



Libraries Connected



Culture Nature, a partnership for People, Libraries and Nature

**A project developed by Natural England in partnership with Libraries Connected:
New funding opportunity for public libraries.**

Natural England have secured funding to offer a number of English public library services up to £6,000 to develop and deliver a project which helps communities build their connection with nature, how they think about, feel about, and experience nature. When we feel very close to nature, we recognise ourselves as part of the natural world, and value our relationship with it. We notice nature, seek it out, and feel happy when we are in it. Whatever our relationship with nature is, we can get closer. We can notice more, listen more, feel more, enjoy more, and care more.

“Culture Nature England” is Part of the Research and Development of the Protected Sites Strategies Project

Protected Site Strategies (PSS) are statutory powers for Natural England in the Environment Act 2021 Section 110. Natural England are researching how to utilise this legislation in ways that bring together key stakeholders to tackle some of the biggest challenges that nature faces evidenced by the impact on wildlife and geodiversity found on protected sites and to help restore the most precious habitats, species and geodiversity. Research is required to inform the Protected Site Strategies Advisory Guidance to learn from local groups and communities, what is actually perceived and understood of Protected Sites.

Background to Culture Nature England

Research shows that the closer we get to nature, the happier we are, the more worthwhile life seems, and the more we are willing to take action to help our wildlife and the environment. In the context of the problems our climate and wildlife are facing, closer relationships with nature are more necessary than ever before.

Natural England aims through the Culture Nature England project, to work in partnership with Library staff and share learning and thoughts to support communities and nature, and connect with additional organisations to enhance nature recovery and share the benefits nature can bring to all.

Public Libraries are wonderful spaces to help communities connect with nature, they have books, display areas, spaces where people can come together for creative activity and debate. Some libraries have outdoor spaces that they could use to build people's connections.

Do you have an idea for a project that would help your community connect with nature? Do you have local creative, cultural, health and wellbeing and environmental partners who could help you? Are you planning to reach groups who don't have the opportunity to connect with nature?

This handbook funded and supported by Natural England including the five pathways to nature and a range of case studies might help you develop your ideas. Think creatively – we'll be looking for ideas that will really inspire your local community and your local knowledge, your partnerships and your understanding of your community are crucial to this.

<https://findingnatureblog.files.wordpress.com/2022/04/the-nature-connection-handbook.pdf>



To apply to be part of the project please complete the attached application form <https://librariesconnected.smapply.io/>
If you are successful you will receive

- Support/guidance/training from Natural England for the delivery of combined Nature and Culture opportunities that result in nature and health positive outcomes in communities, including a green infrastructure map of the area immediately around your chosen library.

You will

- be invited to attend an introductory meeting and receive half day Nature Connection training
- be asked to provide an outline scope for the project
- contribute to the national project evaluation
- engage with local cultural, environmental and health and wellbeing organisations to develop a project that will build the role of libraries as place-based "green" community hubs that can provide connections to health, wellbeing, green infrastructure development and local nature recovery

The funding can be spent on items such as:

- Printing of maps and activity material
- Nature Connection Training
- Additional resource to support engagement activities i.e. Cultural or Environmental Facilitators
- Partners such as local historians with insight into green and blue spaces locally, artists, storytellers, theatre groups, gardening experts, engagement professionals to support interaction with groups)
- Travel
- Accessibility
- Developing your internal and external spaces to facilitate activity

The funding can't cover major capital works

Project Timeline

The project must be completed by end March 2025.

Phase		By
1	Open invitation, meetings and libraries apply Libraries selected and matched with local Natural England (NE) team	Weds 8 August applications in Closing date 30 August 2024 Selection by 13September
2	Library lead and Natural England lead meet and gather information to build profile of each library	By end September 2024
3:	Libraries attend local half day Nature Connection training?	By end September 2024
4:	NE Lead and local library co-design delivery of project and plan evaluation	By end September
5:	Libraries deliver project	By Mid March 2025
6	All evaluations submitted no later than one month after the end of your project	All evaluations must be submitted by Mid March
7:	Continuous evaluation and final report	End April 2025

Please submit your Culture Nature application using Apply (you will need to set up an account via the link) at <https://librariesconnected.smaply.io/> by 30 August 2024.

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