers from Sustainable Sussex, a local charity working with people who find access to the workplace difficult. The volunteers built stakes to trap harvest mice in the stalk zone and were involved in a small mammal trapping study on their site.



Bug club undertake quarterly biological water quality monitoring of the Broadwater Brook.



I am finally remembering the names of these fella's, not sure I'll ever remember the latin!

Since it began at the start of the project, the group has grown from 3 to 11 individuals who are being trained by the volunteer & engagement officer, who is experienced in freshwater invertebrate sampling. Over the life of the project, bug club has provided valuable data that has contributed towards

understanding the impact of the scheme on water quality and has created 56 participant opportunities across 12 training events. The group will continue to monitor the site and are now undertaking monitoring of rivers across the Ouse & Adur catchment.



Skills based workshops

The EPIC team have partnered with local experts to deliver a total of 34 workshops covering six different skills. Based on data from event tracking forms, this has provided opportunities for 324 participants comprising 133 individuals to gain new skills and knowledge. A summary of each of the six workshop themes is provided below.

Hedge laying

A four-day workshop on hedge laying, comprising of seven sessions, was delivered in November 2021 by an EPIC volunteer who is also an experienced hedge layer, having undertaken this work across the South Downs National Park. A total of 19 individuals attended including five young adults, a target group that was invited to participate to gain skills and experience. Two sessions were also run for the River Rangers who will be laying the new hedgerow on the EPIC site once it has established.

"It's quite an artform! Really enjoyed learning this new skill. Looking forward to doing the EPIC hedges in a few years' time."

Chris Weller, River Ranger



Flint knapping

Archaeological investigations on the site revealed a large number of flint cutting tools that suggested the site was used for foraging, fishing, and hunting activities. To engage people in this rich history, the WAS ran two workshops on the ancient art of flint knapping, providing 11 individuals with a greater understanding of the features and characteristics of stone implements.



"I've been wanting to learn how to flint-knap for such a long time. That was absolutely brilliant!"

Isaac Taylor: Flint Knapping 30.06.21

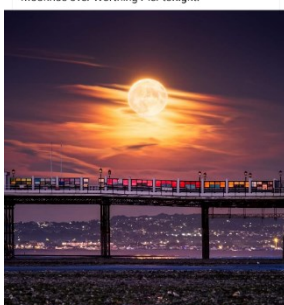


Big Draw

The Big Draw is a visual literacy charity dedicated to raising the profile of drawing as a tool for wellbeing, thought, creativity, social and cultural engagement. Each year they host a Big Draw festival encouraging organisations, and individuals across the world to engage in creative events, activities, and workshops. The theme in 2019 was In and Out of Water so the EPIC project teamed up with local artist and sculpture Janine Creaye to run three creative workshops focused on water and the cultural heritage of Sompting Brooks, the outputs of which would be used to inspire the sculpture and bench for the River Trail. In 2020, Janine ran a further three workshops focused on the water dragon. A total of 57 individuals participated across these events, gaining knowledge on the cultural heritage of the site and skills in sculpturing and drawing. More details on the Big Draw events are provided in Plate 1 (page 46) of this report.



Photography



Working with professional local photographer Carl Slezacek, the project held a series of 12 photography workshops aimed at adults (six sessions) and children/teens/families (six sessions). The courses provided opportunities for 109 participants, comprising 63 individuals (38 adults, 25 children/teens) to build skills, creativity and confidence as well as provide participants with the opportunity to document the changing habitats of the EPIC site. The course culminated in a photography competition and exhibition of photographs taken during the sessions that are displayed on Worthing Pier, which is visited by ~2-million visitors a



"Such a brilliant morning, the kids loved it and we all learned so much!" *Bev Reddin: Photography for Kids*

"Thank you so much for today, myself and the kids loved it. It was great to see them so engaged, especially my 6-year-old who has the attention span of a 6-year-old." *Leigh Garner: Photography for Kids*

Two on-line tutorials were also produced by Carl. These were intended to introduce viewers to photographic techniques and macro-photography and were shared on YouTube, Twitter and the OART community Facebook page along with challenges people could do in their own gardens or local greenspace. Following these, Carl was then on-line for 2 hours to answer questions and view people pictures to give advice on improving the quality of shots. A total of 28 people took part in the online tutoring, posting photographs and receiving feedback.

At the time of writing, the tutorials had been viewed 164 times on YouTube and 126 people engaged with the challenges on Twitter and Facebook with people posting shots of garden wildlife. A full description of the photography course is provided in Appendix 6.

Bird ID Course

The EPIC project's bird ID course was designed to upskill participants who were starting at a relatively low level of bird knowledge and give them the training and support necessary to be able to identify or even monitor wild birds, at home or at the EPIC project site. Working with local ecologist and bird expert, Laurie Jackson, the course comprised of five workshops (delivered over seven sessions) that progressed from learning birds visually and from song, to teaching participants how to undertake different bird surveys, including species lists, point counts and breeding bird surveys. In total, the course provided opportunities for 58 participants, comprising 27 individuals to learn bird identification and monitoring skills as well as details about bird ecology.



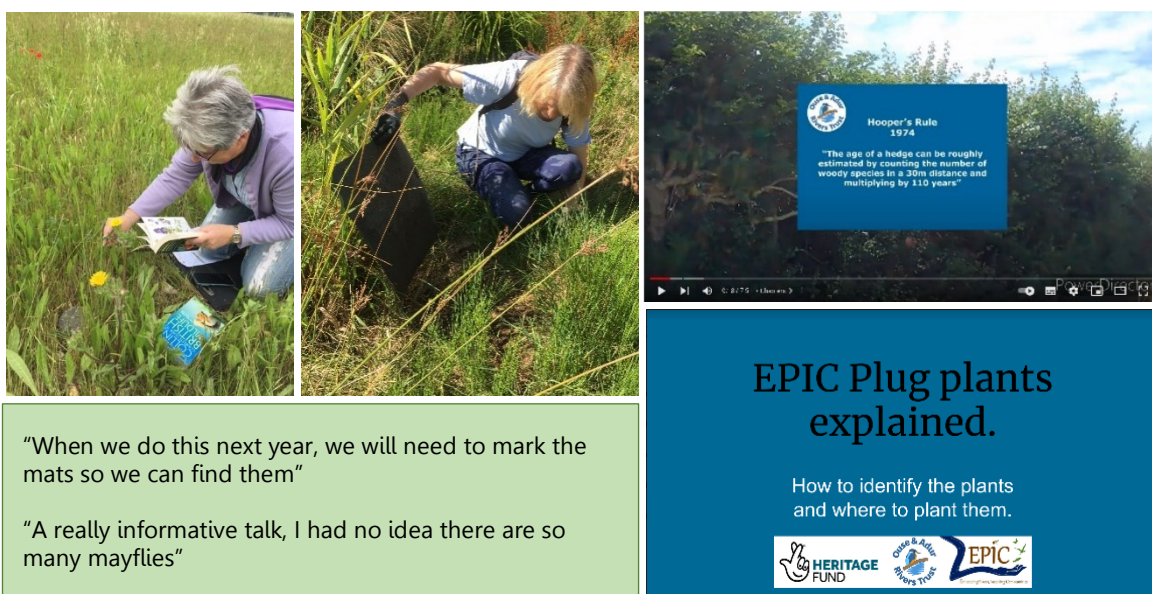
During lockdown, Laurie also produced four bird ID tutorials for the project. These covered a wealth of information on bird ecology and how to identify birds from sight and sound. These videos were posted on YouTube and shared on the OART community Facebook page and at the time of writing, had over 1000 views.

Full details of the Bird ID Course is provided in Appendix 6.

"That was really informative thank you. We have really enjoyed sitting in our garden in Sompting these last few weeks trying to identify the birds. We have a very beautiful Wren in our plum tree" *Karin Vertue, Bird ID video 1*

Biological recording workshops and training

At the start of the project, it was intended that 78 opportunities would be provided for 20 people to undertake training in ecological monitoring, so that they would be upskilled and able to continue monitoring the site beyond the life of the project. This figure contributes towards the overall target of 120 people having gained new skills and knowledge on short courses/workshops. Due to lockdown, the project lost an entire season of ecological surveying that was intended to be used as training, however, through on-line learning (and on-site training outside of restrictions), the project has delivered a total of 21 events, providing 46 individuals skills enabling them to undertake reptile, bat, and wildflower surveys, eDNA and freshwater invertebrate sampling, and hedgerow monitoring.



Achievements towards targets and intended outcomes

Data from the attendance sheets show that a total of 216 individuals have been involved across the two citizen science projects and 51 workshops/courses, which together include 82 events/sessions. This surpasses the initial targets to provide at least 40 training events/short courses for 120 people, despite restrictions in training events during the pandemic. The intention of these events was to upskill new audiences, disadvantaged groups, and families, to increase confidence, self-fulfillment & broaden future opportunities. It was intended that heritage would be better recorded & identified so that resilience is improved for the future. Evidence of these outcomes is provided overleaf and is based on data from the Volunteer Feedback and Photography Questionnaires, Event tracking forms, interviews with the project staff, emails, comments collated by the project team and social media posts collated by the evaluator.

94%
of respondents wanting to gain or develop skills/knowledge said their expectations had been met.
6% stated "maybe"
(based on 160 volunteer feedback forms)

3
people upskilled and doing the bat transects together



"A number of people who had been trapping before were observed showing others how to release mammals from the traps and how to set the traps, which is remarkably hard!"
Lucy Grove, harvest mouse trainer

9.4/10
Average rating for level of training
(based on 184 volunteer feedback forms)

Emma Kendon
Just managed to pop out for a little phone-squeeze too. Might have managed a better one but will look on a bigger screen later. Will enjoy practising though 📸

1y Like Reply 2

Carl Slezacek
A lovely image. A little crop to remove the flower going out of the top of the screen will help our eyes to go straight to and remain more focussed on the insect.



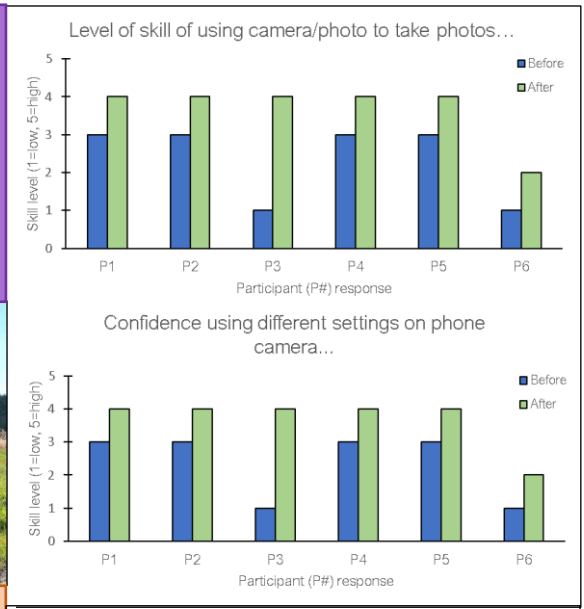
Martyn Cooke
Very luckily I found the first nest today after about 1 min searching. A... See More

"Such a brilliant morning. I'm finally getting to grips with my camera and taking images I'm happy with!"
Georgina Weller, photography course

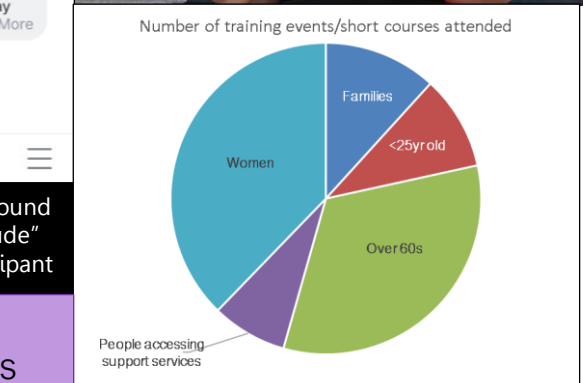
"Still a few bats about but less than before, I'm going to buy a detector over winter"
Bat survey trainee

"Can I have a list of the bugs found so I can move on from Hog dude"
Bug Club participant

159 individuals
trained in species ID incl. birds, small mammals, freshwater invertebrates, bats, and reptiles



"Carl passed on some great tips on using the light to change the effect of a photo. He also gave me some ideas on practice techniques which I have had a go at. There has been an improvement in the composition of my pictures, also my confidence and understanding of using manual mode has improved so much."
Lee Manvell, Photography course participant



"I'm totally amazed by Laurie's ear for birdsong. For the first time ever I'm starting to pick out different bird calls."
Nadia Chalk, bird ID course participant

4.3.2 Programmes to strengthen skills, confidence, knowledge, and employability

From the outset the project team recognized that the river restoration scheme provided a rare opportunity for individuals to gain sector-specific skills and practical experience that would have a positive impact on employability. The project aimed to recruit three individuals on work placements over the life of the project and to support two students per annum undertaking industry-relevant research. It was intended that these opportunities would improve people's skills, knowledge, and practical experience, enable students to achieve relevant qualifications and increase confidence and employability. It was intended that the placements would make a valued contribution to the project's delivery.

Over the life of the project, two students have been supported in undertaking research projects to form part of their experience and qualifications at university. One student has carried out water quality surveys which contributed towards her degree in Environmental Management with the University of Brighton. The other student developed the location aware app for the EPIC river trail which contributed towards his degree in Computing and Information Technology at Surrey University. Surveys were sent out to both students by the evaluator and one responded. The results of this survey show that the student gained confidence, communication skills and motivation to continue learning as a result of his involvement with the project. When asked what motivated him to volunteer/undertake research on the project, he responded "Being able to contribute to a good cause like the EPIC project, while gaining real work experience in developing applications kept me motivated."

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented any further students being able to undertake research on the project.

Three individuals have also been recruited on work-placements. The first, Kaz, was recruited relatively early on in the project and came through the Aldingbourne Trust who support people with learning disabilities and/or autism. Based on feedback from the project manager, her role has been varied and included practical conservation, fixed point photography, water quality testing, helping with small mammal trapping and clerical work. During the pandemic, Kaz's role continued remotely, and she has been in charge of keeping the species records up-to-date so that the team can monitor the number of new species colonizing the site. Over the life of the project, Kaz has contributed **131 hours (18 days)** to the project.

Based on data from the Mid-term Review questionnaire, Kaz, self-reported a growth in confidence, an improved motivation to achieve her ambitions and agreed that that project staff

had provided support to fulfil her own learning needs. In response to whether there were any particular skills and knowledge gained from her experience on the project so far, she responded

“I feel I have gained skills within various ecological studies, as well as a lot of hands-on volunteer work, taking part in harvest mouse trapping as well as water quality testing, scoring taxa, surveys and I have also learnt a lot within the admin side regarding wildlife and their Latin names.”



The second individual is David, who joined the project in May 2020 to gain industry relevant work experience for his master’s degree in Water and Environmental Management. David’s role initially involved monitoring the chemical water quality of Broadwater Brook, but since joining he has provided support in organizing and administering events and has also updated and assessed the water testing protocol for the whole organization. This has improved the ongoing monitoring carried out by the OART across their entire catchment, such that David was awarded the Tony Barnard Shield which is given to volunteers who have had the biggest impact on OART throughout the year. During his placement, David contributed **504 hours (72 days)** to the project and is continuing his work with the OART.

The final individual is John Hawkins, who is a long-standing volunteer on the project. John offered to take on the role of completing and maintaining the River Trail app that was initially developed by a research student for the project. As the app needed more information to make it ‘user friendly’ John has added a species list and photographs into the app and has written an instruction manual on the background programming. In total, John has contributed **286 hours (40 days)** to this element of the project and has recently offered to manage the system going forward.

4.3.3 Creating a BTO accredited bird song recognition scheme

This element of the project aimed to train people with limited vision and/or mobility in bird song identification in-order to facilitate their involvement in biological recording. It was intended that the scheme would help engage harder to reach people with the project and provide them with new opportunities to learn skills and help them connect with their community and local greenspace. At the time of the Mid-term Review, data obtained from project reports and an interview with the project manager suggested that the scheme had been struck by several unforeseen issues which are quoted below:

On accreditation by the BTO...

“The BTO are reluctant to accredit the course as they feel there are plenty of bird song apps which people can use and that choosing a number of birds to recognise doesn’t represent bird song knowledge to which they would want to accredit”

On audience...

“Audience development is proving difficult due to the older demographic of blind/partially sighted groups in the area. We have expanded to see how we might work with other groups accessing support services such as the MS Society and youth groups”

On equipment...

“After a 5-month delay in obtaining Audio moth recorders (that have been used successfully to record bird songs in Norfolk), five devices have been tested on their ability to capture bird song on site. This resulted in 43,000 recordings which are too many for any volunteer or project officer to go through.”

In March 2020, the scheme hit a further obstacle. The Covid pandemic resulted in the target group for this scheme having to isolate. By the time restrictions were lifted, the project officer approached the MS Society Brighton & Worthing, MS Society Sussex, 4Sight Charity, SightSupport Worthing and Sustainable Sussex to see if any of them were still open to the possibility being involved. While there was still considerable enthusiasm from these groups about the bird ID course, none of them felt able to take part due to the continued vulnerability of their service users.

Rather than relinquishing this element of the project, the team decided to continue with the course, but not with a vulnerable target audience (see Bird ID Course summary on page 79 and Case Study in Appendix 6). This allowed them to use the course to test the different elements and how to run it effectively, in the hope that a similar course with partially sighted or other audience accessing support services could be run in the future. An assessment of which

course elements could be transferred and how other elements could be adapted has been undertaken by the project officer for the evaluator and is detailed below.

1) Bird ID training videos

The bird ID training videos can be used by most groups accessing support services as they contain tips on both visual as well auditory identification of birds, and don't require access to a physical site to be used. Birds and their calls/songs are described as well as played in the videos, providing useful tools for almost anyone learning bird ID techniques.

2) Bird ID guided walks

The bird ID guided walks could be undertaken by those with visual impairment and others accessing support services who are able to visit a site and walk on potentially uneven surfaces. An adequate number of support staff would need to be present at such a session to ensure it was undertaken safely. Toilet facilities would need to be available on site (particularly for those with MS or others who need more frequent access to toilet facilities). Guided walks for those with severe visual impairments might not be possible, but some kind of field visit to an area where bird calls could still be heard without the need for walking on uneven surfaces or challenging terrain could still be offered and suitable routes worked out with the charities or service providers involved.

The content of the guided walks would need to be adapted for different users, e.g. the suitability of tasks to describe birds, their features, behaviour, food sources, where they nest as well as their calls and songs.

3) ID field guides, web resources and binoculars

The use of bird ID resources, field guides and binoculars that were used for the physical activities would need to be adapted for those with visual impairments. Audio, large print and braille books on birding are available. Various bird ID apps including BirdNET are available for identifying bird calls and songs for those with visual impairments. A wide range of tips on birding for people who are low vision or blind are available at <https://birdingforall.com/> and <https://www.birdability.org/birders-who-are-blind-or-have-low-vision>.

4) Survey techniques

The teaching of bird ID survey techniques could be undertaken and learnt by all audiences but would need adapting for those with visual impairments. Undertaking species lists, transects, point counts and territory mapping of birds can be undertaken using both visual and auditory survey methods.

Chapter 5. Aim 4: Project management, delivery & legacy

Aim 4

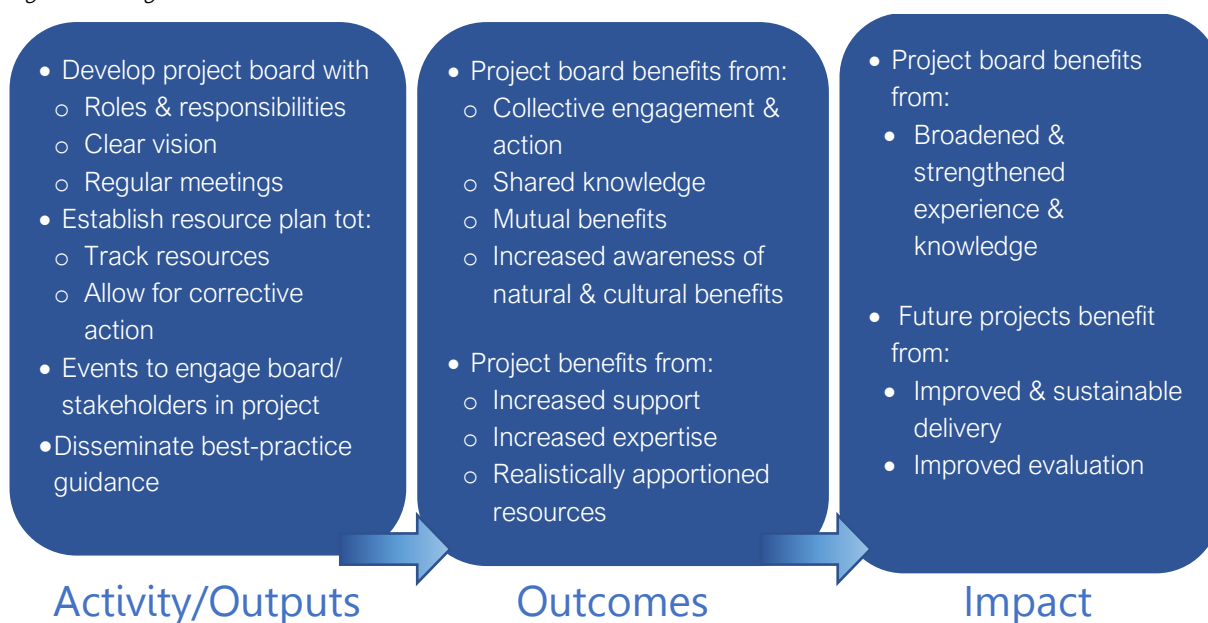
“To establish an effective project board that shares, develops and disseminates best practice and that takes collective actions and an adaptive management approach in order to achieve the sustainable delivery of the project and ensure its legacy into the future.”

This chapter reviews the project management, delivery and legacy relevant to the fourth aim of the EPIC project described above. This aim included the following three main outcomes that were intended to be achieved by delivering the main activities and outputs detailed in the Logic Model provided in Figure 20.

1. The board and key stakeholders are engaged and working towards a common goal and are mutually benefiting from the project.
2. Resources are realistically apportioned and strategically planned
3. The projects monitoring is collated and disseminated to a wide audience to increase awareness of heritage and share and improve best practice.

An assessment of the achievements against each of these outcomes has been undertaken with the Project Manager and is provided, alongside key lessons learnt, below.

Figure 20: Logic model for Aim 4



5.1. Outcome 1: The board and key stakeholders are engaged and working towards a common goal and are mutually benefitting from the project

5.1.1 Project Board

During the project a total of nine meetings of the Project Board were held (average once every four months) which represents 50% of the envisaged meeting schedule of once every two months.

The structure of the Project Board as proposed in the Second-Round application was

“The Project Board will consist of Executives from SET & OART, along with the Project Manager, Project Staff, Finance Officer and external experts from local organisations and authorities”.

Throughout, the Project Board has consisted of the following;

- Mike Tristram - Sompting Estate Trust
- Alex Tristram – Sompting Estate Trust
- Hew Prendergast - Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust (Trustee)
- Project Team
- Keith Colin - Sustainable Sussex
- Liane Web – Sustainable Mind
- Catherine Glynn-Davis - Sompting Parish Council

The first half of the project delivery also saw active participation by the Environment Agency. However, once the capital works were completed, they left the Board as their area of interest and expertise had been completed and they continued to be engaged as stakeholders. Whilst the consistency of the Project Board membership shows a level of engagement and input from these organisations, it does not reflect the level or diversity of external expertise originally envisaged.

Why was this?

With OART as the lead applicant and SET as the sole partner and landowner, it became apparent that the influence of a wider project board was going to be limited and that decision making was primarily being made by these two organisations, especially with regards to site development and infrastructure. Where external help or support has been required, relevant experts have been consulted, however, this has often fallen outside of the Project Board

meeting timeframes. An example of this would be in the creation of the 10-year management plan for the site which, along with SET and OART, engaged seven local experts in its compilation to ensure that the resulting document reflected a management approach which was most appropriate for wildlife, people and the long-term vision and economic needs of the landowners.

The formalization of sub-groups of stakeholders with a focus on topics such as engagement and legacy planning and meetings which fed back to the Project Board may have been beneficial in maximizing opportunities and increasing stakeholder engagement in the project.

The relationship between the Partners has been such that they have been in constant contact throughout the project and have discussed issues and overcome problems outside the format of the Project Board. Whilst this has solidified the relationship between the partners and enabled an ongoing dialogue to direct the project it has made the decision-making process more insular than originally planned and resulted in less Project Board meetings than may have been required.

5.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

During the project, the EPIC team has held a total of 17 events specifically to engage Stakeholders (other than the community or residents) in the project. These events have included site tours during construction (n=3), hedge & tree planting days (n=6), archaeological field walks (n=3) and guided tours of the site (n=5). At the Mid-term review a total of 12 events had been undertaken with the additional five during the final half of the project all being guided walks of the site for Adur & Worthing Council, Pastfinders, Worthing Archaeological Society, Transition Town Worthing, and Sompting Parish Council. These events have maintained a connection between the site activities and the stakeholders and have been well received.

"You guys should be so proud of what's happened at the EPIC site. The transformation from when I first visited until now is astonishing."

Jim Peters (Worthing Archaeological Society)

"The Sompting Brooks tour was superb! Thank you for organising it"

Mike (Transition Town Worthing)

"An oasis of calm - beautiful. Thank you so much for showing us around. What a special day".

Pastfinders

The Mid-term evaluation report highlighted that consideration of increased stakeholder participation in shaping the project would be worthwhile. "All respondents to the (stakeholder)

survey did, however, feel that they would like or maybe like to have more involvement in shaping the project going forward. This was also echoed by the project manager who stated that board meeting had not been as regular as originally planned and that stakeholder engagement could be improved”. – Mid-term Evaluation report

To assess how stakeholder involvement had developed since the Mid-term evaluation report, an end of project stakeholder survey was sent to 18 organisations and individuals who had been critical to the delivery of the project. This included partners, funders, schools, and those who ran component activities. A total of ten organisations responded with results indicating that:

- 100% agreed that their involvement in the project had resulted in a greater understanding and appreciation of the natural heritage of the area.
- 100% agreed that the EPIC project activities and environmental improvements met with their own organisation’s expectations
- 100% agreed that the project will bring a positive legacy to the area
- 90% felt that, throughout the project, the ambition and progress of the project had been effectively communicated to them or their organisation.
- 80% felt the project has contributed to their own organizational objectives with 20% responding “maybe”. This is a slight improvement from the Mid-term evaluation where 75% of respondents felt their organizational objectives were being met.
- 50% felt that they would have liked or maybe have liked to have had more involvement in shaping the delivery of the project. One of these was a member of the project board.

Comments from Stakeholder Survey

When asked to put in their own words what they felt the EPIC project has brought to the local community, responses were consistent in highlighting the creation of a high-quality area of accessible green space and the high level of community involvement alongside benefits to health and wellbeing of the local community:

“The project has reconnected the local community with its natural heritage and has provided life-enhancing opportunities to learn about, restore and enhance this heritage”.

Mike Tristram, Landowner and Principal Project Partner

“It has provided access to a new and exciting green space which has been all the more important and powerful following the covid pandemic. Access to green spaces and nature is essential for our mental health and wellbeing and EPIC provides that in spades”.

Gareth Williams, Environment Agency, Funding Body

“Access to an area of environmental and historical significance”.

Connie Shirley, Worthing Archaeological Society

“Great use of the green space which will be respected and understood more by the local community”.

Nadia Chalk, Creative Waves

“It's created a wonderful haven for wildlife..... It's also brought history to life for many. It has been brilliant to see how much the community engaged with the project, were really inspired by it and learnt so much from it”.

Pauline Corey, Transition Town Worthing

Stakeholders were asked what they felt the main limitations to the project would be in the future. Whilst the project team has identified several risks to the continuing success of the project it was considered useful to see if any other risks could be identified through stakeholder experience. In-order to assess if new risks had been identified, each was put to the project manager as part of the end of project interview and his answers are included below, in blue.

“There is currently no disabled access to the site, wheelchairs and mobility buggy users cannot get to it and this will limit how inclusive the site and it's development needs to be considered to improve this”.

Katie Gander, Agecraft

“We are disappointed that we are entering the legacy phase without complete accessibility for all users as this was one of the primary aims of the project. Unfortunately, we were expecting the West Sompting development to be undertaken in parallel to EPIC which would have enabled access. Now due to start in 2022 we are confident that it won't be long before accessibility issues are overcome.....there just isn't the financial case to build the additional required access path for it to be ripped up within 6-months” Peter King, Project Manager

“It would be good to have an ongoing element of community engagement to keep the momentum going in the area”.

Laurie Jackson, Ecologist

“Maintaining people's interest in the project”.

Keith Colin, Sustainable Sussex

“We are delighted with the formation of the River Ranger group which will form the basis of ongoing engagement for site monitoring and maintenance. This group will continue to be

promoted through social media and the project mailing list. We recognise that a fantastic amount of engagement has been undertaken over the past three years and maintaining that level of engagement is going to be impossible without future funding. However, we have momentum, a highly supportive community and all the equipment we need to keep a level of activities ongoing into the future.” – Peter King, Project Manager

“Keeping the site clean and tidy, litter free (because of the waste that blows over from the nearby tip) and vandal free. On a site that is open to the general public, its proximity to the industrial estate and a new housing estate, it's bound to suffer somewhat”

Pauline Corey, Transition Town Worthing.

“We recognise this as a potential problem and are delighted to be receiving emails and social media posts that the community is already taking the initiative to undertake litter picks without formal events being organised. The implementation of the site management plan and regular River Ranger activities will keep a close eye on how the site is fairing and identify any issues arising from access or the activities of our neighbours.” – Peter King, Project Manager

Throughout its delivery, the project has struggled to engage with two of their target audiences, independent under 25-year-olds and those accessing support services. Whilst there has been some engagement with these audiences and constraints from Covid-19, there appears to have been limited specific events or marketing of the project to these groups. As the stakeholder panel included individuals and organisations with wide and varied experience of working with communities, they were asked whether the lower engagement by these audiences was a consistent problem, and how this might be overcome in the future? In total, 30% of respondents indicated that difficulties in engaging with this audience was a limitation to them or their organisation with the following recommendations.

“For our organisation we have learnt that young people need to be targeted as early teenagers...as they grow, they are more likely to get involved if they are familiar with the people/project. Obviously, this takes time...same as planting a tree! People who are supported are limited by their support worker's interest. This is an ongoing problem that we are only just starting to access. Our SDNP project created a working relationship with support workers who have proved to be useful”.

Nadia Chalk, Creative Waves.

“We find that offering regular days each week for people to engage allows more referrals from organisations than monthly or one-off activities. This is due to people being supported requiring

regular, repeated activity, often due to the difficulty many people have with routines and in finding new activities or being supported to get to a new place in the first instance”.

Keith Colin, Sustainable Sussex.

Communication was highlighted by one respondent as having become an issue towards the end of the project. This appears to centre around a singular event alongside communicating with stakeholders regarding the site opening event. During the end of project interview, the Project Manager was asked if there were any lessons to be learnt from this situation with his response is provided in blue underneath the respondents comment below.

“Towards the end of the project information about the plans for opening the site was not communicated effectively with our organisation. We were unaware that they did not want to publicise the actual opening date to avoid too many people going there on that day. Agecraft ran an exhibition in August 2021 which was our main event and no one from EPIC came to this despite an invitation and no explanation for this was given and problems arose with regards to a press article that was written about EPIC which could have been avoided if there had been better communication”

Katie Gander, Agecraft

“We do appreciate that an issue arose around this specific event and there are definitely lessons to be learnt and taken into future projects. Unfortunately, the details of the opening were lacking at the time as, despite being only weeks away, we were still finishing the site and finding a Covid safe and comfortable compromise with the landowners to the planned large opening event. Whilst it is easy to blame Covid-19 for these problems we agree that more notice would have been better for everyone. We had not considered that collaborative partners might arrange to advertise the site opening through local media outlets and in future we would ensure a greater amount of clarity exists regarding communicating project activities to the local press and whose responsibility this is. The most valuable lesson from this would be to stagger the final elements of the various project components. Having the majority of activities ending within a month of each other, combined with finishing the site and maintaining the regular volunteering activities proved too much to offer presence at events other than being involved in their delivery as we were at this one”- Peter King, Project Manager

5.1.3 Conclusion

Stakeholders have continued to support the project and the outcomes it has delivered with all having benefitted from their involvement. The involvement of stakeholders in shaping the project has increased during the latter stages, shown by the number of respondents having doubled from the Mid-term evaluation and the reduction in those who wished to have more influence over shaping the project. However, half of respondents still wished to have had a higher level of input and this is something which should be considered for future OART project delivery. Whilst the two principal project partners had regular contact and have delivered a high level of activities and high-quality engagement with the local community, it is likely that aspects could have been improved by pulling on the wide range of experience within the stakeholder panel, specifically regarding engagement with hard-to-reach target audiences.

There are concerns over the legacy of the project and how this will be managed and continue to engage the local community. The formation of the River Ranger volunteer group will maintain a connection between community and project, although this will not replace the level of engagement over the past three years. The project team are advised to create a risk register for the legacy, considering the feedback of stakeholders along with their own knowledge in-order to ensure the success of the project is maintained into the future.

A summary of lessons learnt from Stakeholders is as follows:

- The project board structure was not conducive to engaging with or drawing on the knowledge of a wide range of stakeholders. Future projects should consider topic specific sub-groups which utilise local knowledge to a greater extent and the outputs from which can be fed back to the main project board.
- For future projects, consideration should be given to the most effective methods of utilising the wide range of knowledge and experience across the stakeholder panel outside of formal project management structure.
- Greater clarity of processes and expectations should be set out at the start of projects to avoid misunderstanding or miscommunication throughout delivery.
- Consideration of the project “exit” strategy at an early stage would avoid an overwhelming amount of final events and activities within a short timeframe at the end and would enable a greater focus on attending events as well as being involved in them.
- Continuous engagement with stakeholders and the provision of activities for these specific groups is an important tool in maintaining enthusiasm and support for projects.

5.2. Outcome 2: Resources are realistically apportioned and strategically planned

The project received a £871,400 Heritage Grant which was allocated to cover 79% of the total value and 85% of the estimated cash costs of the three-year programme. In addition, the project entered the delivery phase with £148,450 of cash match funding secured, leaving a deficit of £3,400 in the project budget at permission to start.

5.2.1 Spending Summary

The spending summary for the project has been supplied by the project manager from quarterly progress reports submitted to the Heritage Fund. Figure 21 shows the percentage of spend from the Heritage Fund grant, considering the original requirement of £151,850 of match funding. This shows that, when looking at expenditure from the Heritage Fund grant, four elements went over budget. Whilst Other Costs (Capital) shows a 175% spend against budget this represents a £4474 deficit which is due to increased levels of interpretation being installed on the site.

New staff costs represent the largest overspend from the original budget totalling £9,287 and is also the largest cost increase since the Mid-term review where 41% of this budget had been spent. When considering all expenditure, including that funded outside of the Heritage Grant through additional match funding, Repair & Conservation costs become the largest cash overspend on the project, totalling £47,554 which equates to a 12% increase against budget (Figure 22).

Additional match funding was brought into the project to cover increasing costs associated with the capital works, specifically the need to construct a firm access track and additional fencing for containing livestock within the newly create meadows.

There were also areas of underspend, specifically against Volunteer Training, Staff Travel, Equipment Costs and Volunteer Expenses. This is unsurprising considering the period of

inactivity due to Covid-19 restrictions although also reflects the removal of tramper buggy purchases from the project objectives.

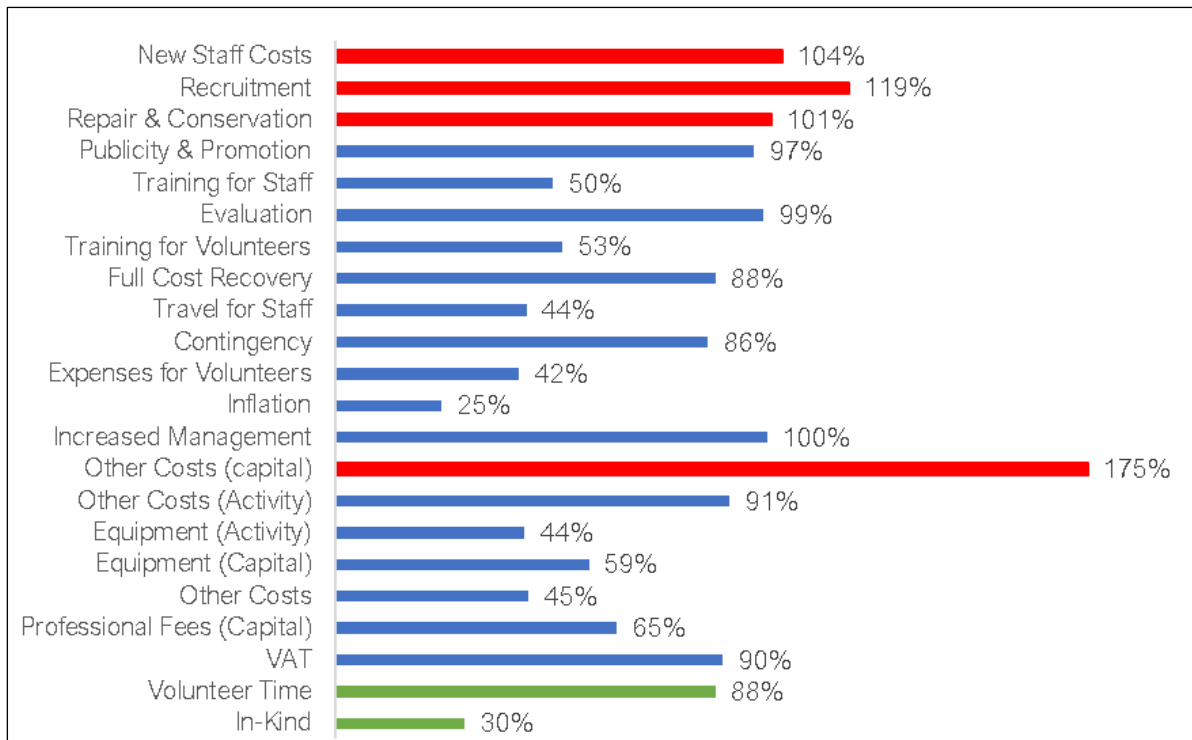


Figure 21 Chart showing spend against budget for each cost centre from the Heritage Fund budget. Green bars indicate "income" to the project from volunteer time and in-kind contributions against targets.

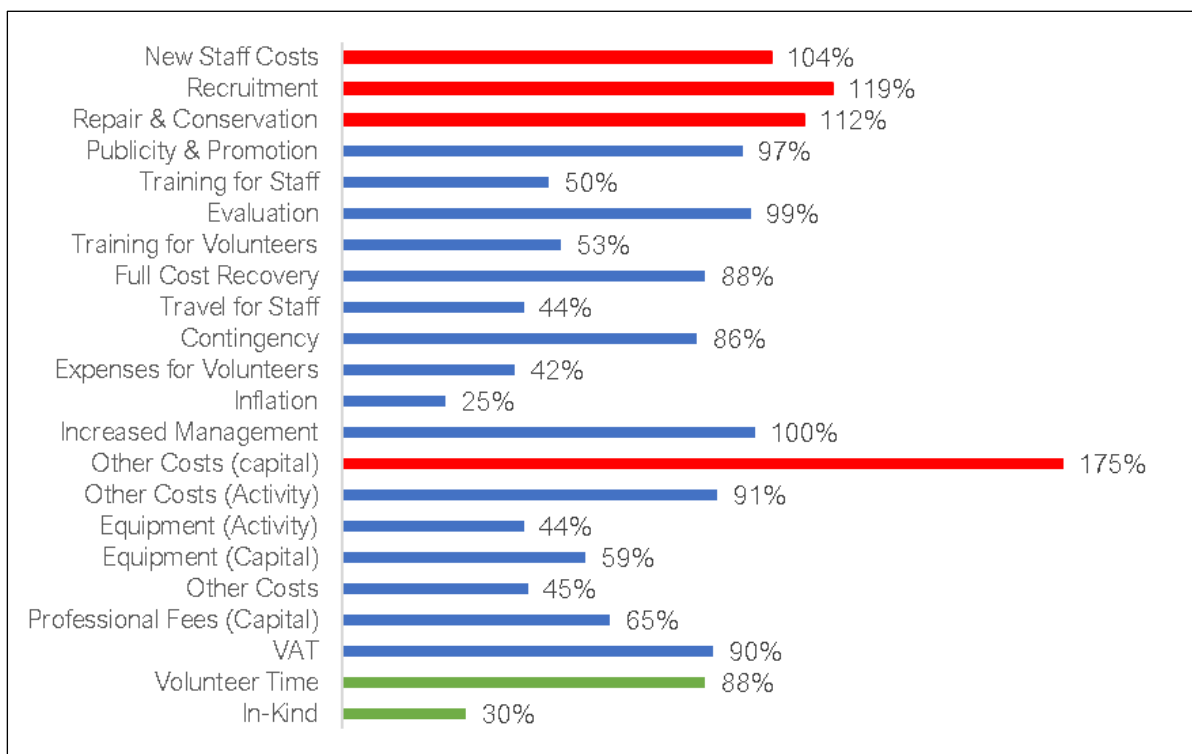


Figure 22 Chart showing overall expenditure of project including additional match funding (note the increase in repair and conservation (capital works) spend). Green bars show "income" to the project from volunteer time and in-kind contributions against targets.

The project has claimed a total of £817,656 from the Heritage Fund against the grant request of £871,400 (94%). The total cost of the project has been £1,012,599 (making an 81% cash contribution from the Heritage Fund against the requested 85%). The additional £194,943 has been made up by match funding from external sources (detailed on page 100), with an additional £46,493 being brought to the project beyond that secured at the start.

The project has generated £43,919 worth of volunteer time in delivery of the project, 88% of the £50,000 target. This equates to 0.5FTE members of staff for each year of the project delivery. Bearing in mind the limited opportunities to provide volunteer opportunities during the period March 2020 – April 2021 the project has achieved beyond reasonable expectations. In-kind contributions have reached £7,205 (30% of target) which should be considered disappointing considering some of the activity requirements for materials and equipment which may have been donated to the project by local businesses.

Taking account of the value of volunteer time and in-kind contributions brought to the project the total value of delivery is £1,069,860. This makes the total contribution of the Heritage Fund to be 77% against the requested 79% at the second-round application.

At the Mid-term Review it was estimated the project would go beyond the £1,023,249 budget. Whilst the percentage contributions have changed the overall project has been completed £5,958 under budget whilst delivering a greater level of site accessibility and a higher number of events. A breakdown of the expenditure, shown as a percentage of the overall cost is shown in Table 7 and is in line with expectations that the repair and conservation work and its associated VAT, along with new staff costs constitute the highest costs (75% of total project).

Table 7: showing breakdown of project costs as a percentage of total spend (£1,018,691)

Budget Line	% Project Cost
Repair & Conservation	41.67
New Staff Costs	27.11
VAT	8.94
Contingency	4.93
Other Costs (Activity)	4.09
Training for Volunteers	3.18
Increased Management & Maintenance Costs	2.04
Evaluation	1.95
Publicity and Promotion	1.31
Other Costs (Capital)	1.03
Full Cost Recovery	0.96
Equipment (Activity)	0.57
Travel for Staff	0.33
Equipment (Capital)	0.28
Professional Fees (Capital)	0.19
Other Costs	0.19
Training for Staff	0.17
Expenses for Volunteers	0.16

5.2.2 Review of Expenditure

Overspend

1. Recruitment

Whilst the Volunteer and Engagement Officer role was filled through a singular recruitment drive, the Project Officer position attracted a limited number of candidates at the first attempt. Therefore, a second recruitment drive was required leading to additional advertising costs not accounted for. However, in the project overview, recruitment is not a large cost and amounted to less than 0.01% of the overall cost.

What We've Learnt

Future projects should build in additional recruitment costs in case multiple efforts to suitably recruit are required or should a team member leave during the project.

2. New Staff Costs

New staff costs have exceeded the original budget by £9,287, this being despite the Project Officer position not being filled for five months into the project. The increase in New Staff Costs reflect the following which were not accounted for during the second-round application phase.

- The cost of office space was not budgeted in the original submission. It became evident that an office was required, and we expected the cost of this to primarily be absorbed by the underspend created by delay in recruiting the Project Officer position.
- The Volunteer & Engagement Officer role was extended from 0.6FTE to 0.8FTE in April 2020 to reflect the additional workload of transforming the project during the Covid-19 pandemic. Once restrictions were eased it was necessary to maintain this new working pattern in-order to maximise the remaining time in delivering high quality events and activities.
- Whilst two of the three project staff were entered, part-time, into the government Job Retention Scheme (furlough) for January to March 2021 the cost saving here did not fully cover the costs of extending the project end date to December 2021. This extension was necessary to ensure that as many opportunities as possible could be hosted and the site could be finished to a high standard prior to opening.

What We've Learnt

It was optimistic to expect a 0.6FTE role would be sufficient to enable a Volunteer & Engagement Officer to effectively operate within the project. Being OARTs first project of this nature and size they underestimated the time required to organize and run activities as well as build and maintain relationships with volunteers, participants and schools. To have had three full time members of staff would have made the delivery of the project considerably easier.

It is difficult to attract further staff time funding to a project and, in future, greater consideration to the workload of delivering a project such as this would be considered against the expectations on staff being employed

In future projects the cost of office space would be factored into Full Cost Recovery. As OART did not have any office space at application they did not consider it important. However, the need for the growing team to work together was important and should be borne in mind by any projects starting from a similar position (i.e. small organisations growing in staff number due to a large scale project).

3. Repair & Conservation

By far the largest component, in terms of cost, of the project and whilst the project has maintained its spend against budget within the framework of the Heritage Fund grant it has cost an additional £48,544 above the submitted second round budget request. All this additional spend has been covered by additional match funding being brought to the project, primarily from the Environment Agency and the Rampion Fund at Sussex Community Foundation.

At the Mid-term review, the project had spent 96% of its original budget and has ended with a spend at 112%. This has included unexpected items such as the laying of a formal access track, additional fencing, and the creation of two additional ponds which were required to control flooding in the picnic area and to make safe a deep ditch which was cut off during the capital works.

A detailed review of the capital works has been provided in Appendix 4 which highlights that the capital works budget was undermined by the process of getting Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) quotes which proved to be unrealistically low (even for the ECI contractor on submission of their quote).

What We Learnt

Despite planning and gaining ECI quotes for the designs prior to submission of the second-round application the cost of the capital elements of the project quickly became a major concern to its delivery. The project was “lucky” to work with a contractor in the delivery of the major elements who was prepared to be flexible in their approach and stick to their budget despite unforeseen circumstances. We will always ensure that we build relationships with contractors prior to awarding tenders for work.

We are wary of using small contractors for delivery of large projects and in future would budget for payments to contractors during the planning stage to provide accurate quotes.

There are a multitude of elements to capital works far beyond the visible or the primary output. Thinking ahead in terms of future land use and the infrastructure required for this would enable a more accurate budget to be formed at submission. More detailed discussion with landowners prior to application would likely have highlighted land management requirements resulting from the capital elements and allowed a more accurate budget to be put together.

Match funding was easier to attract once the project had commenced and clear outputs could be defined and quickly viewed.

4. Other Costs (Capital)

As a percentage, the projects largest overspend was under this budget line. However, this represents an increase of £4474 against anticipated costs and reflects costs associated with additional interpretation installed on site to make it more engaging.

What We've Learnt

Whilst planning during the development of the application generates ideas and costs, other, often better opportunities arise during delivery although they can be slightly more expensive (bearing in mind the 3.5-year gap between submission of the second-round application and the installation of additional interpretation, this is unsurprising).

5. General Observations

- The project has not effectively used the “inflation” line of the budget. Where costs have risen between the second-round application and actual delivery they have not had increased costs allocated against inflation (where appropriate). For future projects a system of registering inflationary costs against original estimates should be created to allocate expenditure across budget lines.

- Whilst the project has come in under budget, and not seen the expected rise in overall costs highlighted in the Mid-term Review, this can be directly attributed to changes in the manner in which the project has delivered its engagement. Had the full cost of activities and volunteer training been utilized (as would be expected if the project had been delivered according to the original plan) along with the associated VAT, the overall cost would have increase by £38,818 taking it over budget.
- Those cost lines which have gone over budget (highlighted above) reflect an overspend of £24,993 (in relation to the Heritage Fund grant) and £68,910 overall. The Heritage Fund grant elements were covered by the contingency built within the project.
- Contingency money was also blended with external funding to deliver unexpected elements of the project such as the paved access track, additional fencing and increased on site interpretation. The ability to use the project contingency as match funding for external applications has been vital in securing the required amounts to deliver the additional fencing and paved footpath.

Overall, the project has delivered beyond the outputs it set out to and has managed to apportion costs effectively during a complex period. The Project Manager highlighted...

"I think the project has coped well in terms of managing the cash flow and budgets. We have been thrown a lot of curve balls throughout our delivery period and have had to make changes which were either unexpected, in relation to Covid-19, or not appropriately considered during the project development in relation to the site, its accessibility and its ongoing management. The whole team has responded fantastically to these challenges, and we have successfully brought in additional match funding to cover the majority of the increased costs. We can honestly say that we have learnt a lot in terms of putting budgets together, the need for adequate contingency and to think more about the smaller costs during development. All valuable lessons for the next one!".

Match Funding

Over the delivery period of the project, match funding has been brought in from a variety of sources (Table 8). No additional match funding has been brought to the project since April 2020. This is attributed to a radical change in the funding environment because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Understandably the focus for funding changed, firstly to supporting organisations most in need of funding to remain viable and subsequently to providing post-covid support. As OART and the EPIC project were fortunate to not require support in this manner, they were not eligible for most funding opportunities.

Table 8: showing summary of Match funding acquired during project life.

Source of Funding	At Permission to Start	Additional	Total
Environment Agency	£90,000	£26,000	£116,000
Local Authority	£6,500	£1,500	£8,000
Sompting Big Local	£7,000	£0	£7,000
South Downs National Park	£4,950	£0	£4950
Grant Giving Bodies	£10,000	£18,993	£28,993
Corporate Donations	£20,000	£0	£20,000
Total	£148,450	£46,493	£194,943

The fact that the project attracted 31% additional match funding during the first 18-months and that this was managed appropriately to cover all additional costs should be viewed as evidence of strategic allocation of resources during the final 18-months of delivery. It is a testament to the appeal of the project that a 31% increase in match funding was achieved and a sign of strategically allocation that this was sufficient to cover all costs.

Summary

The project finances have remained in a healthy state throughout delivery. At Permission to Start, cash flow projections indicated a number of periods when OART would need to borrow money or become overdrawn in-order to complete the works. This has not been necessary due to a flexible claim schedule from the Heritage Fund during the Capital Works and the additional match funding which has been brought to the project.

Changes in project delivery mechanisms and the inability to deliver certain elements of the project (specifically those aimed at audiences accessing support services) has skewed the budget from that submitted as part of the second-round application in 2018. However, despite several challenges such as the need to purchase equipment to deliver a programme of lockdown activities and increased costs of creating an accessible and manageable site the project has been completed within the original budget and with a lower overall input from the Heritage Fund than that originally requested.

5.3. Outcome 3: The projects monitoring is collated and disseminated to a wide audience to increase awareness of heritage and share and improve best practice

5.3.1 Project monitoring

The project has used a detailed monitoring toolbox which was set up by the evaluator at the start of the project and has been adapted and added to as the project has progressed. The data collected from these resources has allowed the team to keep track of progress throughout the project and provided formative data that helped to prioritise certain elements to keep them on track. There have, however, been some limitations and these are discussed in-order to provide improvements for future projects.

Event themes and monitoring and evaluation framework

The project recorded events under a range of different themes in-order to monitor the type of events that were being delivered and their popularity in terms of participant numbers. These themes often crosscut two or more of the project objectives which led to difficulties in evaluating which events contributed to which aim and objective of the project. Future projects should consider developing types/themes of activities that relate only to one Aim and objective and where this is not possible should ensure the aim and objective (purpose) of the event is clear at the start and detailed in an appropriate monitoring form.

Resources

The toolbox developed for the project comprised questionnaires, event tracking forms, registration forms, biological recording forms and volunteer training logs. These forms were developed in-order to keep track of outputs and measure indicators of success. In addition to these, the project also kept their own record of attendance and developed questionnaires to measure learning outcomes during the second phase of the project. The following limitations to these resources have been identified by both the evaluator and by the project team:

- **Time:** The project staff highlighted during interviews that completing the forms took a lot of time, particularly during periods when there were a lot of events, recording and volunteer activity. This led to some forms being rushed, or missed, and not completed correctly which has subsequently led to discrepancies in the data.
- **Number of individuals:** The data collected by the event tracking forms, attendance forms and registration forms was inconsistent and has led to uncertainties in the number of

people involved in the project. The main reason for this is that the attendance form did not include events where registration forms were not completed (talks, stakeholder events, events run by external partners). As the event tracking forms only collected data on the number of new and repeat participants, it was not possible to extract how many people were reached under the different aims of the project (repeat volunteers could have been involved in events that contributed to a different aim). Future projects should consider obtaining registration forms for all events and/or including the names of participants in the event tracking form to reduce the risk of discrepancies across monitoring data.

- **SurveyMonkey:** The project staff developed three questionnaires in SurveyMonkey to capture data on learning and other outcomes from schools, the river rangers and from participants on the photography course. After developing these questionnaires, the features available under the free membership changed and it was no longer possible to extract insights from responses without paying a monthly fee. This resulted in the manual extraction of data and was only viable given the relatively low number of questions and responses. Future projects should consider using a paid for resource for questionnaires to avoid possible changes that could be made to resources that are free.
- **Adaptions to project plan:** The monitoring toolbox was developed at the start of the project based on the initial project plan. However, as the project progressed, the type of events and associated outputs increased which led to changes having to be made to the initial forms. As such, the data collected was stored across different versions of the forms and more time was required to merge this information for the evaluation.

TolaData

The TolaData system is an online platform that stores the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in the form of logic models and was used to monitor progress against project targets using data collected by the monitoring toolbox. At the start of the project this was a relatively new interface with EPIC being the first environmental project to utilize the system. Feedback from the Project Manager stated that

“Overall, the system was simple to use and provided clear indicators of progress against targets across the wide range of targets we set ourselves. My only regret is that we didn’t include enough money in the evaluation budget to spend more time investigating its full functionality before we set it up or to adapt our data capture as the system evolved. The support from TolaData was brilliant and I would definitely recommend it for this type of project but there are a few lessons we have learnt to take into the next project.”

Lessons Learnt

- The system was set up at the beginning of the project and was unable to capture the full extent of changes to activities (e.g. those undertaken through national lockdowns). This resulted in having data stored in two separate systems and different information being collected.
- The system worked well in capturing information from the activity recording forms. However, where these were incomplete or missing there was no “backup” system which resulted in TolaData underrepresenting the outputs of the project leading to focus being put into areas where targets had already been achieved.
- TolaData evolved throughout the delivery period with more features being added. However, the evaluation budget was too low to enable additional features to be investigated or set up by the Evaluation consultant. This resulted in the project team not utilizing the full extent of features within the system. Future projects should consider additional budget for evaluation, potentially as a specific contingency, to enable a review/update to the evaluation process at the Mid-term Review.
- Putting more indicators into Tola, outside of those directly resulted to targets would have simplified the evaluation process, for example capturing data on physical numbers of “new participants” would have enabled the project to define participant numbers which hasn’t been possible.

5.3.2 Dissemination of results and resources

The section includes an overview of how, and to whom, progress and achievements were disseminated throughout the delivery of the project along with specific areas where results have influenced further investigation by appropriate organisations. In addition, resources which were created throughout, or as a result of, the project, and remain available following its completion to provide ongoing learning to others are highlighted. Alongside this, a summary of those external bodies which have been provided advice on delivering similar schemes, or developing their own Heritage Fund application, is provided.

Newsletters

During the project a total of 71 newsletters were sent out to the mailing list which consists of 472 local people. Of these 15 were specifically disseminating results or achievements of the project with the remainder advertising or promoting events.

 <p>Recognition for EPIC</p> <p>Thank You to All our supporters, collaborators, volunteers and participants.</p>  <p>River Restoration Centre Awards</p> <p>The EPIC project was selected as a finalist in the 2021 UK River Prize hosted by the River Restoration Centre. Held in Harrogate on 21st October the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust team along with our Environment Agency co-ordinator attended the conference and award ceremony.</p> <p>We are delighted to report that the restoration of the Broadwater Brook received the River Restoration Centre award, coming 2nd in the UK River Prize against an equally inspiring project in Cumbria.</p> <p>Whilst we can't split the award into 1000 pieces this is awarded to all of you for your help and support throughout the delivery of the project in some extraordinary times and we thank everyone for making the project the success which it has become.</p>	 <p>Fantastic Results from the first Hedging Hands for Harvest Mice Project event</p>   <p>How did harvest mice and other small mammals respond to vegetation clearance?</p> <p>As part of our citizen science project on harvest mice, we have just completed a week investigating how harvest mice and other small mammals responded to vegetation clearance along two harvest ditches on Sompting Brooks as part of preparing the site to build the new river channel.</p> <p>Over 10 days of the hedging, we installed a total of 417 small mammal traps, comprising of 124 individuals belonging to 7 different species. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 harvest mice 6 bank voles & 6 field voles wood mice & yellow-necked mice 10 grey shrews & 6 common shrews <p>Vegetation clearance was carried out not only through our hedging, 20 individuals were trapped by the sites including 1 harvest mouse. Over 40 birds were recorded along hedging, wood rabbit, hawking the harvest mouse!</p> <p>Surprisingly, some voles and wood mice remained in the cleared areas and one even had some individual hedging on!</p>  <p>The new channels, planned by the 23 volunteers who helped clear the trees and provided the animals in the early morning and set them at night. The results are due to back at the volunteers from Sustainable Sussex who made our hedging, hedging!</p>	 <p>New guided river walk, reptile survey, hedgehog map and macro photography tips</p> <p>Rise of the reptiles</p> <p>Last week we did our seasonal walk survey of the season. We're thrilled to say it was a success with a total of 10 reptiles recorded, including an adder, a grass snake and a little green newt. That gives us 15 months in total which will include the harvest mice which were surveyed and the first of the new water now flowing through the site.</p> <p>This is an amazing result, particularly considering that before the spring clearance there were only 2 months from the site in the ground! Thanks to our volunteers who helped us do it all before lockdown began!</p>  <p>Hopping with hedgehogs</p> <p>Thanks to the amazing support of our EPIC hedging mapping teams we now have over a hundred sightings from Sompting, Lancing and Worthing. Huge thanks to everyone who let us know about hedgehogs in their area. It's not being bad at all!</p> <p>We'll continue to update this map (there must be a few more hedgehogs in Sompting) as well as a database of all sightings (please email us if you find one) and will build on our data points of tree log habitats. We can then all focus on giving them the most accessible garden habitats possible!</p> 	 <p>Well that was fun.....</p> <p>For one will be pleased to give a cheery wave goodbye to 2020, but to be honest it has not all been bad. Yes we have all had to make some serious changes to the way we live, work and play. It has been very difficult and tested us way more than was really necessary. But here we are, 12 months on and what have we accomplished.....</p>  <p>We started the year with two harvest mice nest searches and we finished the year with two more. We can confirm that the little fellas are still living on the site and have even moved into some new areas. I think that says that they are more than happy with their new habitats.</p> <p>You have planted 2km (give or take a few meters) of hedgerow, several hundred trees and played in a lot of mud. You have come out in the rain, in the sun but always in the wind. You have always had a smile and lots of laughs, even if the cake was in short supply this year.</p> <p>Then if that wasn't enough you "found" a dragon skeleton on the banks of the new river. What an amazing find!</p>
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Talks & Presentations

Throughout the project talks have been given to inform on the project and to update on progress/ disseminate information. These have been given to:

- University of Brighton
- Adur & Worthing Council
- Sussex Bay Project Board
- Scope
- Sompting Parish Council
- Worthing Climate Assembly
- South Downs National Park Members Committee

Guided Walks

Guided walks (outside of community engagement) of the site have been undertaken to discuss the project processes and outcomes to inspire local organisations to think about similar projects. Guided walks have been undertaken with

- Sustainability Team and CEO of Adur District Council
- Environment Agency Catchment Coordinators
- Sompting Parish Council
- Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership
- Transition Town Worthing
- Lewes District Council

Informing Future Practitioners

The University of Sussex and University of Brighton have both undertaken guided field trips to the site, listening to talks and undertaking activities aimed at upskilling students and providing real world scenarios to learn from. Students came from a variety of courses including Environmental Engineering, Water and Environmental Management, and Ecology. Being able to disseminate the work undertaken, discuss the constraints and how these were managed, alongside practical activities such as water testing and ecological surveying was positively received and both Universities plan on repeating these activities in the future.



“Thank you so much for sparing time to support our MSc students last Friday. The students were buzzing with excitement on the bus back to Brighton and were highly enthused by their interactions with you all. I really appreciate all the time you put in to make the trip such an excellent experience”

Dr Sarah Purnell, University of Brighton

Case Studies & Reports

The project has created case studies and reports which will be useful resources for external organisations and individuals wishing to undertake similar activities or learn more about the project outcomes. Whilst there is a lot of data to still be processed into reports in the future, current outputs which will be available to download from the project website are;

- Five case studies for community/school activities have been produced (Appendix 6)
- Case study of the capital works outlining the process, how constraints were overcome, and the lessons learnt (Appendix 4).
- Final reports for the archaeological investigations (end of January 2022)

A summary of this evaluation and monitoring report is being prepared for general viewing with the full report available on request.

Online Resources

The EPIC project has produced an end of project video which summarises the outputs of the project and can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4hZUzKDuXw>. This video has been shared across the Rivers Trust movement as well as forming part of the submission to

the River Restoration Centre River Prize where it was shown to over 400 participants who are involved in river restoration and delivery of projects.

A separate video about the project was shown at the 2020 online Rivers Trust Conference to highlight the project and its achievements <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls9siNEJ59c>

All videos created as part of the project will remain available through the YouTube channel with links from the OART website. These include the following training and learning resources:

- 4 x Bird Identification Training videos
- 2 x Photography Training Videos
- Hedgerow Survey Techniques
- Introduction to Wildlife Recording: Moths, Butterflies, Shieldbugs and Wildflowers
- Bat Walk and Equipment
- Plaster Cast Footprint Making
- How to make a Hedgehog Footprint Tunnel
- Flower Smashing
- Make a Solitary Bee Hotel
- How to Make a Bird Box

Results of Water Quality Testing

Results from water testing have highlighted a significant spike in nitrate levels during the winter months when the springs are flowing with water from the South Downs National Park. This information has been shared with the Environment Agency who have responded to say

“Thank you for this data set, it appears this could be connected to nitrate levels associated with agriculture on the South Downs and we will liaise with Southern Water to investigate further under their Worthing Chalk project”

Helen Carter, Environment Agency

The project has provided a student work placement since May 2020 which has been focused on measuring water quality across the site. However, at the end of the project no formal report had been produced disseminating the results of this. Initial results from the University of Brighton as to the effectiveness of the silt traps were received in November 2021:

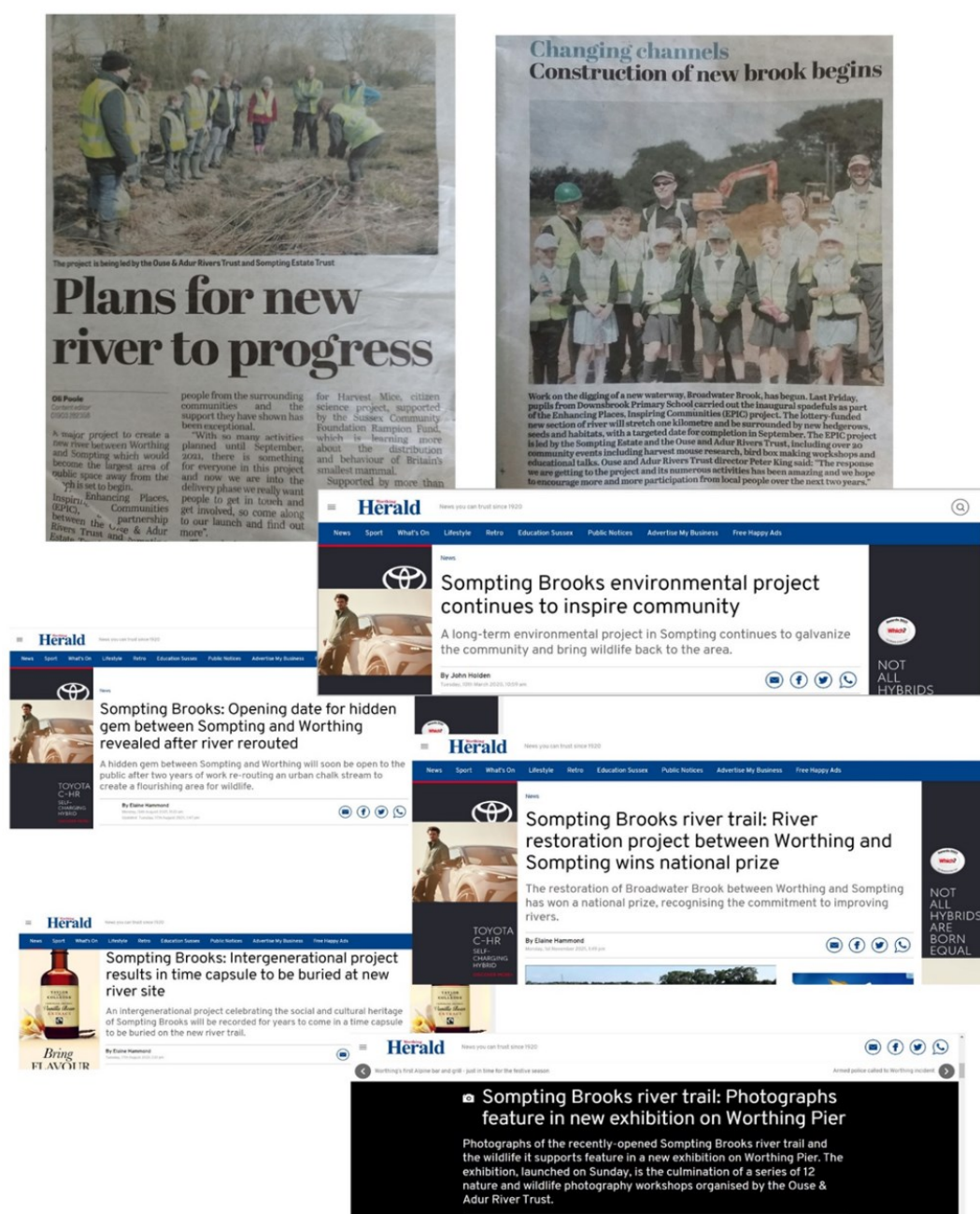
“...the levels of faecal indicator bacteria and the viral indicator were 25 and 700 times higher, respectively in the sediment of silt trap 2 compared to the overlying water and that

phosphate and ammonia were highest in sediment from silt trap 1. So, the silt traps are trapping something!"

Professor James Ebdon, University of Brighton.

Media & Press Coverage

A total of three radio interviews (BBC Sussex) and 12 newspaper articles (examples shown below) have been produced throughout the project, appearing in the Worthing Herald and West Sussex Gazette. These have followed the story of the project, disseminating progress to the local community with a circulation of 30,000 and 63,000 respectively.



The project also appeared in the Sussex Giving Annual Review 2020/21 (one of the match funding organisations) showcasing the projects habitat creation as an example of projects they would consider funding. The project also appeared in the annual review showcasing the Helping Hands for Harvest Mice project as an example of Citizen Science. The project has also appeared twice with the Sustainable AW magazine which showcases projects across the Adur District.

Thriving communities
Our new strategy highlighted three key areas where we want to redouble our energies and focus. They were investing in voluntary sector infrastructure, increasing diversity and inclusion and tackling climate change.

Voluntary action
At the heart of our thriving voluntary sector in Sussex is a network of community voluntary action organisations, which nurture and support new and existing charities and community groups across the county.

We have worked closely with this network, this year more than ever before, focusing in terms to deliver Covid-19 emergency support, as well as longer term capacity building, work with black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, digital inclusion, and volunteering.

We have also supported Diversity Sussex to contribute to opening a more equality community development worker. We are working with them, and other infrastructure bodies, to ensure that we meet the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities more effectively in the future.

METWER VOLUNTARY ACTION received a £10,000 grant from our Sussex Crisis Fund to further explore the emerging community needs and to develop a specific training and support programme to enable local mutual aid groups that had sprung up in the community over the last 18 months. In diversity, digital and skills. Plus, the grant will help them to improve their online and digital capacity to deliver support remotely.

Diversity and inclusion
We want to better reflect the communities we serve across all areas of the organisation and our work.

THE TRUST FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES delivers community led solutions to tackling inequality in Brighton & Hove. We have funded them £10,000 over six months to support the development of a change, more robust and sustainable Black, Asian and ethnic minority led sector in Brighton & Hove.

Climate change
We signed up to the Pledges Commitment to Climate Change, which commits us to reach a range of measures to help tackle climate change. This year, we have worked towards disinvesting from carbon industries and making towards investments that actively address climate change. Read more here: <https://sussexgiving.org.uk/giving-us-the-vestments/>

THE RAMPTON FUND
Since launching the Rampton Fund at Sussex Community Foundation three years ago, the fund has given over £1.5 million in grants to projects, in a specific geographical area, that encourage renewables, sustainability, energy efficiency, water saving, nature conservation and environmental protection.


THE OUSE AND ADUR RIVERS TRUST received a grant of £10,000 from the Rampton Fund to support the creation of a new river wall and 6.5 hectares of flood-plain wetland meadows, which will provide environmental access to a historically private area of land.

Left to right: Alison Groomer, Peter King and Alison White of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust, and supporter Alex, Brighton.

6 ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SPACES

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

OUSE AND ADUR RIVERS TRUST



their project 'Helping Hands for Harvest Mice', working with the communities of Sompting, Lancing and Worthing in West Sussex to tackle the decline in harvest mice, owing to habitat loss.

The Rampton Fund boosts its grant-making on projects and groups that have links to environment and localities, climate change, energy and improved community facilities. Local community surveys have identified limited opportunities for people to engage with the local wildlife. This fun, social and hands-on project created a unique chance to learn about the environment and, ultimately, instil in residents a greater sense of responsibility to protect the area.

The project inspired local people to seek out further opportunities to learn about the world of conservation. One volunteer, Amy, a single mother from Sompting, had struggled previously to attend activities that interested her, due to childcare demands. The team at the Trust were able to find someone that suited her and were quickly able to see her passion for nature and wildlife. She has since signed up to a part-time conservation course at the local college.

The Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust is dedicated to the environmental protection and enhancement of the rivers Ouse and Adur, their tributaries and surrounding habitats. They raise funds for capital projects and work with the local communities to increase awareness and understanding of the water environments and the wildlife which depends on them.

In 2018, the group were awarded a grant of £10,000 from our Rampton Fund to launch

www.sussexcommunityfoundation.org

WESSEX ENGINEERS 3 LOCAL NEEDS IN PERSPECTIVE 18


Winter 2020

Sustainable A&W
Protecting our environment

LOVING OUR LANDSCAPE

The people bringing new life to our green spaces and helping tackle the climate emergency

IN THIS ISSUE
Behind the scenes of our strategy
Climate Assembly
An interview with Sustainable Rivers
Sussex Drivers
"Everyone needs to be engaged!"



EPIC Sompting

IN THIS ISSUE
Zero 2019
Climate Change
Carbon Neutral
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Sustainable Three
Sustainable

EPIC, which stands for Enhancing the People's Involvement in the Community, is a small non-profit organisation that has been set up to support the people of Sompting to improve the quality of their lives and the environment. The organisation has been successful in securing funding from the local authority and other sources to support a range of projects, including the creation of a new river wall and 6.5 hectares of flood-plain wetland meadows, which will provide environmental access to a historically private area of land.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
www.epicproject.org


Summer 2020

Sustainable A&W
Protecting our environment

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The fight for a sustainable future

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Zero 2019
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Eco-upgrade for Sompting stream

Vibrant underwater aquatic plants and a flock of goldfishes feeding on seed heads are all in a day's viewing at a new environmental project in Sompting

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Advice to Others

Throughout the delivery of the EPIC project the team has been approached by organisations seeking advice from the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust in respect of delivering similar capital works schemes and the process of putting together a Heritage Fund application. These include

- Advice to National Trust regarding their River Aller restoration project and the process of gaining permissions in a complex environment
- Advice to National Trust regarding the Heritage Fund process in respect of their Changing Chalk Project
- Advice to the Environment Agency and Wessex Rivers Trust in the set up and development of the Winterbourne and Wetlands project
- Advice to the Environment Agency in the setup of the DNAire Heritage Fund project.

- Advice on wetland creation and capital works processes to the Fixing & Linking Our Wetlands (FLOW) project on the Manhood Peninsula

It is understood that activities undertaken during lockdown were promoted by the Heritage Fund as examples of online activities although there is no evidence to support this. In addition, the projects Mid-term Review report has been shared with other projects although details of how many or which are not known.

“I am advising another project which is at the mid-point of delivery and considering how to evaluate progress so far to inform the remainder of the project. Would you be happy for me to share your report as an example?”

Laura Joyner, Heritage Fund Investment Manager for EPIC Project

Conclusion

The project has increased the dissemination of information and results since the Mid-term evaluation, using multiple platforms to achieve this and it is likely that the reach of the project has expanded although there is no evidence to support this (e.g. there is way of knowing how many people have read newspaper articles).

Learning resources have been created and will be accessible to audiences through the project website or via the YouTube channel.

There is still a large amount of data which should be analysed, written up and disseminated to project partners, stakeholders and the local community whilst also being available to practitioners across the Country. A combination of factors have resulted in delays to the publication of data as explained by the Project Manager during the end of project interview

“Much of what we expected to be able to produce and disseminate needs more data collected before any meaningful results can be provided. Water quality results have been erratic and whilst we can see that the overall biological and chemical quality has improved, we need to allow more time for the new channel to settle and establish before any meaningful results can be obtained. Likewise for the ecological indicators, we can see that diversity has increased but it would be good to allow more time to pass to see if this increases, remains constant, or decreases as habitat establish. We are recording colonizing species which could move on from the site as the habitats develop and we need to be sure that what has been recorded so far is not a sudden surge before the site settles. We hadn't really considered this at the beginning but as we have worked with Universities and independent researchers

throughout the project, we have become a lot more aware of the time requirements in creating robust datasets for analyses”.

Peter King, Project Manager

There remains a lot to learn from this project and the work it has undertaken, representing a unique opportunity to analyse water quality and species diversity within an entirely new river channel and micro-landscape. The OART should, as part of the project legacy, continue to collect data from the site. This could be done by the River Rangers, the continuation of Bug Club and by working with university students in the collection and analysis of results as part of student project requirements.

Chapter 6. Assessment of project achievements

This chapter first reviews the achievements the project has made towards its planned outputs and then goes on to assess achievements against the agreed Heritage Fund outcomes.

6.1. Achievements towards targeted outputs

In this section the achievements of the planned outputs are assessed against the overall targets set out in the project's activity plan and for those assigned to each of the three main aims of the project. Outputs that were not targeted but contribute towards the achievements of the main objectives have also been included. The main source of data used to assess achievements is listed in the contributing evidence section for each table. Where event tracking form data has been used, this is listed by the event theme that it was recorded against and abbreviations for these events are provided as footnotes for each table for reference. Targets have been taken from the initial activity plan and Evaluation strategy document and are shown in green if they have been achieved, surpassed or are additional outputs that contribute towards the achievement of the aim or objective, and are highlighted orange if they have been progressed, but not achieved.

6.1.1 Engagement targets overall

Description	Target	Actual
General engagement in project		
General engagement events (excluding volunteers)	229	196
Participant opportunities (excluding volunteers)	2810	3820
People directly engaged with project	1,600	1,751
Activities for people accessing support service	40	59
Participant opportunities for people accessing support services	400	>107 ¹
Family events	9	91
Family participation opportunities	120	156
Volunteering for project		
Total number of volunteer engagement activities	40	120
Total volunteer opportunities	680	866
Number of people volunteering time	150	258
Total value of volunteer time contributing to project	£50,000	£43,919

6.1.2 Aim 1: To conserve & enhance the Broadwater Brook & surrounding landscape

Outputs	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
Obj 1: Divert the Broadwater Brook away from contaminated sources			
Create new river channel (km)	0.9	1km	Capital works report
Obj 2: Plant riparian and meadow habitat			
Meadow (area created in(ha))	6.5	6.9	Quarterly reports
Plug plants planted	None	3000	PC Events
Area (hydro) seeded (ha)	None	0.48	Feedback from PM
Obj 3: Restore two dew ponds at Lower Trudgeons and The Mountain			
No. ponds	2	4	Quarterly reports
Obj 4: Plant hedgerows & trees			
Hedgerow planted (km)	2	2.4	PC events
Native trees planted	1000	240	PC events
Create and/or enhance habitat on and off-site			
Bird boxes built	None	72	UW events & Urban Wildlife Campaign Case Study
Hedgehog houses built	None	6	
Bee hotels built	None	104	
Hedgehog awareness (reach)	None	3,900	
Litter picks	None	5	PC events
Site maintenance events	None	18	
Hibernacula/log piles created	None	3	
River features installed	None	5	
Hedgerow laid (km)	None	0.6	SBW events
Management plan	1	1	Site Management Plan

*¹includes 3,500 reach from hedgehog awareness posts on Facebook and 400 homes in receipt of leaflets
Event tracking form data: PC = Practical conservation, UW = Urban wildlife, SBW = Skills-based workshops*

Over the last three years, the project has achieved or surpassed five of the six targets and delivered a wide range of additional activities to conserve and enhance the Broadwater Brook and surrounding rural and urban landscape. The building, planting and maintenance of the new river channel has provided new habitat for 292 species (including 5 chalk stream indicators) and resulted in decreased levels of phosphate, ammonia and sediment showing that the intended outcomes to provide habitat and reduce pollution have been met. The creation of a new wildflower meadow, hedgerows, scrub and woodland areas, and reptile refugia have also improved the ecological value of the site with increases observed in the distribution of slow

worms and diversity of bats and birds. In total 594 species have been recorded on the site since 2019 and an increase of 97% in the taxa that were surveyed pre- and post-enhancement works (reptiles, amphibians, birds, bats, small mammals, freshwater invertebrates, and fish). The site is also providing habitat for 45 species of conservation concern in the UK. This shows that, despite the infancy of newly created habitat, the intended outcomes of increased biodiversity and resilience on the site have been met. Improvements for urban wildlife have also been made with 182 new homes for birds, bees and hedgehogs created and nearly 4000 people reached by the helping hands for hedgehogs, campaign. Due to limitations on obtaining data from outside of the scheme, the outcomes of increased urban biodiversity can only be assumed given the improvements that have been made.

6.1.3 Aim 2: To connect the local community with the natural and cultural heritage of Broadwater Brook and local landscape

Output	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
Obj 1: To provide access to new urban greenspace through the creation of a River Trail			
Km footpath created	1.1	1.4	Quarterly reports
Km fencing	2	2.9	Feedback from PM
Interpretation boards	3	5	Quarterly reports
Bench	1	1	
Waymarker posts	6	3	SBW events "Big Draw"
Sculpture	1	1	Quarterly reports
Willow hide	1	1	Quarterly reports
Trail map/guide	1	1	
Location aware app	1	In-progress	Feedback from PM
Obj 2: To provide Intellectual access to the site using on-line media platforms			
Project website	1	1	Quarterly reports
Annual website users (average)	500	833	Monthly analytic data
Social media platforms	2	4	Social media platforms
% users converted to participants	10	16	Participant feedback questionnaire
Obj 3: To provide volunteer opportunities and develop a regular task force to help manage the site			
No. annual task force events	12	11	PC/BR events "River Rangers"
No. volunteers recruited	20	42	
Average N volunteers/task days	5	7	

Output	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
Tree planting events	5	7	PC events
Tree planting participation	50	40	
Hedge planting events	8	17	
Hedge planting participation	80	140	
River feature installation events	3	3	
River feature participation	24	27	
Plug planting events	None	12	
Plug planting participation	None	60	
Wildlife refugia events	None	4	
Wildlife refugia participation	None	19	
Litter pick participation	None	38	
Site maintenance participation	None	158	
Local recording group events	None	63	PC events, species reports & Volunteer hours log
Local recording group participation	None	79	
WAS site investigations	3	4	AR events
WAS site investigation participation	36	39	
Obj 4: Deliver a range of events/activities to engage & inspire the community			
No. schools engaged	3	9	Sc_OR/OS events & School Case Study
No. school events/activities	54	38	
No. pupils engaged	500	1159	
School participation	1710	1475	
Agecraft project activities	30	59	AC events
Agecraft participation	300	968	
Guided walks	15	30	GW_N/C events
Guided walk participation	180	294	
Archaeology engagement events	1	1	T_C events "Archaeology"
Archeology participation	30	20	
Archaeology exhibition	1	0	Ex events "Archaeology"
Photography exhibition	1	1	Ex events "Photography"
Agecraft exhibition	1	2	AC events
Other engagement events	None	20	JFF, BR & T_N/C events
Other participant opportunities	None	514	
Outreach events	None	11	OR events

Output	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
Estimated engagement at outreach events	None	2830	
Indirect engagement of Lockdown activities	None	4,500	Social media analytics "Lockdown activities"
Obj 5: To promote community initiatives and campaigns to educate people in urban wildlife and water			
Urban wildlife campaign	1	1	UW events & UW Case Study
Urban wildlife events	6	8	
No. households engaged in Urban Wildlife campaign	50	202	
Water related campaigns	3	1	Quarterly reports
Indirect engagement from campaigns	10,000	68,300	Website/social media analytics for Water & UW Campaign
No. campaign exhibits	4	0	Feedback from PM
No. schools engaged in campaigns	6	0	

Event tracking form data: SBW = Skills-based workshops; PC = Practical Conservation; BR = Biological recording (community); AC events = Agecraft Project; GW_N/C = Guided walks (natural/cultural); T_N/C = Talks (natural/cultural) Ex = exhibitions; OR = Outreach; JFF = Just for fun; UW = Urban Wildlife Campaign; Sc_OR/OS= Schools (outreach/onsite).

The project has achieved or surpassed 77% (n=34) of its targeted outputs and delivered a further 13 additional outputs to connect, engage and inspire the community in the natural and cultural history of Sompting Brooks and wider landscape. Progress has been made towards a further 8 outputs (18%) of which six have achieved over half of the intended target. Two targets, both relating to the campaigns, have not been progressed. The main reasons for targets not being met include the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic (campaigns x 3 outputs & school closures x 2 outputs), land contamination (archaeology x 2 outputs), resources (location aware app & waymarkers) and adaptations to original plan (tree planting x 1 output).

Despite this, the project has delivered a wide variety of physical and virtual events that have provided enjoyment and opportunities for the general public, families and schools to connect with nature and cultural history. Opportunities for people to take ownership of the site, meet new people and to have increased wellbeing have been provided through regular volunteering events and activities and through the formation of the River Ranger task force group that will care for the site into the future. The project has reached a wider audience and helped people connect with each other through their social media platforms. Households have also become more connected with urban wildlife and educated about plastics through their campaigns and initiatives, which has led to some positive behavioural changes. The new river trail has provided access to new greenspace and the hide, waymarkers, sculpture and site interpretation have,

and will continue to, allow people to connect with nature and learn about the area's heritage. Together, this indicates that the project has achieved the overall aim of connecting the local community with the natural and cultural heritage of the Broadwater Brook and associated water environment by delivering community initiatives, events, activities, and access that will engage and involve people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities with their local green space, securing its legacy and helping increase its ecological resilience into the future.

6.1.4 Aim 3: To provide opportunities for people to learn skills and develop knowledge to increase life opportunities

Outputs	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
Obj 1: Deliver training events/short courses to upskill and provide new opportunities for people			
No. people on training courses	120	216	Attendance & CS, SBW & BR events (training)
Photography course events	12	12	SBW events
Photography participation	120	109	
Harvest mouse training sessions	11	12	CS events
Harvest mouse participation	400	210	
BMWP sampling "Bug Club"	6	12	
Bug club participation	60	54	
Sculpture/waymarker events	20	6	SBW events
Sculpture/waymarker participation	200	117	
Willow hide construction	4	0	
Willow hide participation	60	0	
Biological recording workshops	3	6	BR events
Biological workshop participation	60	61	
Non-native species workshops	3	0	
Non-native species workshop participation	60	0	
Flint knapping workshop	None	2	SBW events & Archaeology Case Study
Flint knapping participation	None	11	
Hedge laying workshops	None	7	SBW events
Hedge laying participation	None	25	
Ecological survey training events	78	17	BR events
Ecological training participation	20	106	
<i>Bird ID Course events¹</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>7</i>	

Outputs	Target	Actual	Contributing evidence
<i>No. people trained in bird ID¹</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>27</i>	SBW events & Bird ID Course Case Study
<i>Bird ID participant opportunities¹</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>58</i>	
Indirect training from lockdown activities	None	1,500	Social media analytics "Lockdown activities", Photography Case Study, Bird ID Course Case Study
Obj 2: To provide volunteer and student placements to enhance life opportunities			
People on work placement	3	3	Quarterly reports & feedback from PM
Volunteer days contributing towards project delivery	20	130	Volunteer log
Research students	6	2	Quarterly reports
Obj 3: To develop and deliver a new BTO accredited scheme for people accessing support services¹			
<i>People (accessing support services) trained on scheme</i>	<i>20</i>	0	Quarterly reports, Bird ID Course case study and feedback from PM.
People actively monitoring birds	10	0	
<i>Participant opportunities</i>	<i>100</i>	0	

¹ The Bird ID Course was a replacement for the BTO scheme and did not target people accessing support services (due to Covid restrictions). The associated targets have been added to objective 1 but are retained under Objective 3 as this was part of the approved purposes of the project.

Event tracking form data: CS = Citizen science, SBW = Skills-based workshops, BR = Biological recording (training)

The project has achieved or surpassed ten (43%) of its 23 targeted outputs and delivered additional physical and virtual training activities that were not part of the original activity plan. The project has also made progress in delivering a further eight (32%) outputs, of which five have achieved over half the intended target. The BTO scheme (objective 3) is shown as not progressed as the target audience and structure of the course changed. Two of the outputs for this, however, have been included under Objective 1. Discounting these, five other outputs were not progressed, and this was largely due to the Coronavirus pandemic which resulted in a whole ecological survey season and the opportunity to train people being missed. Participation in the willow hide construction was also not possible as the living nature of the willow meant that this had to be built during the first National Lockdown. The BTO bird song could not be run with its intended audience due to their vulnerability to Covid and student placements could not be recruited due to the closure of universities. It should also be noted that the actual figures for the photography and bird courses do not include the online resources (4 bird and 4 photography tutorials) that were produced and shared during lockdown and as such engagement and learning from these courses are likely to be higher.

Despite the limitations, over 216 people have been trained on a range of topics and new skills and evidence suggests that this has led to people's enjoyment, increased confidence and, for some, the motivation to continue using and developing their new skills and knowledge which may lead to an increase in future opportunities. The training has resulted in 159 people learning species identification and biological monitoring techniques, providing the foundation for the natural heritage of the site and beyond to be better recorded and understood. This will help to increase resilience in the future. Online tutorials will continue to provide opportunities for a wider range of people beyond the life of the project leaving a legacy for the project and organisation. The project has also supported three work placements of which two have stated that their involvement has increased their confidence and motivation to learn and given them new skills. Two placements are also continuing with their roles beyond the end of the project suggesting that they enjoy their roles and the contribution they are making to the project and organisation. Learning from the adapted bird ID course (formerly BTO scheme) has identified how this scheme could be developed for people accessing support services, providing opportunities for the organisation to connect with those that are harder to reach in the future.

Overall, the project has achieved its aim to provide opportunities for local people to develop new skills and knowledge across a range of heritage and conservation topics, and there is some evidence to suggest that this may lead to enhanced life opportunities and has increase people's confidence and wellbeing.

6.2. Achievements of the Heritage Fund outcomes

Introduction to Heritage Outcomes

In addition to outcome measures set by the EPIC project, the Heritage Fund have developed three types of outcomes in-order to assess what difference their investments have made in relation to heritage, people, and communities. From the outset, the EPIC project aimed to address 12 Heritage Fund outcomes spanning all 3 themes. The following section presents a summary of evidence presented across the preceding chapters of this report to evaluate progress towards these outcomes.

5.2.1 Outcomes for heritage

Heritage will be in better condition

- The creation of the new river channel, hedgerows, ponds, wildflower meadows, woodland shaws and scattered trees have replaced agricultural land. This has resulted in new natural

habitat that, once fully established, should provide refuge for a range of terrestrial and aquatic species.

- Sediment transfer has reduced, and water quality has increased, surpassing targets for orthophosphate and ammonia which now meet the thresholds for “Good Ecological Status” under the Water Framework Directive. Wider catchment issues and downstream modifications may be a limiting factor in the site achieving “good” ecological status.
- Overall, 455 new species for the site have been recorded since 2019 with 295 recorded using the new channel. Target species groups for monitoring have seen a 93% increase in diversity (birds, bats, reptiles & amphibians, birds, freshwater invertebrates, and fish)
- Five chalk stream species have naturally colonised the new channel and 45 priority species of conservation concern in the UK have been recorded across the site.
- The distribution of priority species; Cetti’s warbler and slow worms have increased.
- It will take a little while before the habitats on site are fully established and in optimal condition. However, given the increase in number and distribution of new and existing species, the natural heritage of the site is already in better condition.



Heritage is better recorded and identified

- A total of 54 participatory events have been carried out by project staff and local experts to identify the species occupying the site. These include 12 harvest mouse and 16 freshwater invertebrate surveys, along with 21 events recording bats, reptiles, amphibians, annual bioblitz and winter bird surveys. Other surveys of macrophytes, birds and dragonflies have also been undertaken by local surveyors. Together with eDNA surveys and anecdotal sightings, these have resulted in 455 new species being recorded on the site.
- A total of 202 households have engaged with the urban wildlife initiative, leading to 102 new records for hedgehogs and lockdown challenges posted on social media resulted in 63 new species records.
- Workshops and citizen science projects have resulted in 159 individuals being trained in small mammal, bird, wildflower, reptile, bat, freshwater invertebrate identification to enable them to record wildlife on-site and in their own environment beyond the life of the project.



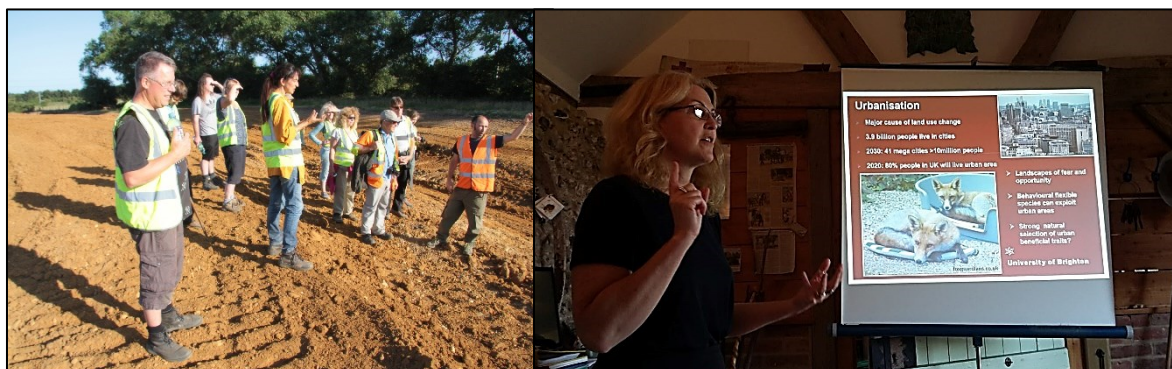
- The development of the location aware app enables visitors to record wildlife that they see whilst visiting the site and whilst this is still in development, the app will contribute better recording of heritage.
- The development of the location aware app has included the ability for visitors to record wildlife that they see whilst visiting the site and whilst this is still in development, the app will contribute better recording of heritage.
- Four archaeological field surveys found evidence of flint tools that range from late Mesolithic and early Neolithic to late bronze age. Many more tools and evidence of a flint knapping site were found providing new information regarding the history and past use of the site. The large number of cutting tools suggested that this site was used for foraging, fishing and hunting activities rather than habitation.
- The Agecraft heritage-based workshops with the community and schools provided 968 opportunities for the community and school pupils to investigate and discover old stories, photographs and experiences from people in the local area. This culminated in the burial of a time capsule on site which contains a range of information from these investigations as well as experiences from the Covid-19 pandemic for future generations to learn from.



Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

- The community inspired 'water' bench has been created following 3 participatory "Big Draw" skills-based workshops. The bench is located at the entrance to the picnic area, providing interpretation to visitors of the sites natural and cultural heritage.
- The trail map which includes an interactive tool on the website to explore heritage on Sompting Brooks and has received over 1620-page visits. The trail map also forms the focus of the welcome interpretation panel on the river trail.
- The location aware app includes pop-up information about the cultural and natural heritage that has been discovered on site and will be updated with new information as it becomes available. The App is due for release in early 2022.

- Three waymark sculptures depicting the natural and cultural heritage of the site created from community input and the result of investigations have been installed along the trail with explanatory panels. These provide tactile and informative interpretation to site visitors.
- Results from the archaeological investigations, including maps representing the historical landscape and artworks of how the site would have looked in the Mesolithic and Bronze Age periods, are displayed in a series of three interpretation panels at the end of the river trail.
- A further interpretation panel detailing the value of wetlands and chalk streams along with some of the species which use them has been installed overlooking the new channel.
- The Agecraft project hosted two pop-up exhibitions displaying 3D models of the natural and cultural heritage of Sompting as discovered through the events and activities undertaken. These included old photos, oral histories and artwork depicting Sompting through the ages and into the future.
- Archaeological finds are to be stored and displayed within premises on the Sompting Estate for future research and viewing.
- The project has used local experts to deliver a total of five talks covering freshwater habitats, biological recording, urban wildlife, harvest mouse research and the results of the archaeological investigation. The project has also delivered 30 guided walks, six under the theme of “culture” (e.g. archaeology & sculpture interpretation), and 24 under “nature” including bird and bat walks and river restoration tours.
- The results of research and information relating to the progress and ambition of the project has been documented in 63 different newsletters, disseminated to 472 subscribers. In addition, one video of “the story so far” has been created and posted on social media, 11 articles have been published in the local newspaper (excluding advertorials relating to the plastics campaign), 2 radio interviews have been done and the team have exhibited or spoken about the project and its heritage at 11 different local events.



5.2.2 Outcomes for people

People have volunteered time

- A total of 258 people have volunteered time to help deliver the outputs of the project which is 172% of the projects target of 150. This figure includes



- individuals involved in citizen science and practical conservation activities (n = 231), biological recording (n = 11), archaeology (n = 9), volunteers helping to deliver the Agecraft project (n = 3), one volunteer on a work placement and three research students who have contributed to the water quality monitoring and development of the location aware app.
- The types of volunteering opportunities have been wide ranging and have included tree and hedgerow planting, plug planting, making brushwood bundles, site maintenance activities (e.g. litter picks), wildlife recording (e.g. small mammal and reptile monitoring), biological water quality monitoring, helping set up/run events and clerical work.
- Volunteers have been represented by all the projects target groups including people accessing support services, women, families, the over 60s and <25-yr-old dependents indicating that volunteer activities have been accessible and inclusive.
- The River Rangers task force was formed in March 2020 and has an active membership of 42 people who will continue to improve, maintain, and monitor the site.
- The value of volunteering to the project equates to £43,919 (88% of target).

People would have had an enjoyable experience

- Participant feedback forms (n = 442) show that over 95% of participants rated their enjoyment of events 7 or more out of 10 with over half rating enjoyment 10 out of 10.
- Feedback from teachers from three schools suggest pupils have enjoyed their experience with EPIC and 92% of pupils and care home residents involved in two of the Agecraft reconnecting generations project activities rated their enjoyment 3 out of 3.
- All ten of the participants responding to the Mid-term Review questionnaire listed a wide range of activities that they have enjoyed the most. The following gives a flavour of what and how the activities have provided enjoyment:

“Every activity that I have been on I have enjoyed the most”

“Thank you so much for today, myself and the kids loved it. It was great to see them so engaged, especially my 6-year-old who has the attention span of a 6-year-old!” – *Feedback from photography course.*

“Hey Alistair, thanks so much for yesterday, my kids are well chuffed with their bird boxes!” – *Feedback from build a box activity*

“This project has been one of the best things I’ve done. I gain so much joy in coming and benefits my mental and physical health. It’s great to be doing something for my community in which my children will grow up in.” – *Feedback from River Ranger*

“I took my 5-year-old grandson along to Bugs on the Brook in August 2019, we were looking after him for 10 days and needed places to go. He thoroughly enjoyed searching for the little critters, it was one of the best days of his stay with us.”

- There is also a wide range of pictures, posts from Facebook and emails from participants that show how activities are bringing enjoyment to a wide range of people....

	<p>Urban Wildlife Initiative</p> 
<p>Agecraft – Reconnecting generations project</p>	<p>“It has been such a pleasure to have been part of this beautiful treasure on my doorstep. Me and my family have been truly blessed to have been part of this. Cannot thank you enough!!!” <i>Nikki Orchard, Project Volunteer 2021</i></p>
<p>“Another interesting and informative day which I really enjoyed. Thanks for the list about the birds and the details about the binoculars, which I am hoping to get soon for my birthday.” <i>Fran Briscoe, Bird ID Course, 2021</i></p>	<p>Charlotte Doddington Thank you for a wonderful afternoon. Our toddler had the most wonderful time. <i>Build a box event, FB post, January 2020</i></p>
	<p>“I am writing to thank you for our visit today. The children had a fantastic time, they are already asking about the next visit” <i>Downsbrook Primary School 2019</i></p>
	<p>“Thanks for Friday even though the conditions were pretty awful I still had loads of fun. We got in loads of trees didn't we!” <i>Jackie Hands, Tree planting 2020</i></p>

People have developed skills

- A total of 82 events have been delivered to specifically provide people with new skills and knowledge across a range of heritage topics. These have included workshops on photography (n = 12), flint knapping (n = 2), sculpturing (n = 6), hedge laying (n = 7) training on harvest mouse surveying (n = 13), bird song identification (n = 7), ecological monitoring (n = 23) and sampling, identifying, and scoring freshwater invertebrates for water quality monitoring (n = 12). These activities have provided 697 participant opportunities for 216 individuals which is 180% of the projects target of 120.
- Based on feedback from participants at these events (n=184), the average level of training was rated 9.4 out of 10 and 94% of respondents (n = 160) who came to develop or learn new skills stated that their expectations had been met with 6% indicating “maybe”.
- 100% of respondents to the photography questionnaire (n=6) believed their skills and knowledge had increased.
- The project has also become involved in the John Muir Discovery Award Scheme, providing opportunities for 338 students at one school to learn and connect with natural heritage.
- Feedback from the Mid-term Review questionnaires (n=11) showed that 100% of people had developed new skills following their involvement in the EPIC project as a whole.
- There is also other anecdotal evidence from course leaders, participants, and project staff that people are learning new skills across a wide range of EPIC events.



“There has been an improvement in the composition of my pictures, also my confidence and understanding of using manual mode has improved so much” – *Lee Manvell, Photography Course*

“We learnt a vast amount but, more importantly, it has given us the springboard for further learning & enjoyment in the future” – *Marcia Mell, Bird Song Course.*

“It's great how EPIC is galvanising such a wide range of the community's skills into action, while teaching us even more skills so we can care for the estate and its nature. Love it, EPIC!” *Emma Kendon, Facebook review*

“Thanks so much for a great bat walk last night - we all learned so much and really enjoyed it”. – *Tracey Edwards, Ecological Monitoring*

People have changed their attitudes and behaviours

- Behavioural change can be difficult to capture and monitor over a short period of time. Whilst highlighted as needing improvement in the Mid-term Review, this has remained an area where the projects data collection could have been more focused. There is, however, some quantitative evidence that people have changed their behaviour or attitudes as a result of the project including:
 - Feedback from work placements (n = 2) indicate that they both an increased motivation to learn more and achieve individual ambitions following their involvement in the EPIC project.
 - Seven respondents to the Mid-term Review questionnaire stated that there are things that they do differently in their day to day life as a result of their involvement in the project and these include “increased confidence (n = 2)”, “making more environmentally friendly choices (n = 3), working with other charities (n = 1), being more aware of, and increased interest in, natural and cultural heritage (n = 3) and sharing and recording more wildlife (n=1).
 - 91% of respondents to the Mid-term review (n=11) stated that they were motivated to make a difference to the environment and 73% stated that their involvement in the project had increased their motivation to get outside.
 - 50% of respondents to the photography questionnaire (n=6) stated that they are more likely to take pictures than they were before taking part inf the photography workshop.
 - Two of the three schools responding to the feedback questionnaire stated that their pupils had become more confident and connected with nature as a result of the EPIC schools’ programme.
- Qualitative evidence in the form of emails, conversations and social media posts indicate that behavioural and attitudinal changes have occurred with examples below.

“Jack & I have thoroughly enjoyed the 5 sessions of this course. We learnt a vast amount but, more importantly, it has given us the springboard for further learning & enjoyment in the future. I am also much more aware of the birds and wildlife around me now.” – Marcia Mell: Bird ID Course

“It was brilliant being back on site with you all again. As you say it is incredibly satisfying to pick up the rubbish left in the environment, plus it is incredibly addictive as well. When I am out walking with my dog in the mornings, I pick up rubbish every day, it is just amazing how people can throw away rubbish like that, and there seems to be a huge

increase in the amount that you can find especially from the first lock-down.” – Jackie:
litter pick

“Lovely surprise this morning whilst putting the bins out. Been here 10 years and no sign of them, then this summer I have added log piles around the garden. Build it and they will come!” – Nick Kelly, EPIC Volunteer Facebook post

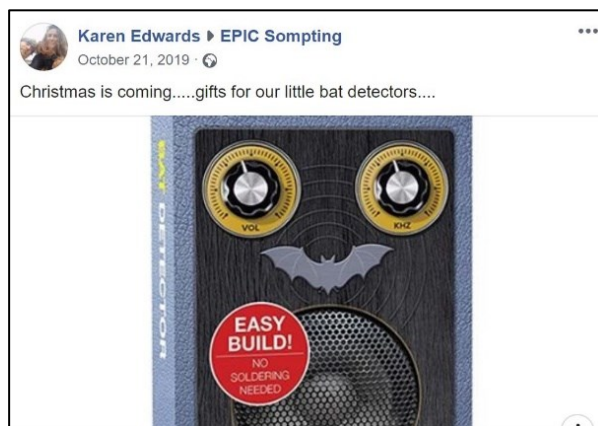
“Thanks for all the useful starter links and inspiration from you guys. I'm joining the BSBI (Botanical) and getting involved there-it's just what I needed.” – Trina Hunter, Bioblitz Zoom session

“Been here 10 years and no sign of hedgehogs, then this summer, thanks to EPIC, I have added log piles and this morning saw my first one in the garden”

“I was inspired by Tom's video on solitary bees - so simple but effective. I made four "homes" in one day and they are now south-facing, on the end of my garden workshop”.

“I'm going to use the hedge laying skills to lay hedge at my Mum's bit of ancient woodland”.

- Other anecdotal evidence from social media gathered by the evaluator and emails and posts collated by the project team also suggest that some participants are inspired to use their skills and knowledge from their involvement in activities outside of the project. This includes at least 5 trainees on photography courses who have used their new skills and posted their shots on the EPIC Facebook page, one MyNatureWatch camera trapper making changes to the garden following his discovery of foxes and hedgehogs at home, and a range of people are posting their sightings of wildlife in the surrounding areas.



- The campaign for rivers in plastics reached over 60,000 people via social media and advertorials in the local Worthing newspaper. There is no direct evidence that this has resulted in behavioural change, however, the message went to a large audience and was supported and shared by the Plastics Free Worthing campaign. Sustainable Sussex, a partner of the project also supported the campaign and responded stating “Is that a caddis

fly with plastic on it? 63,000 tons of plastic from car tyres! Wow. I feel better about our decision to get rid of the car in 6 months-time.”

- Adur District Council have, as a direct result of the EPIC urban wildlife initiative, adopted a hedgehog friendly approach to their management activities and are listed on the Hedgehog Preservation Society “Hedgehog Heroes Roll of Honour”.

4.2.3 Outcomes for communities

Negative environmental impacts will be reduced

- The capital works to redirect Sompting Brooks has already reduced the impact of pollution by diverting the water from contaminated sources and capturing sediment through the installation of sediment traps. Evidence that this is working is shown from the water quality sampling that shows both orthophosphate and ammonia have reduced from baseline levels prior to the works.
- Five litter picks and 14 site maintenance days that include collecting litter, have reduced plastic and other waste on the site. The hedgerows and wooded areas that have been planted with 8000+ trees will help contribute to carbon sequestration to reduce the impact of climate change.
- Awareness of environmental impacts on rivers has been raised through the schools programme and through talks (n=1) and guided walks on freshwater habitat (n=12), workshops on freshwater invertebrates (n=3), the launch event and at 11 outreach events where the project team have exhibited or spoken.
- Awareness of plastics in rivers also reached 60,000 people which may help contribute towards a reduction in plastic waste, however, this outcome is challenging to evidence. Feedback from five local residents indicates that they are now picking up litter when out on walks as a result of the campaign.
- The impacts of urbanisation on wildlife is also being reduced through the participation of 202 households in the Urban Wildlife initiative which has resulted in 182 new garden habitats (bird boxes, hedgehog houses, bee hotels) being built. Participation in the project has also resulted in at least 3 people making differences to their garden to benefit urban wildlife.
- Other than the capital works where specialist contractors were required, local suppliers have been used to deliver/ cater for events ensuring a low carbon footprint for the project.
- Feedback from the Stakeholder Mid-term (n=4) and Final Review (n=11) review questionnaire also shows that there is a strong perception that the project is contributing towards reducing environmental impacts:

“The project is an extraordinary beacon of good practice improving biodiversity, climate resilience, and delivering multiple benefits: pollution mitigation, community involvement, access to nature, volunteering capacity.

Sompting Parish Councillor

“People can see that what were culverted and polluted watercourse drains, can become beautiful streams full of new kinds of life. People who are involved in this (EPIC project) appreciation and improvement of their local resources, not instantly but over time, are being given more pride in their community's recovering environmental heritage, confidence in themselves, and connections with which they can go on to better promote appreciation and improvement of local resources in other ways in the future.”

Mike Tristan, Sompting Estate Trust and owner of Sompting Brooks

“It has provided access to a new and exciting green space which has been all the more important and powerful following the covid pandemic. Access to high quality green spaces and nature is essential for our mental health and wellbeing and EPIC provides that in spades.”

Environment Agency

More people and a wider range of people would have engaged with heritage

- 4,745 participant opportunities have been created from activities and events. This has facilitated the direct involvement of 1,751 individuals (1,159 school pupils and 592 from the local community) in the project.
- Harder to reach audiences, including people accessing support services, <25-year-olds, care home residents and youth groups (Princes Trust) have also engaged with the project.
 - Data from participant feedback forms show that 10% of 126 individuals consider themselves to have a disability with one individual commenting that “everyone was so kind and welcoming and didn't seem to mind my disabilities and even seemed to want me to get involved in the project.”
 - The project has delivered 9 events targeted to people accessing support services including Herons Dale Special Needs Primary School (2 events), Sustainable Sussex (4 events), SCOPE (1 event) and Princes Trust (2 events). These have enabled those with physical or mental health needs to become actively involved in the project. *“What a great opportunity for our students, as part of our course we support*

them in developing their community skills and this experience has been really beneficial for them” – Princes Trust Group Organiser

- Agecraft have run 4 reminiscence workshops and facilitated 9 school visits at Rectory House residential care home as part of their reconnecting generations and heritage project. Feedback from two events show that 92% of school children (n = 24) and 100% (n = 3) of care home residents rated their enjoyment 3/3. This has inspired one Agecraft Volunteer to write a book; *“I am so inspired by this project I am going to write a book, not to publish but for my grandchildren to learn more about my life and experiences” – Barry.*
- Target activities for <25-year-olds have attracted those looking for experience relevant to future careers which they would not have got elsewhere. “I love that this skill is a part of our countryside heritage. I want to get into a nature-based job after my Geography degree so this experience will come in useful.”
- The team is also supporting a work placement volunteer from the Aldingbourne Trust who provide opportunities for people with learning disabilities and/or autism to reach their potential. The role includes clerical and practical conservation and monitoring work to help provide skills and knowledge that will help towards their future employability.
- Social media has connected with 46 new people and six community groups that were otherwise not engaged in the project.
- The Sompting Brooks River Trail has provided new engagement opportunities for the community with 29 of the 37 visitors interviewed stating that they had not heard of OART or visited the site before.
- Other anecdotal evidence collated by the project team also suggest the project has provided new engagement opportunities for people...

“A huge thank you to the EPIC team for holding these events, I never would have had the opportunity otherwise” – *Nikki Orchard, Project Participant and River Ranger*

“I have lived in Sompting all my life and before this project I didn’t know this area existed and had never seen the village from the South. Thank you for showing me the wildlife and history of my home” – *Nick Kelly, Local Resident and Project Participant*





The local community will be a better place to live and work

- The new river trail is being well used with a local resident estimating an average of 10 visitors on weekdays and 20 visitors on weekend days.
- Of 37 visitors using the trail that were interviewed, 67% rated it 10/10 with the trail scoring an average of 9.5/10. Comments gathered from these same users also suggest the trail is positively impacting the community.

Can't wait to see how it develops through the seasons, we are so excited to have this. Brilliant.	It's amazing, the space, the wildlife, the interpretation, and so nice to have somewhere the kids can run.	I used to be your biggest critic, thought it was a waste of money. It's brilliant what you've done down there
Wonderful to see green space I'd not seen before	Fantastic to be adding new walk to our local patch	Best thing has that's happened to Sompting in decades!

- Other quotes from social media, emails and feedback forms also suggest that the feedback for the new access is positive....

	
<p>"In my adopted locality, it's [the EPIC project] really connected me with the wildlife south of the A27, which is otherwise inaccessible" <i>Emma Kendon, Participant feedback questionnaire</i></p>	<p>"What a fantastic job you have all done, only sad my health would not allow me to contribute. Thank you for building a future for our children to enjoy and learn from." <i>Roger Sharman, Facebook response to "The Story so far" video</i></p> <p>"The project has generated enormous public interest and as a result, the community have come together in a way that would not have happened without it. There is a sense of pride in Sompting as an area which supports environmental issues." <i>Catherine Glynn-Davies, Adur & Worthing Council,</i></p>

The local economy will be boosted

- The project has used local businesses to help deliver the project and its activities.
- Local venues including the Harriet Johnson Centre and Chesham house community centre have been used for 24 and six events, respectively.
- Local caterers and shops have been used for refreshments at all events.
- Local experts and companies have been used to supply materials and undertake works to construct the ponds and access track, erect fencing, sow the wildflower meadows, design the site map, website, interpretation, and pier exhibition, undertake artworks (water bench, sculptures, dragon building), deliver biological recording activities, talks and guided walks.
- A total of £187,456 has been spent directly into the local community (within 25 miles of the project site) which equates to 19% of the project budget.
- Considering the river channel diversion (£428,000) and staff costs (£255,000) could not be spent in the local community the direct spend accounts for 56% of remaining budget.

The Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust (OART) will be more resilient

- The EPIC project has resulted in OART connecting with new audiences that were previously not engaged in the organisation. This includes women, who make up over half of the participants at events, persons accessing support services who have attended 57 community events, and younger audiences. These include schools (7 schools and 861 pupils, excluding assemblies and Agecraft), families, who have been present at 28% of the events and youth groups including the Princes Trust.
- The profile of the Trust has also been raised through social media which was not used before the EPIC project. Followers on the OART Facebook and Twitter pages have now reached 1,018 and 829 respectively.
- Two new members of staff have been employed because of the project and funding. This has led to the Trust integrating a new and improved payroll system and adopting more robust contractual agreements and policies which, together, increase the organisational resilience. Both new members of staff are being retained within the Trust beyond the EPIC project providing continuity and ensuring developed skills can be used for development and delivery of future projects.
- Feedback from the Project Manager indicates that “we are now much more confident in delivering large scale, multi-year, projects which are not just about restoring rivers but working closely with a diverse section of the local community. The problems encountered and the solutions found have made us stronger as an organisation and are enabling us to think even bigger for the future”.

- Opportunities to further influence local and national river and wetland restoration schemes have increased and, whilst there has been a need to be mindful of available staff resource during the delivery of EPIC, OART are now considered a major organisation across our area of operation. This is evidenced by the below which are major projects in the Southeast and ones that OART may not have been considered for, or confident to undertake, without the experience from the EPIC project.
 - **New Salts Farm:** Adur Council have approached OART to develop and deliver a similar, larger scale, project on land they have acquired. This approach and the subsequent formation of this project partnership is a direct result of the EPIC project and the multiple benefits it has delivered.
 - **Sussex Bay:** A cross organisation collaboration seeking to deliver restoration across the Sussex Bay area (Littlehampton to Eastbourne). OART were instrumental in the formation of this group and in directing its progress towards an investable set of projects.
 - **Cockshut Wetlands:** A direct result of the work at the EPIC project, Lewes District Council has asked OART to develop an 8.6ha wetland project on Lewes Brooks to achieve increased ecological value to the water environment and provide a high-quality space for local residents.
- In January 2019 when the EPIC project commenced OART had a membership of 176 which has grown to 214 over the delivery phase and increase of 21%. Membership from within the project area has increased from 1% to 10% of the total and is representative of the size of this part of the organisations area of operation.