

Let Nature Feed Your Senses



Project Update – Summer 2011

This summer on one of your sites the 5,000th visitor had a memorable sensory-rich experience! A huge hurrah and thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to host these visits. Check out the feedback from the group

leaders on page four, it glows! Congratulations! We had a great conference too and thank you to Reaseheath College, our speakers and the workshop presenters for your support in making this a great day.

Our 2nd annual conference was a great success and brimming with ideas!

Re-awakening a childhood sense of wonder in the natural world was the focus when farmers and care home activity managers from across England came together at Reaseheath College on 6th September. The second Let Nature Feed Your Senses National Conference buzzed with energy and enthusiasm as delegates worked to develop new activity ideas to inspire a love of nature amongst 'hard to reach' visitor groups.

Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks from ['Going Wild'](#) led the group into the world of imagination, fires, adventure, clay, dens and masks, all sourced from natural materials, exploring how host farmers might remove social barriers and awaken a sense of wonder in the natural world amongst diverse audiences.

Speakers shared ideas for delivering powerful visits for people with disabilities, the elderly, and people from areas of high social deprivation. A range of stimulating questions was tackled; What is distinctive about a sensory rich farm visit and what health and well being impacts have visitors reported? How can elderly people with dementia be encouraged to reminisce during farm visits? How might a host farmer partner with local care providers utilise personalized care budgets? How can taste be brought into a visit to help connect visitors to the story of their food?

[Cracking Good Food](#) from Manchester ran great workshops in Reaseheath's brand new state of the art Food Technology Centre using foraged and seasonal foods in soup and on pancakes! Tasty!

Check the LNFYS website to download the ['Going Wild' presentation](#) for loads of ideas, the Cracking Good Food fantastic recipes and visit plans and ideas for what to put in a memory box.



Stunning masks were made in the woods



Making soup from foraged greens

The Going Wild approach

We were delighted to have [Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks](#) deliver the keynote presentation and run two workshops at the recent LNFYS conference. Their mission – ‘to awake a sense of wonder in all that nature has to offer’ matches the aim of LNFYS beautifully. Jo and Fiona have found their approach is applicable with a wide range of audiences, whether young or old, urban or rural, disabled or socially excluded. When planning visits they suggest:

- Make it fun
- Make it varied – sensory, creative, imaginative, practical, adventurous...
- Be flexible
- Start where your audience is
- Get people out all year round making the most of the seasons
- Using raw materials from beginning to end process



The idea is to find something for everyone. Do go to their presentation on the LNFYS website to see a rich array of stuff you could try on your next visit. Below is a tiny taster from their [presentation](#).

Using clay and natural materials



Monsters in the trees



Clay and twig creatures



Puppets

Wild weaving



Simple stick frame



Willow sculptures



Dream catchers

Building relationships

Let Nature Feed Your Senses is about improving access to the countryside, and building people's confidence to get outdoors and explore nature. A big part of helping this to happen is through building relationships between groups and their carers/teachers and custodians of the countryside – you!

2011 has been a big year for making connections with groups. Over 350 groups have been contacted this year across England promoting Let Nature Feed Your Senses visits. Many groups are starting to make bookings for 2012. For next year's visits we expect that host farmers will build on these relationships and follow up these groups, who would be unable to access the countryside without the help of the project, to invite them on another visit. If an organisation has visited your site before, a repeat visit is fine as long as it includes people who have not visited your farm previously. A lot of foundations for lasting relationships have been built, keep up the great work!

Have you kept the contact details for the organisations that have visited your site this year so you can follow them up for 2012? If not, please contact Carol (LEAF) carol.cartwright@leafuk.org or Marian (Sensory Trust) letnaturefeedyoursenses@gmail.com for their details.

Is it worth it? What does Jo North, RC for the South East have to say?

“Being part of this project has meant building some fantastic, lasting relationships. As a host farmer and a co-ordinator I have had the opportunity to meet a wide variety of farmers all doing fantastic jobs in their own ways. Personally every person I have met as part of a visit has been a unique treat! Building relationships with charities and individuals who do a lot of good in the community has been great and as a farm we have built relationships with groups that will visit us for years to come. Examples of organisations we have built relationships with are a local drop in centre for adults with learning difficulties, two sure start centres in areas of deprivation, a charity for children with autism, local wildlife groups and a school for children with severe physical and mental disabilities.

“The main thing is communication, if the visit enquiry comes through LEAF or Sensory Trust I email/call the group as soon as I can. I really want them to come out so I try and make sure that any issues that they perceive are dealt with immediately. Usually they are access and health and safety which are easy to address as we have our risk assessment and access review which I send them.

“After I have spoken to them I encourage an initial visit if possible although this is often not possible due to time commitments.

“I always do a pre-visit plan and send to the group so that expectations are clear from the onset and any particular areas of interest such as calves, grains etc are covered off. I also attach a map which is particularly useful if the group haven't visited us before.

“The visits I have gone out and got on my own have been through networking events, courses I have been on, people I have met in the street, presentations I have done and through postcard shots followed up by phone calls. These can take months to come to fruition but are really worth it as you are building the relationship from the start.

“Focusing on the seasons is a good way of getting repeat visits and we have members of a photography club who have come to take photos in the autumn and the spring. They were mainly two different groups but the centre used the photos for displays, calendars and competitions. People having a great time is of course the best way to get visits!”

How about this for great feedback?

Planning your visits to meet the particular needs of your visitors is one of the most important things you can do. The pre-visit conversation with the group leader is the key to this. There is plenty of evidence that the care being taken on your visits is making a positive difference for everyone! Here is a small sample from the visit evaluation forms.

“I was very impressed that he was understanding with the people that had dementia and the afternoon was a very hands on experience for them.”

Group leader, Kirkella Mansions, elderly with dementia visit to Bishop Burton College.

“I would recommend to others and I would return. Staff so helpful and an ideal mix of animals and crops to keep the children interested. Brilliant day for our students with complex needs.”

Nikki Wardell, Sheringham Woodfields School, children with disabilities, visit to Astley Farm.

“Excellent guide, knowledgeable and patient with our service users.”

R.Colley, Woodlands ABI, Adults with disabilities, visit to Tee’s Valley Wildlife Trust.

“This is such a valuable experience for our pupils; many never experience life outside of the home, never mind being able to engage with nature. It is such a grounding and rewarding experience.”

Green Meadow School, Young people with disabilities from an area of deprivation, visit to Pepperpot Farm.

“We have had the most amazing day, far exceeding any expectations we had. Gini and Charlotte put so much effort into the day and it’s the best day out we have ever had.”

Lyn Wilkie, Highfield Care home, over 65s with disabilities, Stanstead Bury Farm.

“The wonderful, thoughtful staff absolutely made this a great trip. Kindness of providing chairs in the yard and the beautiful tea table.”

Alison Trudgey, Langholme, elderly group with disabilities, visit to Bowcawen Farm.

“We felt, as a group, that you had really thought about how the residents could interact and adapted where and when needed.”

Tracey Demartino, Orchard Manor Transition Service, disabled young people, visit to College Farm (Russell Smith)

“All of us were made to feel very welcome and the staff understood to tailor information to encourage less able children to access everything.”

Mari Hulse, Willow wood Community school, children with complex learning needs, visit to Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

“We enjoyed a unique experience in a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere. All our pupils were catered for with tolerance and dignity”

Pauline Hunt, Young people with disabilities from an area of deprivation, visit to Molescroft Farm.

“The type of children we have can be volatile and impulsive. Mr Davenport kept them engaged, spoke to them appropriately and adapted his tour according to the pupil’s needs.”

K. Hooper, Group leader, Chestnut, Education Centre, Children with special needs, visit to Cote Hill Farm.

“John pitched everything at just the right level and made us feel welcome. A fantastic day out! Thank you!”

Darrilyn Downes, Forest Oak, group with learning difficulties, visit to Southfields Farm.

“All the children got something from the visit. they all learnt a great deal about plants and growing but they also experienced going somewhere as a group – sharing food, the social aspect of visiting – how we behave when we are out, how do we speak to others not our teachers – this is something our children find difficult.”

Stasia Jackson, Haxby Road Primary School, area of deprivation, visit to Stockbridge Technology Centre.

Need some helpful prompts for your conversation with the group leader before the visit? Click [here](#) to download the prompt sheet.

Reminiscing, recollecting, reliving rural memories

A lot of positive feedback was received from this year's regional workshop on hosting visits for elderly people and many hosts have felt more confident to run these visits. Did you know that on average 70% of elderly people in care homes have a disability? These visits are slower in pace and require careful thought and discussion with the carer or activity coordinator so that the visit works well for everyone. If you didn't make the training do visit the [reminiscence](#) webpage and download the handout as it will give you some useful information.

"One of the ladies is virtually blind and said there was no point in her going but she was able to use her other senses to experience the farm and had a lovely time. Even the residents with short-term memory loss remembered the day when prompted with photographs."

Jacque Moss, Fairholme House, over 65s with disabilities, visit to Broughton Grounds



Senses and sensitivity

Many hosts have had experiences running visits with children and adults with a wide range of disabilities this summer. **The sensory rich aspect of your visits is so important** to ensure everyone has the chance for an engaging experience. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) magazine website has a lot of links to information about many of the disabilities our beneficiaries have. This [link](#) is to a short article about the sensitivities of children with autism that you might find helpful.

"The sounds of beans dropping fascinated him."

"I hosted a visit for a group of adults with Down's Syndrome. On the visit we did a lot of touching eg running fingers through barley, oil seed and beans, and stroking animals. One uncommunicative man wouldn't at first feel the oil seed rape, beans and barley, so I placed some oil seeds in his hand s and he just broadly smiled as he jingled the seeds in his hands. He enjoyed dropping the beans one on top of the other, the sound fascinated him.

"A lesson I have learnt from that visit is that I had to slow down to their pace and if it took us half an hour to walk up the track that normally takes 5 minutes that is ok because the group were taking everything in and perhaps when I normally march up I miss the little details.

"This last visit gave me confidence as it was the first visit I had had with a group with Down's and I was nervous to begin with. The main thing I found was to slow down and to give everyone a chance to say what they enjoyed even if that took time. I kept repeating breeds of animals we had on the farm and crops, the repetition helped the group remember.

"Next time I would ask beforehand if anyone had any particular needs, I was not told that one of the group likes her meals exactly at 12 and we didn't go for lunch until 12.30, the lady started to get anxious, she managed and it didn't seem to spoil her day, but if I had know I could have tailored the times."

Helen Renner, North Bellshill Farm, NE

"Very informative trip. Helen was wonderful with everyone and encouraged everyone to join in"

Kerry Turnbull, Liberate, adults with disabilities visit to North Bellshill Farm

What's new on the website?

Widgits

Developed over the last 20 years, Widgit Symbols are used across the world. Clear, concise and suitable for all ages, each has been carefully designed to illustrate a single concept without adding unnecessary information. There are more than 10,000 images covering a vocabulary in excess of 40,000 words. This vocabulary is continually growing. We've developed a great ['Day out on the Farm'](#) resource for widgit users.



Do tell teachers and group leaders of children with special needs of this great resource. From what we can see there isn't one like it available anywhere.

Video to promote visits to care homes

Conference delegates got to see the great little [film](#) of St Leonards Care Home visit to College Farm, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire.

The activity coordinator recently phoned wanting to take another group to College Farm, she said that when the video arrived everyone piled into the living room and they held a mini Oscars! The photos from the visit are up on the wall and they haven't stopped talking about it for weeks – the interesting information from the farmer, how the baby bulls are getting on and those lovely china tea cups and homemade cakes. Great stuff! A big thanks to Claire and everyone at College Farm.

Audio Guide

A [guide](#) has been developed to help teachers integrate the audio stories easily into their lessons. A range of classroom activities are provided, along with links to the National Curriculum in England. The list of activities is not exhaustive, as many of the audio stories lead themselves to literacy and numeracy learning, as well as other cross-curricular approaches.

Things to do

Some more ideas for activities on visits have been added to the 'Things to do' pages. See the section on ['Framing'](#) for ideas on using the wooden frame in your Discovery Bags. Take the idea further by cutting different shaped holes in cardboard and have your visitors find the corresponding shapes. Don't forget to send in your ideas and photos for sensory rich activities and we can add them to the website. Sue Padfield sent in the 'I spy' photos.



Bird song and serenity...do try it.

"A small group of elderly residents from a local care home, most of whom have dementia, had come inside from feeding the lambs and baby cattle and were settling down for a cup of tea. Birdsong was put on the CD player and we were amazed at how the atmosphere changed from rather agitated to serene. Everyone was calm and relaxed, and even those who usually have poor appetites ate several of the home-cooked flapjacks with relish. The care home manager was delighted that they all sat down for a good 45 minutes, she said they don't ever see a mealtime like that in the home."

Sue Padfield, Fosse farm, SW

Soft, feathery, tickly, prickly, silky, slippery and fun!

Hands on, sensory rich and memorable visits at Pepperpot Farm, Y&H; Lees Court Estate, SE; Fosse Farm, SW and Church Farm, EofE. All visits making the most of the sense of touch!



Let Nature Feed Your Senses

Visit Checklist

A reminder of the key administrative tasks for every visit.



Before

- Have the pre-visit conversation with the group leader.
- Read your health and safety checklist
- Check your planned route – any new risks or access issues since the risk assessment and access review were carried out?
- Please remember to let your regional co-ordinator know well in advance of a visit taking place. (We are unable to pay for visits you have delivered if you have not told your regional co-ordinator beforehand.) Please check with your regional co-ordinator that the group fit our beneficiary criteria. Please also check with your regional co-ordinator before offering a group assistance with their travel costs.
- Let your insurer know of your planned visit
- Order any resources (take home bags, discovery bag items, Shaun the Sheep activity books, BBC breathing spaces books etc) from the LEAF office at least one week before your visit takes place.

During

Please make sure the following forms are filled in before the group leader departs;

- Every visit evaluation form (the revised form is attached).
- In-kind form. Please include all support you have received in preparing for and delivering a visit. If a colleague or spouse helps prepare for a couple of hours, please do record this on the in-kind form. (If in doubt, include it!)
- Photo consent form

After

Within a month of the visit taking place send the following to the LEAF office*

- Your invoice
- Every visit evaluation form
- In-kind form
- Photo consent form
- Photos if any, to be emailed

Please speak to your regional co-ordinator if you require any additional forms.

*Note: Hosts in SW send the above paperwork to their RC, Sue Padfield.

The distinctiveness of LNFYS visits – who and what

Our target is for 9,600 people who are currently unable to access nature, to take part in sensory rich project visits by August 2012. We are over halfway!

Who takes part in a visit?

Our specific beneficiary groups are:

- people aged 65 or over;
- anyone from a region's 10% most deprived Super Output Areas;
- people with any type of disability;
- and people under 24 who are either disabled, from a 10% most deprived Super Output Area, or attend a school that is currently unable to access the countryside.

What happens during a visit?

The project is distinctive in terms of what happens during a visit to a farm or nature reserve.

A Let nature feed your senses visit;

- Engages all 5 senses
- Communicates the links between nature, food and farming
- Is active
- Is tailored to the specific needs of the visitors



Resources

Discovery Bag 'top ups'

We have 100s of the sticky 'nature palettes' in storage to be used during the life of the project, please don't hesitate to request more.

Take home bags, booklets, seeds etc

We have four different 'Shaun the Sheep' activity books (kindly donated by Weetabix), eight different BBC Breathing Spaces booklets, plenty of printed 'take home bags' (ideal for collecting small items during a visit) and project salad seeds.

Postcards for promotion

We also have postcards for hosts and community connectors to promote the visits throughout your local networks... There is a postcard designed for each beneficiary group. There is space on the back for you to include your own contact details.



How to order more of all the resources

Contact Carol at the LEAF office; Carol.cartwright@leafuk.org or 02476 413911.

Running in a green field

Experiencing a wide, open green space can be an important part of a visit to your site.



Research has shown that brief exposure to green outdoor spaces – and in one study, to photos of green settings – can improve concentration and impulse control in children and adults in the general population – individuals *without* ADHD. A recent [study](#) of more than 400 children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder found the children tended to have milder symptoms if they regularly played in a green and open environment (such as a soccer field or expansive lawn) rather than in a green space with lots of trees or an indoor or built outdoor setting. To run freely and safely, or to stand/sit still and soak up the green expanse is a wonderful experience you can give to your visitors.

Need to speak to someone about the project?

Please get in contact with your Regional Coordinator or the Project Coordinators, James 02476413911 james.taylor@leafuk.org or Jen 01726 222900 jbartlett@sensorytrust.org.uk.

Regional coordinators contact details

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