REWILD HASTINGS REPORT

By Project Rewild CIC

Funded by Active Sussex

March 2023

REWILD HASTINGS

Active Sussex, Children & Young People Investment Fund

Rewild Hastings, By Project Rewild CIC
September 2022 – March 2023

This report has been created to review and assess the outcomes of the 'Rewild Hastings' Project delivered by Project Rewild CIC.

Active Sussex funding received: **£7,667**

All quotes in this report are directly from parents of children who attended the project over the last 7 months. Or the children themselves.

The idea:

REWILD HASTINGS: Our Project aimed to deliver exciting weekly outdoor adventure activities for local children. Through these events we wanted to connect, educate, and inspire young people of Hastings to get outside and get active. Our activities would establish spaces in which children can have lots of fun outdoors while getting active. Less about competitive activity and more about community play and fun outdoors. Playing in the woods and over the fields and hills, fishing in the sea, getting active, improving physical and mental health without even knowing it's happening.

The sessions would include:

- Woodland sessions: nature-based play, climbing, exploring, archery, bushcraft.
- Coastal sessions: Sea angling, beach craft, beach-based games, and activities.
- Greenspace sessions: Classic childhood games, exploration, team activities and play in local green spaces around town.
- Conservation work: Elements of physical conservation work will be undertaken in the outdoor spaces we use to help young people build a closer relationship, and take ownership of their local outdoor spaces.

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How?

These events are based upon tried and tested activities of which we have been delivering via our existing free community groups such as HAF. The funding has allowed us to offer more regular and sustainable weekly sessions to young people in the town instead of just in the school holidays.

We aimed to target young people of both secondary and primary age in selected areas of deprivation. We are already established in two of these areas - Church in the Wood (Hollington) and North's Seat (North Hastings). We also work in local schools in these areas. We hoped to work with schools and local community groups in targeting children who will benefit most from this work: Such as FSM, low attendance, and SEND.

The locations selected would spread us well across Hastings and enable us to be as accessible as possible to young people.

What we did.

We delivered 31 Rewild Hastings sessions from 1st September 2022 - 31st March 2023.

- 23 Weekly after school woodland sessions in Hollington (Chrurchwood).
- 8 school holiday sessions in local woodland, the beach and on the East Hill.

Due to the Active Sussex funding of **£7,667,** Local Children in Hastings and St Leonard's have been able to access these outdoor activities for free. They can get outside and be active in a fun and engaging way.
The communities we have been working in the most, including Hollington are in the top 10% most deprived communities in the country. Up to two thirds of children are living in poverty. The recent cost of living crisis is hitting our communities extremely hard.

With this funding, we set about delivering a unique and exciting programme of outdoor activity events for children in our town. Helping them to get outside and active in natrure.

Rewild Hastings.

Outside and Active.

Free nature based activity groups for children

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Weekly group (Term Time)

From September 2022 to the end of March 2023 we delivered a free weekly (term time) after school group in Hollington, St Leonards.
23 sessions have been successfully delivered in Churchwood woodland to 53 children. The group has continued to run through the whole winter, even in the dark, cold evenings.
This group has been very popular and allowed local children to access our work over a long period of time. The excitement of playing night games in the dark has also added even more to the winter sessions.

"Can't imagine Hasting's life without Rewild. First thing I ever dropped my son off at... he loves the energy and all-weather adventures. Big respect to the highly experienced team and what they offer to local children."

School Holiday sessions:

In The school holidays we have delivered 8 outdoor adventure sessions to children. These exciting groups have engaged 102 children. These days have been incredibly popular with children and parents.

BEACH.

Our school holiday beach sessions have offered local children exciting new experiences along the town's magnificent coastline. Sessions have included: Sea fishing with our professional angling instructor, Coastal exploration and education, beach-based crafts, and loads of active play and games on the beach. Despite Hastings being a coastal town, many of the children who attended had never played on the beach in this way, and most had never tried fishing.

Fishing is a great way to relax while staying active. Connecting with our coastal landscapes which we are so lucky to have here in Hastings. Our experienced instructors help children to learn everything they need to get fishing.

GPs, nurses, and other health care professionals can now prescribe angling instead of antidepressants in many parts of the UK.

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HILLS.

We made use of the town's stunning hills and cliffs during this project. We took children exploring and playing over the East Hill and Hastings Country Park. These sessions included lots of walking, running, climbing and playing. Again many of the children involved had never been over these hills.

"My 9 year old absolutely loves the activities and has such a good time. Luke and his team are brilliant. I know I am leaving him in safe hands and he comes home happy and stimulated by the time spent with Project Rewild."

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WOODS.

We also delivered woodland sessions in the school holidays, as well as our weekly group. The large public woodland in Hollington allowed children to play free and be wild directly in their community. Children kept active by running and playing in the woods. They learnt new skills in bushcraft and Archery. The consistent use of the same woodland gave local children a sense of security and belonging to the space. We know that many kids have since explored the woodland without us.

"This is an amazing group! My children absolutely love going and have loads of fun outside! They particularly love building campfires and making different crafts and all the games on offer! The leaders are so friendly and care for the children well! I would highly recommend Project re wild to anyone!"

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What worked well?

Outside & Active: Our groups have successfully engaged nearly 200 local children in exciting and fun outdoor activities. These activities help children to run, climb, roll, spring, balance, splash, explore and play. Children are being physically active whilst having loads of fun. Parents repeatedly tell us their children are exhausted after our sessions, but full of exciting stories about the day.

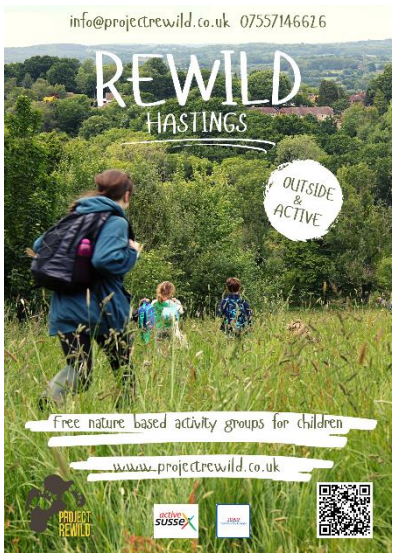
Regularity: With this funding we have been able to run groups almost every week for 6 months. This consistency has allowed many children to go far beyond one-off exciting experiences. Children have been able to return again and again, allowing them to make more friends, be more active more of the time, get fit while having fun, and spend more time outside in nature.

Engaging our targeted community: Our free term time weekly group has been directly in Hollington. 42 of 53 children who attended this group were from the Hollington area. That is 79% from our targeted area.

New Opportunities: Our school holiday sessions have offered opportunities for local children to discover and explore some of the town's most magnificent natural spaces. We have been on our amazing coastline, explored the East Hill and Country Park as well as lots of woodland fun. Many children who have attended these sessions had never been over the Country Park or spent time playing on the beach outside of the summer months.
As well as the wonderful locations, children have been given lots of new skills and activities to enjoy. Including sea fishing, crabbing, archery, slacklines, abseiling, climbing, bushcraft, foraging and loads of games and play.

Accessibility: Thanks to the Active Sussex funding, all our sessions have been free and accessible. We have specifically targeted key areas of deprivation, especially the Hollington area. Many of the children who attended had Special Educational Needs. Four of our regular children are living in foster care, and many more are receiving Free School Meals.
We know from discussions with parents that these groups have been invaluable to them. Having free activities in their local community that their children love. Activities which keep their children active and outside instead of indoors on screens.

Promotion: Our exciting promotional campaign on social media, mailing lists, and posters around town has helped with the projects reach. We particularly targeted the communities we wanted to engage. The various posters used can be seen on the next page.



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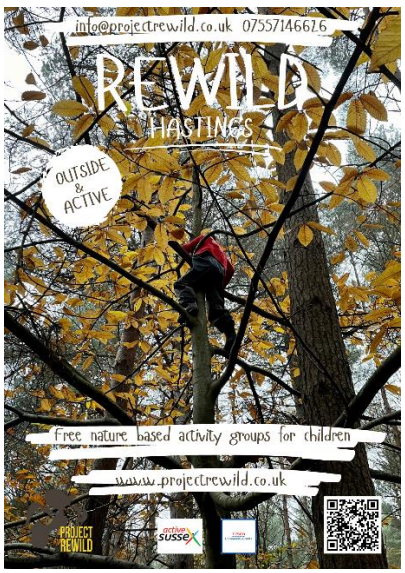

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Final numbers:

Attendance: Children who directly attended our free sessions.

- Afterschool group: 53
- Holiday groups: 102
- Family day: 30 (20 adults)

Total number of children: 185.

The aim was to engage 170 local children over a 6 month period. We have achieved this aim during the project. All sessions were fully booked. One of the reasons for the slightly higher numbers was the family day in the October half term break. This had very high attendance numbers.

We have been able to offer large numbers of children these opportunities as the funding allowed for high staff ratios on the sessions.

Despite the large numbers, many children have been able to regularly attend the groups, especially the weekly group.

Every group delivered in this project has been fully booked and had a waiting list. Our afterschool group has 29 children on the waiting list at present.

"I highly recommend sending your child/ren to sessions run by Project Rewild. They give local children the most amazing outdoor experiences, where they learn new skills, knowledge and develop friendships. Luke and his team are fantastic at providing so many activities and both my children thoroughly enjoy each and every one they attend. I feel happy knowing my children will be looked after and will come away with skills I could never teach them!"

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Budget:

We have spent **£7,693.23** on the Rewild Hastings Project. This is £26.17 over the Active Sussex funding received.

We had a little extra help with food from Tesco Community Fund. We realised we needed extra food for the after-school group as the children were extremely hungry that time of day.

We are pleased with the budget, which covered the work promised and delivered perfectly.

> ***"What an amazing experience. What a lovely group of caring people. All members of Project Rewild team are delivering an incredible learning/life experience for our daughter".***

What next?

The Rewild Hastings Project has been a great success. The problem this leaves, is the void created when funding ends.
Lots of children have come to love their time in our groups, especially those attending the weekly after school group. Parents often tell us of the positive affects the group is having on their children. For example - Improved confidence, social skills, reduced anxiety. We know the end of this project is disappointing for many children and parents.

"The only time I want to leave the house is for this group".

Layla, 12 - November 2022

At Project Rewild we are actively applying for funding to expand this free community work. We do have a small pot of Funding from 'Tesco Community Fund' to deliver sessions in the Easter Holidays. We also have HAF funding for the whole of 2023.

We hope that we have inspired children and parents to get outside and enjoy these amazing spaces more often. But we are aware that the wider benefits of group-based work for children, held by experienced professionals is hard to replicate.

We will continue to explore various funding options to maintain this valuable work in our community.

We hope to work with 'Active Sussex' again wherever possible. We are grateful for the opportunity this funding gave us, and very proud of what we have been able to achieve for our local community.

"We are so lucky to have Project Rewild in our town. My children always come home tired, muddy and full of magical stories of their adventures. This is what all children should be doing"

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"This is the best day of my life"

Kacey, 7 - February 2023

Report written by Luke Funnell – Director. March 2023
With input and support from the core 'Rewild Hastings' team: Polly Palmer, and Mark Hutchinson.

All photos taken by Claire Thompson – Project Rewild CIC
Accompanying film created by Mark Hutchinson – Shendao Silent Films

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More information on Project Rewild can be found here: Project Rewild website