

Project Number : 15 Outdoor Champions



Project Overview: The Outdoor Champions programme will engage participants with the natural and cultural heritage of the Carbon Landscape through a structured programme of health walks. The rationale for supporting a ‘health walks’ focus, reflects both the findings from national and local evidence of effectiveness. As part of the referral programme participants will receive an outdoor exercise offer and behaviour change support over an initial period of 12 weeks as well as monitoring support for up to 6 months.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles

Project Location: Various

Project dates: June 2017 to June 2022

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
6 weekly sessions x 48 weeks per annum ~ 864 in total?	864	508	
485 new participants per annum (1,455 over 3 years)	1,455	820	
30 new volunteers to support the programme over 3 years	30	30	
Additional outputs delivered			
Anything unexpected or additional outputs!			After the pandemic, because of the effect of British Cycling on the Carbon Trails the project moved over to working from the Cycling Hub at Leigh Spinners Mill.

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what’s the one thing that you’re most proud of that has come from your project being part of the Carbon Landscape?

The highlight for us was the launch of the Carbon Trail as part of the “Week in the Wild” as the community launch for the Carbon Landscape. It was a logistical fete to say the very least. It involved a relay of three groups of walkers totalling 32 people. The first leg was Warrington Train Station to Irlam Train Station (12 miles) with Livewire leading, Irlam Train Station to Astley Mining Museum with a drop at Little Woolden Moss Nature Reserve (6 miles) and finally Astley Mining Museum to Wigan Flashes (9 miles - did not go as far as Wigan Train Stations) led by Be Well (formerly Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles) where the finale of the event was being held. This involved the logistics of a

minibus relay for walkers. The feedback was that the last leg (Bridgewater Canal and Leeds-Liverpool Canal Leigh Branch) was not varied enough and absolutely fine for cyclists but not for walkers. Subsequently the route changed to go up the Glazebrook Trail with spurs at New Moss Wood, Little Woolden Moss (West side entrance), Windy Bank Wood, Bents Garden Centre and Hope Carr before reaching Pennington Flash. We are proud of the way we co-produced our trails so that local people feel ownership for them and also how amazing our volunteer walk leaders are for stepping up to support this event.

What difference has this project made to the cultural and natural heritage of Carbon Landscape?

This is the first time three local authorities have worked together in the area to provide a comprehensive, wrap around healthy walk service. Be Well ran Wigan and Leigh and Tracy Lamb was the overall co-ordinator, Matt Fairhurst ran for Warrington Livewire and Jo Bennet ran for Salford Community Leisure. On the whole, this approach worked well although each area Wigan, Salford and Warrington had autonomy to run the walks programme how they saw best. This led to some amazing collaborations e.g. when the walkers from Wigan, Leigh and Salford came together to walk the "Boothtown loop" which encompassed Lancashire Mining Museum at Astley and Worsley Woods both of which had been supported by other programmes in the Carbon Landscape.

The biggest surprise for culture has to be what the pandemic brought. Lockdown killed the organised walks in early 2020 but not the people getting out on walks which exploded. However, because the programme team had received the British Cycling funding the Outdoor Champions "morphed" into a cycling programme from late 2020 run by our cycling lead Chris Evans running out of Leigh Spinners Mill Cycling Hub. Like Tracy Lamb, Chris brought his own charisma to the outdoor champions and, as a former police man, he is passionate about motivating others to get involved and especially training the leaders. As the Carbon Landscape Heritage Funding period has ended, he has moved into cycling for "Active Travel" e.g. getting to work and we are pleased with the new infrastructure works that are happening across the borough with new multi-user cycle routes going to connect to Pennington Flash.

In terms of cultural and natural heritage the beauty of the Outdoor Champions has been around raising awareness. We have been particularly successful at engaging with new audiences with no prior knowledge of the history or wildlife of the area. As the project manager Richard Smith (BeWell) said

"I had never even heard of a wildlife corridor. Now I can see how important it is to move people through the landscape for them to appreciate it. I would say it broadens people."

Local participant said

"Waggy tail walks have been really important for me. They have helped to improve my dog's social skills whilst in a safe environment. We've discovered parts of Wigan that I didn't even know existed. I've since revisited the walks and taken others to explore the area. Low hall and Amberswood are beautiful. I even used some of Tracy's knowledge to storytell along the way Tracy deserves a medal she makes every walk fascinating. Her walks are the best part of the month."

What difference has this project made to people?

There are two sides of health and wellbeing.

- Firstly, there is the being active. The majority of people attending the walks or cycling on the week days are over 50 so they are more susceptible to health problems.
- Secondly there is reducing social isolation which has got to be good for mental health. Some of our participants report that they might not have spoken to anyone in the last two or three days. Their mood changes instantly.

Increasing cycling confidence is interesting since participants reported that they have not cycled much before and now they are getting to know the local cycle routes and learn about the landscape. We also have increased confidence in bike repairs because not knowing how to fix a puncture is a barrier and so there is all that type of learning. Leigh Spinners Mill is set to get a unit for doing up bikes and distributing them at reasonable cost in the community.

Members of the private facebook group "Wigan and Leigh Walking Group" ran by Tracy Lamb were asked about their experiences on the Carbon Landscape. There are 1.5k members.

"Nothing but praise for Tracy Lamb and her team all walks well organised and a chatty leader to make you all feel welcome."

"Tracy is the most amazing motivator I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. She has the amazing gift of being able to get people to join in with absolutely anything. She inspires me to go that little bit "extra" without me realising it! An amazing asset to the Council and the walks program. Please keep this going!"

"Comments about Tracy Lamb.... She's fab! Super welcoming, full of energy and her super power seems to be remembering names. Comments about the walk... it was the only activity I could safely do with my baby (she's on oxygen, immunocompromised and it was mid-pandemic, so indoor stuff was a no-go). The walks were a godsend. I was very isolated before, not just because of the pandemic but being a first time mum, I had no mum friends and we have no family in the area, so with my husband at work I was completely alone. Not now though, I've met some fabulous people through the walks."

"I went on the bump and buggy walks at Haigh and 3sisters whilst on maternity leave (2021). Those walks were lovely, nice to get out chatting to other parents, allowing the babies to interact with a coffee after if fancied. The cost of children along with maternity pay can feel like there isn't much to do but these free walks really helped 😊. Since the bump and buggy walks my son (👓) and I have been on the bat walks.... they have been so interesting. Tracy and Karen Scott are such friendly lovely people and make everyone feel so welcome 😊 they even allowed my 8 year old to be a walk leader on the bump and buggy walks over the school holidays....he got his own jacket and felt so proud to in his words "have his 1st job" 😊"

Useful Links

www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/explore Interactive map

www.wigan.gov.uk/BeWell/Activities-sports/Active-Outdoors/Index.aspx

www.letsride.co.uk/groups/leigh-spinners-community-cycling-hub

[Salford Wellbeing Walks - SCL \(salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk\)](http://Salford Wellbeing Walks - SCL (salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk))

[Walk this way to volunteer to help lead LiveWire's popular Health Walks around Warrington • Livewire \(livewirewarrington.co.uk\)](http://Walk this way to volunteer to help lead LiveWire's popular Health Walks around Warrington • Livewire (livewirewarrington.co.uk))

Future Plans and Legacy

The legacy is undoubtedly that the walks have been mapped, all their interesting features are much more accessible. Then the other part of the mix is we have our amazing volunteer walk leaders and cycle leaders who keep the programme running even if there is not a professional member of staff present. So, we are continuing to be active on the Carbon Landscape, even without the Heritage Fund, because of the increase knowledge. We can still share.

Also, and a bit of surprise to us the cycling hub has really grown from strength to strength. Leigh Spinners Mill have put a funding application into Transport for Greater Manchester to put cycle parking on site and to improve the access onto site and put showers. We are seeing lots of ongoing physical infrastructure improvements in the Carbon Landscape.

Lessons learned?

One of the local authorities struggled to recruit volunteer walk leaders and participants. It is fair to say to them it was not easy as the wetlands are with almost a peninsular of the borough. However, Tracy Lamb adapted and is great at coming up with solutions. Even despite Covid we managed to extend the offer of the programme.

Photographic Evidence



First leg of the Carbon Trail near Glazebury for launch at Week in the Wild



Leg 2 Irlam Train Station. Tracy Lamb far right.



Leg 3. Richard Smith far right



Leigh Spinners Mill Community Cycling Hub

Funding Partners

