

## Water Environment Improvements Project Evidence Form

### Scope & Purpose

This form is to be used by the external Water Environment Governance Group (WEGG), to review, validate and formally approve the length of bluespaces improved for the Water Environment Improvements ODI. The form will be completed by the Water Environment Team with support from project partners and presented to the WEGG. After formal approval, the km of water environment improved will be recorded against the ODI and projects will be marked as completed on the Water Environment Scorecard and illustrated as delivered in the Bluespaces Mapping Portals.

### Project Name

Healing Hazel Dene

### Project Lead

| Company/<br>Organisation   | Named Lead             | Position                         |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Durham County Council, through the SeaScapes Landscape Partnership | Alex Kaars Sijpesteijn | Principal Heritage Coast Officer |

### Bluespaces Improved

| Year   | Claimed | Proposed | Reason For Any Change |
|--------|---------|----------|-----------------------|
| Year 4 | 0.5 km  | 0.5 km   | N/A                   |

### Water Environment Assurance

This project has been reviewed internally to ensure it has delivered benefits above and beyond our baseline and regulatory obligations to improve the water environment accessible to customers across at least two out of three aspects. Following our assurance process, the project was approved by both our internal and external groups for review before delivery. This form presents evidence of project completion and the outputs achieved, to request project sign off.

| Level   | Project Acceptance Date | Project Approval Date | Completed Project Sign Off Date |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Project Team                                  | March 2022              | NA                    | N/A                             |
| Water Environment Steering Group (Internal)   | April 2022              | April 2022            | N/A                             |
| Water Environment Governance Group (External) | April 2022              | April 2022            | June 2025                       |

### Project Timescales

| Candidate Project Approved | Project Initiated | Project Completed |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| April 2022                 | April 2022        | March 2025        |

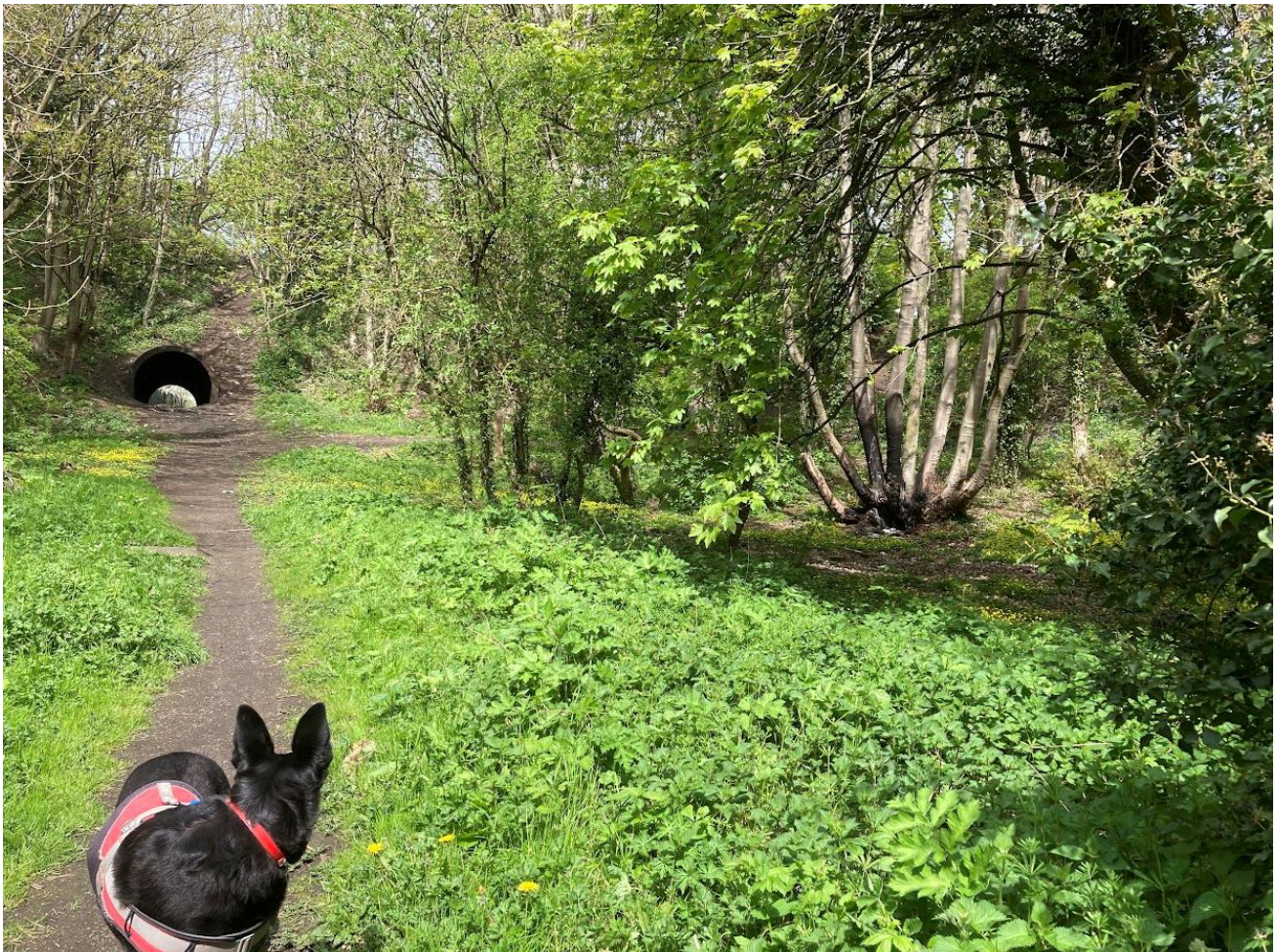
## Project Summary and Highlights

### Summary

The Hazel Dene Bluespaces project has delivered 0.5 km of water environment improvements to a previously unused and undervalued area of bluespaces near the Durham coast. This project is linked to the overarching SeaScapes Heritage Lottery Funded programme for which NWG has been a co-funder and deliverer of the BeachCare and Aware project. The project success has come from community engagement with the site, and particularly young people taking ownership of the natural environment around them. The site has benefitted from reduced anti-social behaviour and litter and increased public use.

### Highlights

- New seating and interpretation to provide facilities and increase local use of the area
- Ecological management plan produced to support future plans and build on the work of this project
- Large events programme engaging the local community with the site, supported by SeaScapes
- Princes Trust programme linked to the site, engaging young people and increasing their skills





## Maps

### Hazel Dene

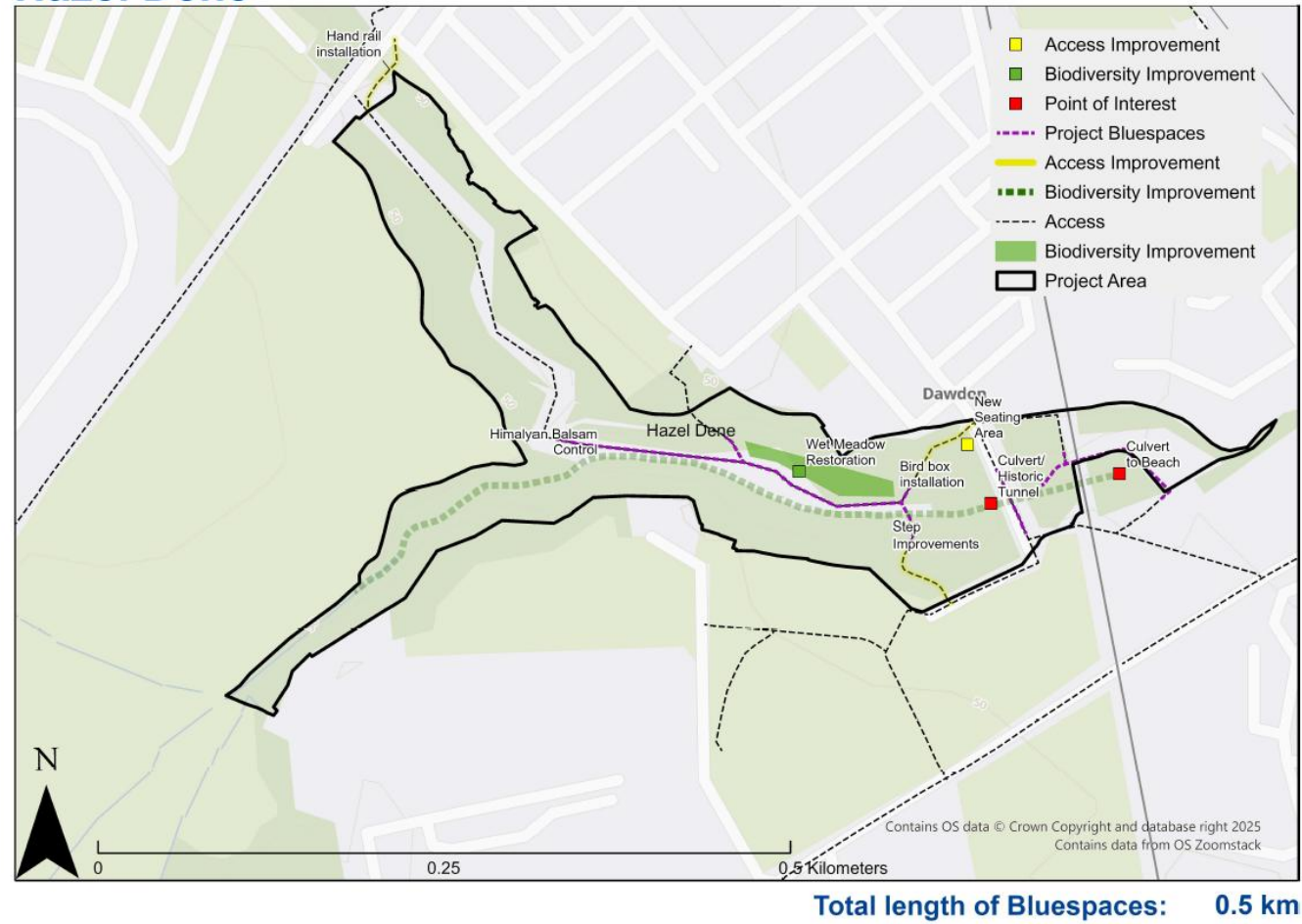


Figure 1: Bluespaces improved at Hazel Dene

## Project Outputs, Benefits & Evidence Against Criteria

| Access, Facilities & Recreation   |  |
|---|--|
| Expected Project Outcomes   | Benefits   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access improvements will be made throughout the site, including repairing steps, clearing paths and creating a new seating area for visitors, allowing Hazel Dene to become more accessible and attractive for the enjoyment of the community</li> <li>2. Work and volunteering activity will be undertaken with local residents, schools, groups, and businesses, increasing engagement with the water environment and helping to promote positive environmental behaviours and benefit health and wellbeing</li> <li>3. A Friends of Hazel Dene group will be set up to ensure the continued effectiveness of the improvements delivered in this project, building on the successes of other similar groups</li> <li>4. Public events will increase community engagement and raise awareness of their local water environment</li> </ol>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A1: Increases access to, engagement with and enjoyment of the water environment</li> <li>➤ A2: Benefits health and wellbeing through:</li> <li>➤ A3: Influences positive environmental behaviors</li> </ul> |
| Outputs   |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implementing access improvements at Hazel Dene was more challenging than anticipated due to large-scale flooding in 2023, pushback from landowners to make changes, and budget restrictions. However, conversations with the local parish councilor were productive, allowing new benches to be installed in summer 2024, and a new interpretation board to be erected that autumn. Volunteers from the local veterans group assisted with step repair work and will also assist with installation of handrails on the western entrance in summer 2025. The Greenscapes community interest group delivered step repairs to the south of the area.</li> <li>2. The volunteering and events programme was a huge success, with 12 events held in total. 6 sessions were part of an environmental project programme with the Prince's Trust, which included bird box construction and sessions on how participants would improve environmental behaviours on site. Litter picks (involving up to 35 local residents), tree thinning works, bird walks, and a further bird box construction and installation session also took place, delivering improvements not previously planned, and encouraging engagement with the site, positive environmental behaviours and increasing community health and wellbeing. Local youth groups and the Seaham Wombles litter picking group also participated in site maintenance activities.</li> <li>3. Activities to maintain and regenerate the site are now promoted through the Green Drive Regen Group, a Dawdon-based community group established to support regeneration of Green Drive and Hazel Dene.</li> <li>4. The events programme, linked to volunteering is a key success of the project. Durham Wildlife Trust's Nextdoor Nature project hosted a celebration event in 2023. Community litter picks, bird walks and volunteering opportunities have also proved popular to increase community engagement and raise awareness of the local water environment.</li> </ol> |  |

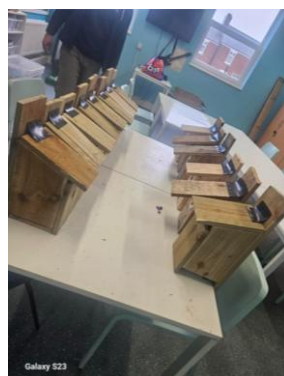
## Evidence



Seating area before and after installation of benches



Interpretation board



Bird box making with The Princes Trust



Guided bird walks





Community litter picking

**The Green Drive Regen Group**

**Nextdoor Nature**

An invitation is extended to all local residents and the community of Dawdon, Seaham and beyond to mingle, connect and share their stories. There'll be activities, stalls, guided tours of Hazel Dene, with the chance to meet lots of local organisations.

Connect and celebrate the people restoring nature and connecting people across the North East!

**When: Saturday, July 22nd**  
**Time: 10am - 3.30pm**  
**At: Dawdon Youth and Community Centre**  
**Hall SR7 7NH**

**Join us for:**  
Food!  
Live music and jam session!  
Wildlife walks and crafts!

**Get in touch:**  
Tom Parkin (Durham Wildlife Trust)  
parkin@durhamwt.co.uk

**Logos:** Durham Wildlife Trust, SeaScapes, bluespaces, NORTHUMBRIAN WATER living water, Heritage Fund, and others.



Celebration event on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023

**Dene Walk+ Bird Boxes**

Support local wildlife!

Green Drive Regen Group and Durham Wildlife Trust are leading a free walk and talk in Hazel Dene, Seaham. Have the chance to learn about local wildlife, help install bird boxes that were built by the community and clean up the dene. All equipment provided, just bring yourself and suitable footwear and clothing.

**Venue:** Hazel Dene, Queen Alexandra Rd, Seaham  
**Meet at green gates entrance**  
**Date:** Saturday 25th November  
**Time:** 10am - 12pm

**Logos:** SeaScapes, Durham Wildlife Trust, and others.

**GET INVOLVED**

**Thursday, 23 February**  
**11 am - 1pm**  
**Meet at the Green Gates, Dawdon Welfare Park, Queen Alexandra Road**

A new and exciting community project is starting this year. We are regenerating and rewilding Green Drive and Hazel Dene. Come along, help and learn about looking after your local environment. There are lots of opportunities to get hands-on:

- Scrub clearing
- Raking
- Bailing
- Strimming
- Cutting up fallen trees\*
- Making seats from fallen trees\*
- Beltan bashing
- Litter picking

\*All machinery will be operated by licensed professionals. You are welcome to watch, learn, and ask questions.

All ages welcome! Kids must be accompanied by an adult guardian and supervised at all times.

Get in touch: greendriveregen@gmail.com



Leaflets and banners were produced and shared to get volunteers and the local community involved in wildlife enhancement projects



## Wildlife & Biodiversity

| Expected Project Outcomes  | Benefits  |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Biodiversity will be enhanced through the commissioning of an ecological management plan and the implementation of appropriate conservation management for the site along with the restoration of two meadows</li> <li>2. Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed at the site will be controlled by volunteers and contractors</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ B1: Improves the quantity, quality and connectivity of habitats</li> <li>➤ B2: Improves the conservation status and or abundance or distribution of species</li> <li>➤ B3: Reduces risk or impact of invasive non-native species (INNS)</li> </ul> |

## Outputs

1. An ecological management plan, commissioned by Seascapes, was produced by Dendra Consulting. This provided recommendations to improve access and signage, reduce anti-social behaviour, manage invasive non-native species and enhance biodiversity. Some of these recommendations were implemented as part of this project, and the report remains a source of reference for those involved in future management of the site, including Seaham Town Council.

Not all meadow restoration was feasible due to the amount of flooding of the dene, although tree removal has restored an open meadow area, with the debris being left on site to create habitat piles. One of the meadow areas has benefitted from the flooding with plants that favour the wet soils becoming more prominent. At least 30 bird boxes, made by the Prince's Trust and the local community, have also been installed throughout the dene, with help from a local youth group and the Seaham Wombles.

2. Durham County Council have injected the Japanese Knotweed on site in 2023, and Balsam pulling has been completed on ad-hoc visits to Hazel Dene as well as by the local community on volunteering days, with up to 25 people on a session. Future herbicide management of the Knotweed has now been incorporated into the Council's site management work programme.

## Evidence

Ecological management plan [Healing Hazel Dene management plan.pdf](#)



Local children making habitat piles, and helping to erect nestboxes

## Water Quality

| Expected Project Outcomes  | Benefits  |
|--|---|
| 1. The visual appearance of the watercourse will be improved through the removal of litter and stream habitat enhancements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ C1: Reduces pollutants entering waters from point or diffuse sources</li> <li>➤ C2: Contributes towards improved status or no deterioration of rivers or bathing waters or protecting drinking water</li> <li>➤ C3: Improves state and function of water, including naturalisation, visual appearance, litter and odour</li> </ul> |

## Outputs

1. The visual appearance of the watercourse has been improved through the removal of litter - 3 litter picking days have been completed with the local community. The group had hoped to implement stream enhancement work such as de-silting and embankment reinforcement, however an agreement could not be made between landowners and lead partners on liability following the works. Due to the winter flooding, the removal of litter helped the stream to be 'flushed' naturally, also contributing to the improved visual appearance.

## Evidence



Extensive litter problem in the Dene



Litter-free environment, cleared by volunteers




## Additional & Secondary Benefits

| Expected Project Outcomes   | Benefits   |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The removal of litter and fly tipping will help local residents and groups to use the area in safety, and activities to care for the dene will promote a sense of community ownership</li> <li>2. The natural heritage of the site will be promoted through public events supporting the site's links to local cultural history (the dene once hosted a bandstand) and the local mining legacy</li> <li>3. This project will help deliver against the SeaScapes programme's goals, and work towards Durham County Council's Countryside Objectives and the Durham Heritage Coast Management Plan 2018 – 2025</li> </ol> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ D2: Provides benefits to local communities, the local economy or NWG</li> <li>➤ D3: Supports strategic project or investment into strategic partnership or landscape/regional activity</li> </ul> |

## Outputs

|   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The removal of litter and the improvements delivered, together with the community engagement legacy of the project means Hazel Dene is now a much more attractive site to local residents. One of the most positive aspects of the project is the community, particularly young people, taking ownership and trying to encourage positive environmental behaviours, for example the involvement of The Prince's Trust group as evidenced above. A youth group that attended one of the litter picking events at Hazel Dene were so inspired that they put together a successful funding bid, through Creative Youth Opportunities Young Volunteers Group, to Children in Need Social Action Fund. The funding delivered the Seaham Sea Saviours community project, which focused on protecting waterways and the ocean from pollution.</li> <li>2. Local residents have been connected to the Dene's natural and local history through guided walks, community action days, celebration events at the local community centre and a new interpretation board.</li> <li>3. This project has helped put a spotlight on Hazel Dene and its potential as an important community greenspace, particularly relevant with new housing developments nearby and the foreseen increased pressure on the coast as a result. This all ties into the SeaScapes programme and Durham County Council objectives.</li> </ol> |
|---|

## Evidence



Seaham Sea Saviours is a project that is being led by local Seaham Young People.... we are all members of Creative Youth Opportunities Young Volunteers group and this project is a social action project with a creative twist!

The project is funded through BBC Children in Needs Social Action funding in association with the #iwill fund.

The idea for this project came from the beach litter picks and the Green Drive clean up we took part in 2023.

The project has been running since summer 2023 and will come to its end in March 2024 - although we do hope to secure funding to keep it going!

The aim of the young people is to inspire other people, especially other young people to take care of our beaches (and our seas)

we have undertaken research, thought hard about our message to the public, we have created art work, commissioned artists and thought hard about how we can capture people's attention. On Saturday 23rd March we plan to do just that!

we have a marquee booked for Terrace Green, our own plans with art installations, performances and awareness raising and we will have space for stalls where we would welcome relevant organisations who can help us get our message across!  
could that be you?

contact us at [admin@creativeyouthopportunities.co.uk](mailto:admin@creativeyouthopportunities.co.uk) if you can help

Seaham Sea Savors flier

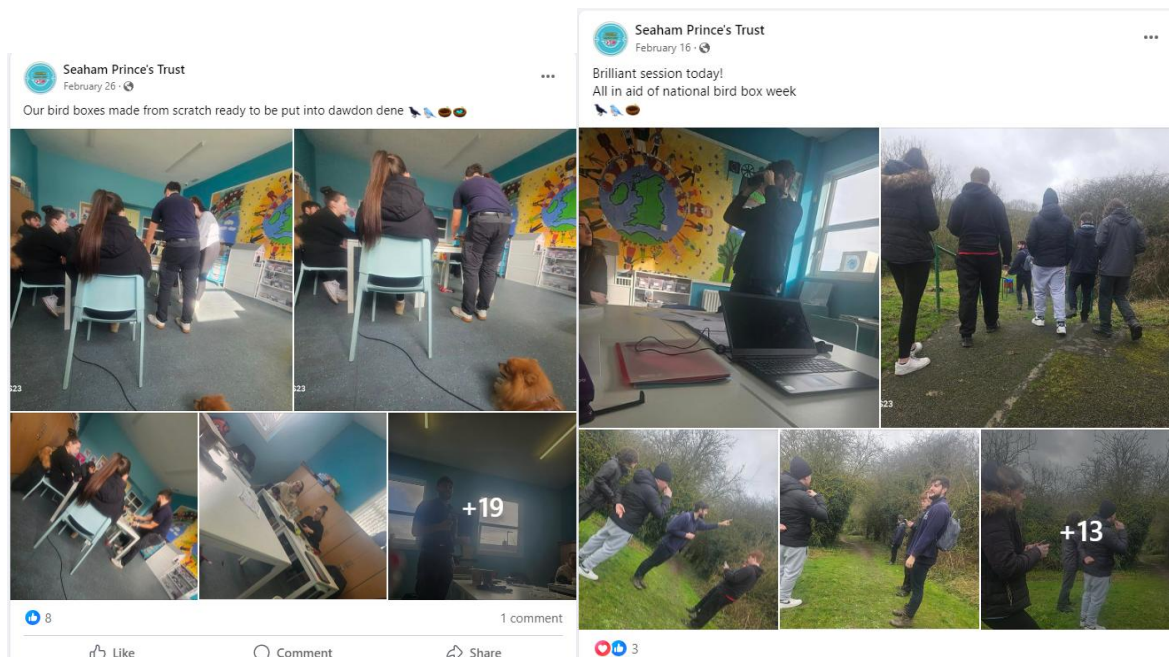


Social media post by a local resident, highlighting a well-being benefit derived from the dene

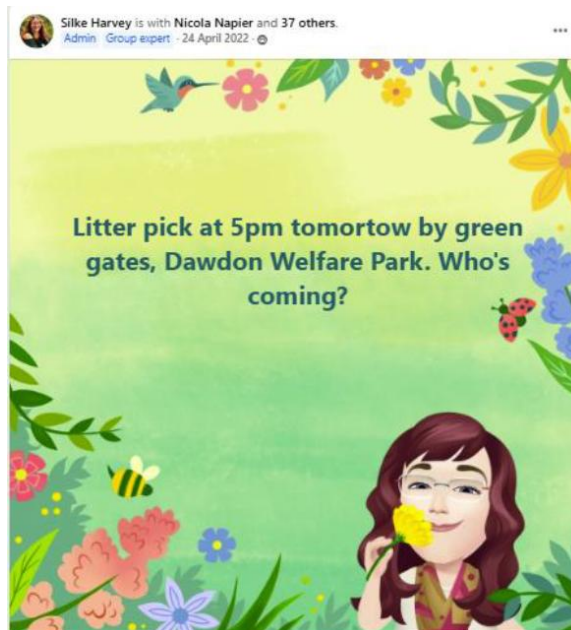
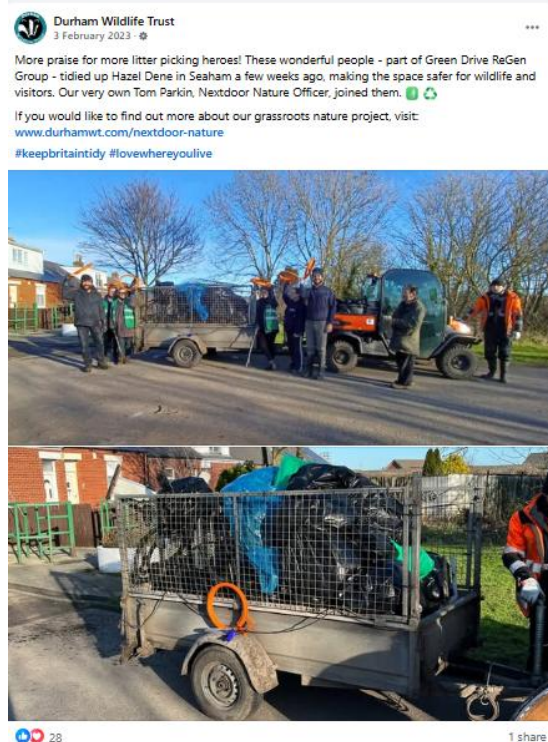
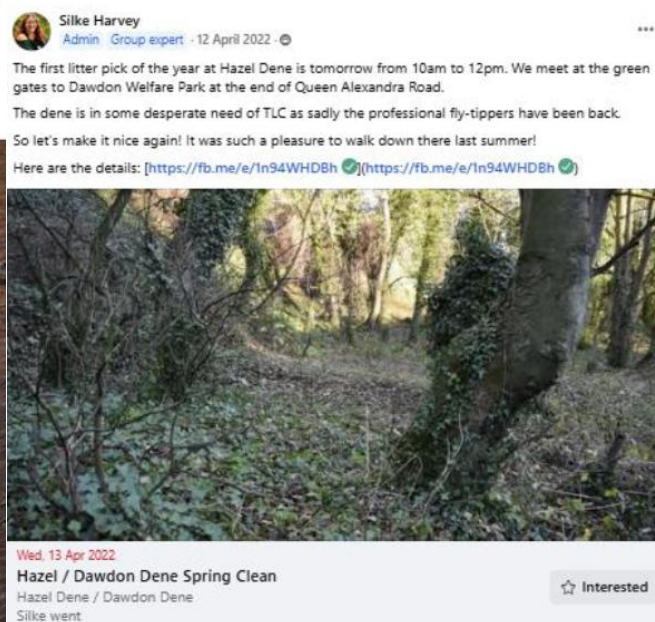


## Customer Testimonies & Media

Social media reports of Prince's Trust events



## Social media posts advertising litter picks







*'Nice to meet up with Tom and others, seems like a great project, something we'd like to get involved with.'*

**Facebook user**

*'My son loves these things and would love to come back and do it again!'*

**Community volunteering event attendee**

## Lead Partner Quotes & Testimonials

*Through Nextdoor Nature, I became connected with The Green Drive Regen Group via Silke, a local resident, who primarily used the space for dog walking. Silke identified how the green space had been neglected from management and abused by individuals for fly-tipping, littering and fires. Linking back to the past history of the once Welfare Park, Silke saw the potential to connect other local residents to nature, quite literally on their doorsteps, and ways she could empower more people to experience wildlife here and take action.*

*I have supported Silke through multiple meetings with Network Rail, trying and frustratingly failing to receive their support for access improvement works into the dene. We met regularly at the nearby Dawdon Youth and Welfare Community Centre, where I connected other groups and organisations to become involved and invested in the project, raising the profile, and value of this green space. Through this, I have supported the group with leading multiple engagement sessions in the dene – litter picks, bird ID, nature walks with local residents. Door-knocking, leafleting and flyering were all part of this process. Linking in other organisations such as the Princes Trust, whose 12 young people (16-25) on the project, were able to focus their community project on developing litter and dog-waste awareness schemes and learned about bird species and call ID in the dene, then designed, built and installed bird boxes here. This project was hugely impactful. Some of the young adults, who were taken regularly to the dene for their sessions, exclaimed that they had never once previously stepped foot into the green space, even though they lived at the entrance. Exposure and awareness of local wildlife had been missing and their desire to improve the space for birdlife as a result was incredibly rewarding.*

*There have been a multitude of challenges, ranging from the lack of support from Network Rail, Silke returning back to her home country, to severe flooding and fallen trees preventing access to this site, which have ultimately halted a lot of progress. However, connected council members and strongly associated members of the Green Drive Group have linked in other local groups to build power and make this beautiful site a space people can continue to not only connect with but help restore nature.*

**Tom Parkin, Nextdoor Nature Officer, Durham Wildlife Trust**

*I feel like we've had a positive impact on the Dene. It has raised its profile in the local area, people that use it for anti-social reasons have moved off from the main part of the Dene which makes it a safer and more pleasant place to visit, this is likely a result of increased footfall at the site. I've really enjoyed being part of the project, a highlight has been the Seaham Sea Savors being inspired by one of our events to create their own whole project around litter issues and encouraging better behaviours in people!*

**Georgina Fuller, Community Organiser**

*Receiving the funding from Northumbrian Water has brought the community together to raise awareness of this important site with it's mosaic of different habitats and features. Funding has enabled the newly formed Community Group to work with the relevant local authorities to tackle invasive species, clear footpaths, create habitat piles, plant trees, erect bird boxes and install a seating area with interpretation. Durham Wildlife Trust have increased community engagement with their Next Door Nature Scheme and several groups including Veterans have been carrying out work from litter picking to scrub clearance. None of this would have been achieved without funding from external partners.*

**Louise Harrington, former Seascope Beach Care Officer, Durham County Council**



## Other Supporting Evidence

### Next Door Nature / Prince's Trust events organised:

- Bird call workshop 15/2/2024
- Site walk and community tasks event 1/2/24
- Litter pick 12/2/24
- Seaham Saviours event 23/3/24
- Nest-box making (also with other volunteers) 22 & 26/2/24



Flooding in the dene prevented completion of some works