



# FOREST OF BOWLAND

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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# People Enjoying Nature

## Introduction

People Enjoying Nature (PEN) is an outreach project scheduled to take place in the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme. This project aims to give individuals who are dealing with mental health or social isolation issues the opportunity to get out in the Pendle Hill landscape and take part in new activities and learn new skills. The project will meet these aims by offering these individuals the opportunity to get involved in a number of supported sessions in the Pendle Hill landscape which will involve a range of different activities and will relate to the other projects in the LP scheme. Sessions will occur throughout the year, however the majority will take place between March and October of each year. The PEN project will encourage participants to become aware of the wider implications of the activity they are taking part in, with regards to the project the session is linked to, and the wider LP scheme. We hope to evaluate the benefits these sessions have on the participants, in terms of general enjoyment; mental health and well-being; social networking and skills gained/employability.

NHS Lancashire Care Foundation Trust East Lancashire Community Restart have been involved in the development of this project and will also be involved in the delivery stage. Community Restart is a forward thinking service that is dedicated to improving quality of life, promoting opportunities and improving the outcomes for people across Lancashire. They work in partnership with people who access the service, carers, mental health specialists, employment providers and environmental agencies to provide the opportunities and community connections for individuals to improve their health and wellbeing. They support individuals who have mental health issues and/or suffer from social isolation both on an individual basis and by setting up and supporting groups and projects in local communities. These connections will enable the service to advertise the PEN project, signpost and register individuals on the PEN sessions.

## Background to the PEN project

There is an increasing amount of academic research looking at the benefits of being in the outdoor environment on mental health and well-being. Studies such as Access to Nature (Natural England 2011 – 2014) and reports about Ecotherapy projects (Mind, 2007 onwards) are also raising awareness within the general population, NHS services and environmental/nature based organisations. Some of this research is now looking at how social prescribing and offering different alternatives to patients can be beneficial to the NHS in terms of reducing pressures and the financial savings.

There are other projects which are currently in operation, across the country. For example there is a nature and well-being project funded by Public Health at Somerset County Council run by three AONB's in Somerset (Mendip, Quantock and Blackdown Hills). The project has worked with a variety of different groups already, and has had success in producing sustainable relationships between groups and session providers (e.g. farmers), demonstrating the positive effects the project is having on mental health and well-being and how that is becoming more evident to organisations and service providers. The PEN project also has the potential to add to this research, but also, more importantly aims to improve mental health and well-being of multiple individuals by giving them different opportunities.

We know from surveys and studies that there are still underrepresented audiences within the Pendle Hill Landscape, who don't benefit from taking part in activities outdoors because of a number of barriers, including transport, lack of confidence and lack of knowledge about where to go and what to do. This project will be able to work with some of these underrepresented audiences who may benefit the most from spending time out in their local environment, potentially providing them with the confidence they need so that they can make return visits on their own or with friends and family and deepen their engagement with this landscape. Our partners in this project, East Lancs Community Restart also identified an interest in visiting and enjoying the wider countryside amongst groups and individuals who they work with and support.

## PEN Pilot Project

To better plan for the PEN project within the wider Pendle Hill LP scheme it was decided that running a short pilot programme during the Development Phase would be very beneficial. Outreach work with this target audience is not something the AONB have a lot of experience with and so the aims of the pilot were to evaluate and observe the content of the sessions, interest in the project and logistics such as sites for activities and transport. Additionally the pilot study was seen as an extra opportunity to talk about and introduce the wider Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership scheme to a potentially different audience, one which may not have heard about the LP scheme previously.

### Planning the Pilot – What We Wanted to Happen?

#### Dates and Times

With the aim of having all the sessions in the programme outdoors, we assumed that a pilot programme would be most enjoyed during the spring/summer period, however recognised that the summer school holidays may influence participant's ability to join the sessions due to other commitments. The first session was planned for the 27<sup>th</sup> April, the week after Easter, with the aim that the programme would run for 12 weeks and so to finish just before the start of the school summer holidays. This time frame was suitable in terms of offering a range of different activities and realistically practical in terms of financial spend and time spent on the project within the development phase.

After discussions with Community Restart the sessions were planned to last for approximately 3 hours (not including travel time), which we considered a realistic commitment for most people to be able to make, and we decided that having the sessions in the afternoon would be more practical for many people.

#### Transport

Transport is a major barrier for many people attempting to access the wider Pendle Hill landscape, especially if they don't have access to personal transport and public transport isn't always an option because it isn't available or individuals don't feel confident enough to use it. We therefore decided that, for the PEN project, transport should be offered to participants from central pick up locations to the session venue, and back. The central pick up locations would be based on the geographical location of where the participants on a particular sessions live, however there would only be a maximum of 2 pick-up points, so individuals would still be required to make their own way to the nearest pick-up point.

After receiving quotes from different local bus hire companies, we decided to form an agreement with the Little Green Bus Company, based in Clitheroe. This service offered a competitive price, but also serves as the Ribble Valley's Community Transport and so we thought it would be beneficial to put money into this service. The agreement included a 15 seater minibus for every session, along with a volunteer driver to drive the bus.

Participants were also given the option to make their own way straight to the session site if they preferred.



Participants learning to start fire using flint in the bushcraft session,

#### Number of participants on each session

Each session was planned to take a maximum of between 12 and 15 participants. This was a suitable number for the types of activities and time frame for the sessions, as well as meeting the limits for the minibus.

#### Activities and Facilitators

The PEN pilot would not necessarily contain the same activities as the main PEN project, because these future sessions will relate more to the other work taking place within the LP scheme.



However, with the aim to evaluate which activities are particularly enjoyed and seem to provide benefits to mental health and well-being, we wanted to provide a range of content and activities in the pilot programme, which would offer participants a chance to learn new skills and provide them with knowledge on a range of different things.

We organised the sessions based on the season, local providers and what we could realistically offer. Some sessions were planned to be led by external facilitators and others by the LP team, and the sessions were planned to take place in multiple different locations around the Pendle Hill landscape.

Risk assessments and first aid was the responsibility of the Pendle Hill LP team.

## Finances

For detailed costings of the PEN pilot please refer to appendix I. The total amount spent on the programme was £2429.70 and this included costings for transport, external facilitators, venues, resources and the PEN Celebration Event.



The group learning more about the sculptures on the Pendle Sculpture Trail from the lead artist Philippe Handford

Activity	Venue	Facilitator
<b>Pendle Sculpture Trail guided walk</b>	<b>Pendle Sculpture Trail, Barley</b>	<b>Philippe Handford</b>
<b>Bluebells and wildflowers</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>
<b>Bushcraft Taster Session</b>	<b>Boothman Park, Barley</b>	<b>Adrian Rose (North West Bushcraft)</b>
<b>Bird box building</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>
<b>Navigation Skills</b>	<b>Barley</b>	<b>Outdoor Elements</b>
<b>Organic Farm Visit</b>	<b>Gazegill Farm, Rimington</b>	<b>Ian O'Reilly (Gazegill Organic Farm)</b>
<b>Archaeology taster session</b>	<b>Nick of Pendle</b>	<b>Mike Woods</b>
<b>Permaculture and Pollinators</b>	<b>Gazegill Farm, Rimington</b>	<b>Victoria Woods (Bees, Trees, Flowers and Peas)</b>
<b>Dry stone walling taster session</b>	<b>TBC</b>	<b>Alan Rhodes (Dry Stone Walling Association Mastercraftsman)</b>
<b>Arts in the Environment</b>	<b>Downham</b>	<b>Keith Parkinson and Beverly Chapelhow (Ribble Valley Art Studios)</b>
<b>Rivers</b>	<b>Gazegill Farm, Rimington</b>	<b>Victoria Woods (Bees, Trees, Flowers and Peas)</b>
<b>Geocaching</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>

Table 1. The first version of the scheduled plan for the pilot programme, which was in place as the programme started on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

## What actually happened?

The PEN pilot project ran from 27<sup>th</sup> April until 13<sup>th</sup> July (inclusive) with sessions taking place each and every Thursday afternoon from 1pm until 4pm. The minibus collected individuals from its based in Clitheroe and two other locations which included either Burnley Bus Station; Hodge House Allotments on Reedyford Road, Nelson and/or Open Door Community Centre, Colne. These pick up locations were used because they were thought to be central locations for the participants. The first set of participants were collected at 12.30, before going to the second pick up location and then driving to the session venue.

All the planned activities took place, however some venues/sites and facilitators changed due to unforeseen circumstances.

The risk assessments for all of the sessions was carried out by the Pendle Hill LP, even when the LP team were not leading the session. An example risk assessment can be seen in appendix 2. The first aid kit was help by the LP team representative and available throughout all the sessions and the LP team representative was the designated first aider throughout the programme.

Activity	Venue	Facilitator
<b>Pendle Sculpture Trail Guided Walk</b>	<b>Pendle Sculpture Trail, Barley</b>	<b>Philippe Handford</b>
<b>Bluebells and Wildflowers</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>
<b>Bushcraft Taster Session</b>	<b>Boothman Park, Barley</b>	<b>Adrian Rose (North West Bushcraft)</b>
<b>Bird Box Building</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>
<b>Navigation Skills</b>	<b>Outdoor Elements, Simonstone</b>	<b>Outdoor Elements</b>
<b>Organic Farm Visit</b>	<b>Gazegill Farm, Rimington</b>	<b>Ian O'Reilly (Gazegill Organic Farm)</b>
<b>Archaeology Taster Session</b>	<b>Grassroots Centre Nelson and Roughlee</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>
<b>Permaculture and Pollinators</b>	<b>Whalley Forest Garden</b>	<b>Victoria Woods (Bees, Trees, Flowers and Peas)</b>
<b>Dry Stone Walling Taster Session</b>	<b>Higher Gills Farm, Rimington</b>	<b>Alan Rhodes (Dry Stone Walling Association Mastercraftsman)</b>
<b>Arts in the Environment</b>	<b>Downham</b>	<b>Keith Parkinson and Beverly Chapelhow (Ribble Valle Art Studios)</b>
<b>Rivers</b>	<b>Victoria Park, Nelson</b>	<b>Victoria Woods (Bees, Trees, Flowers and Peas)</b>
<b>Geocaching</b>	<b>Spring Wood, Whalley</b>	<b>Jayne Ashe</b>

Table 2. The final schedule for the PEN pilot project. More details about the sessions can be found in appendix 3.

## Participants

The PEN project engaged with 30 different individual participants throughout all of the sessions. Out of the 12 sessions:

- Two individuals attended 10 or more sessions
- Nine individuals attended between (and including) five and nine sessions
- Nine individuals attended between (and including) two and four sessions
- Ten people attended just one session.

There was quite a large difference between numbers of male and female participants, with only four women engaging in the project (only two women attended more than two sessions). The participants came to the sessions as individuals, and also as members of pre-formed groups. The groups included the Good Life Project, Garden Able, Claret and Brews and Child Action North West. Individuals involved in the Good Life Project and Garden Able actively volunteer in an outdoor setting, however other participants have little regular involvement in activities that take place outdoors.

Session	Number registered	Actual number of participants
1 – Pendle Sculpture Trail	11	8
2 – Bluebells and Wildflowers	11	9
3 – Bushcraft Taster Session	12	11
4 – Bird Box Building	10	8
5 – Navigation Skills	9	12
6 – Organic Farm Visit	8	13
7 – Archaeology	8	12
8 – Permaculture and Pollinators	7	6
9 – Dry Stone Walling	10	8
10 – Arts in the Environment	12	8
11 – Rivers	7	9
12 – Geocaching	9	13
<b>Total number across project:</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>117</b>

Table 3. Number of participants interested/registered onto each session compared to the number of participants who actually took part in the sessions.



Some of the group getting a photo with Alice Nutter after learning more about some of the potential sites of archaeological interest in the area.



## Evaluation and Feedback

### Methods of Evaluation

Evaluating a nature and well-being project is complex, and this is something that is going to have more focus in the main PEN project. With the pilot programme only lasting 12 weeks, it was difficult to obtain any specific evaluation on changes in mental health and well-being, however as much evaluation and feedback as possible was obtained from the pilot study in order to fulfil a main aim and reasoning behind running this project. Therefore, please note that this is practice evaluation and not a research study, and any comments made about benefits to mental health and well-being from the PEN project have not necessarily been proven to be due to direct causation.

Different methods used to gather evaluation:

- **Photographs:** Photos were taken throughout the pilot project and were used as the main method of documenting the sessions. Consent was required at the beginning of each session from all the individual participants, and anyone who didn't consent wasn't included on any photos.
- **Recordings:** A Dictaphone was used to obtain recordings from participants on sessions. This method was only used once because it wasn't particularly effective.
- **Feedback forms:** Feedback forms were given out for participants to fill in after certain sessions, however they were not mandatory. Each form contained a variety of questions (See appendix 4)
- **Verbal feedback:** By far the most effective method of obtaining feedback from the participants. We requested direct feedback by asking questions, but also collected more indirect feedback obtained in general conversations.
- **Observations:** Due to the nature of the pilot study, and its short time frame, the Pendle Hill LP team who took part in the sessions, either as a group leader or helper, were asked to make notes on observations they made of the PEN sessions, the groups activity and behaviours.

### Evaluation and Observations

#### Photographs

A large number of photographs were taken throughout the PEN pilot project, some of which you can see in this report, and others are stored in the PEN folder within the Pendle Hill LP files.

#### Recordings

This method of evaluation wasn't very effective when used, and so it was only used the once. Quotes were gained from session 8 through conversations with individuals.

#### Feedback Forms

A version of this form was given to individuals after session 5, session 7 and session 10 (see appendix 4 for more detail) and each form contained between 7 – 9 questions. Each form related to the specific session and the programme as a whole and 17 were filled in altogether, 8 after session 5; 5 after session 7 and 4 after session 10. (Please note the same individual may have filled in more than one form (one form after each session)).

Everyone either 'really enjoyed' or 'enjoyed some of the session' for each of the forms filled in and where asked, the session had made everyone feel happy (denoted by a smiley face). The majority of people also would recommend the specific session to families and friends, and, where asked, would all themselves take part in the same session again if they could. Words used to describe the specific sessions included 'friendly', 'inclusive', 'learnt something new', 'enjoyable', 'meet new people and its very therapeutic', 'beauty', 'peaceful' and 'brilliant'. No individual made a comment, when asked, about a part of any session which they didn't enjoy and the only tip we were provided with to improve the PEN programme was to make the sessions longer (See appendix 5 for full answers to feedback form).

## Verbal Feedback

Through conversations and questions to individuals or the group as a whole, we were able to gain some direct quotes as well as individual stories and thoughts. When asked about the programme in general quotes included:

'Interesting'

'Some of the sessions need to be longer'

'Able to socialise and meet new people'

'Delivery and communication was very good. The demonstration at the start of the session was very clear.'

'Fun!'

'The organic farm visit was inspiring!'

'Educational'

'With all the negativity and things that get you down, coming to somewhere like this and learning or doing something positive, no matter how small, really recharges me!'

'We have learnt about a lot of different things.'

### One Individual's Story...

Being outside makes me feel a lot better because I am always over thinking when I am inside and I suffer from claustrophobia. The PEN sessions have given me the opportunity to be outside more, which stops me overthinking and reduces my anxiety.

I also have COPD, however was really surprised that on the Navigation Skills PEN session I didn't suffer from it very much, even though we were walking throughout the entire session. I think that this was because I was outside in the fresh air and taking part in an activity which meant I didn't think about it.

The sessions have also given me the opportunity to do stereotypically masculine activities, such as building bird boxes, which I have really enjoyed.

Many years ago I completed a course in horticulture and so some of the sessions have allowed me to revisit previous knowledge – particularly remembering Latin names of certain species!

The PEN sessions have given me the opportunity to develop friendships with different people of different ages, and build on relationships I have developed with people from the Good Life Project.

### One Individual's Story...

This individual only came to the archaeology session because he has a particular interest in archaeology and is going to study the subject at University. His support worker found out about the session and they got in touch with Community Restart to register him.

He then came to every other session after the archaeology one, even though the focus of the other sessions weren't necessarily what he was interested in, he just enjoyed the archaeology one so much that he thought he may as well try the others!

He became really involved in all the other sessions, and discussed how he enjoyed interacting with nature again, after having an interest in biology as a child. He also used the PEN sessions as an opportunity to reconnect with his family's allotment, and made an insect hotel in one of the sessions to put on there.

Since the PEN project, he has started volunteering with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust – and so definitely has reconnected to nature!

As can be seen by the above statements, some individuals discussed the benefits of being outdoors in terms of reducing anxiety and improving their mental health and wellbeing. They recognised openly that the PEN sessions gave them the opportunity to feel these benefits. There were also discussions on how working and taking part in activity outdoors in general provided individuals with more of a purpose, and provided them with a productive way to spend their time, instead of staying indoors struggling to find the motivation to do anything.

Lots of feedback came up, particularly at the end of the project, about social networks. Individuals expressed their views about the need for friendships and how the PEN sessions have allowed them to meet new faces and even build on existing social networks. This relates to the observations made about the range of social connections between the individuals in the groups. Friendships were developed between people of different ages, different genders, different backgrounds and different interests and everybody was treated equally by each other.

Throughout the dry stone walling session the group developed a 'wall of words'. The walls, one for before the session, one for during the session, and one for after the session, were filled with words relating to how the individuals were feeling and how they were finding the session. The 'Walls of Words' can be found in appendix 6.

### Observations

Throughout the programme the group leaders made lots of observations about how the group and individuals were reacting to the sessions, how they enjoyed the sessions and the group dynamics.

Within different sessions and during different activities individuals and the group as a whole demonstrated different skills. For example within the Arts in Environment session the group demonstrated their individual creativity, and used that as a way to establish a less direct interaction with the environment. In the bird box building session, at the end of the activity a few of the group suggested that we go for a walk, and were keen to explore the site more. When they went for the walk they showed an interest in the flora, asking each other questions and having discussions amongst themselves.



The group getting 'stuck in' to some dry stone walling

A clear observation over the whole programme was that the vast majority of participants were very involved and engaged in all the activities. They were keen to 'get stuck in' right from the beginning of the sessions, and it didn't matter if they had experience doing to activity before or not. Many of the participants were very enthusiastic about the activities, and seemed to be enjoying themselves the vast majority of the time. Even with individuals in the group who didn't know each other previously there was a lot of encouragement evident, individuals would help and motivate each other when appropriate, and there was a lot of interaction within the group.

All individuals who took part in the PEN session were very respectful to all the group leaders, and they seemed very keen to listen to and learn about the information and instructions they were being given. Confidence also developed with some of the regular participants, and in some sessions they felt comfortable sharing their own knowledge and experience about a certain topic or activity. People who were new to sessions generally were quite quiet at the beginning of sessions, however their confidence seemed to increase throughout the sessions, especially when the group leader or staff support took time to talk to them directly. This conversation seemed to encourage them to be more vocal throughout the rest of the session.

There were notable sessions within the programme which were firm favourites amongst the individuals. In particular the bushcraft taster session, navigation skills session, bird box building and rivers sessions were highlighted as some favourites, although if they had the opportunity most of the participants who attended more than half the sessions would state that all the sessions were their favourite. Some of the sessions were less liked by some members of the group, however other individuals still really enjoyed them, particularly the Organic farm visit and the archaeology session. These differing opinions may be down to specific interests or levels of engagement with the session (these were less practical sessions than most of the other ones). The more practical sessions, such as bird box building and dry stone walling, were particularly good examples of where individuals were engaged and involved throughout the whole session, which is useful when thinking about including practical sessions in the future PEN project which may relate to other projects such as Access for All, Traditional Boundaries or Wild About Pendle.

## Feedback from other group leaders

The following are responses from two of the external facilitators who ran session within the pilot study:

Victoria Woods led two sessions – Permaculture and Pollinators and Rivers. She said 'working with the PEN sessions has been a very positive experience, the group were well organised they arrived on time and with support from the AONB they were well equipped for the outdoor practical activities. On the Rivers session most people joined in straight away and some preferred to observe first and join in later when they felt more comfortable with the group and the activity. It was interesting to see that the group realised that I was not going to simply tell them what all the fresh water invertebrates were that we caught - instead they had to use a key to identify them themselves - be 'detectives' - this engaged them much more and I believe that we learnt a lot more as a result of actively following the key and working out what the animals were. At the Forest garden (Permaculture and pollinators) the group were very positive, asking lots of questions and joining in with the site tour and bee survey, the results were discussed and surprised many of the group which was interesting and fun. It worked out well that people could select from a range of activities in the afternoon some more physically challenging than others from scything to habitat box making. The afternoon went very quickly, I would have liked to stay longer and I hope we will have the chance to meet the group and return to the venue again in future. In general the afternoon sessions were well timed and the groups were well managed by AONB staff - I think an afternoon activity plan worked out well, perhaps if the group attended the same venue for a second time they could carry out more practical tasks on the second visit - i.e. once they feel settled and familiar with the venue and the group - there is not much time to do introductions to the site and project and then carry out a practical project on the same afternoon'

Philippe Handford led the first session in the Pilot study, around the Pendle Sculpture Trail. He said 'I thought my session went well and there was good interaction by all members, especially whilst using the tea caddy.'



**Be active...**

Many of the sessions involved a walk, of varying lengths and varying steepness! The group was particularly active throughout the Navigation Skills session, and they were able to get around an area they had never been before, navigating the route as well as walking along it! It was great to see the group really enjoy this session and there were no complaints about the walking.

**Learn...**

There was particularly a few individuals who were very engaged with finding out more about organic farming when we went to Gazegill Organic Farm. They had lots of in depth questions and became very engaged in educational discussions. Most of the group also learnt new and different pieces of information from the archaeology session, and I have had enquiries since about the local archaeology work which we are carrying out.

5 ways  
to  
wellbeing...

**Connect...**

Each session was made up of individuals who knew others in the group and some who didn't. Throughout each session, individuals were connecting with each other, getting involved in small groups and talking to everyone else in the session. The Arts session was a particularly good example of this social connection. The group all got involved with a collaborative piece, with discussion amongst themselves on the best actions to take.

**Take notice...**

Throughout the first session along the Pendle Sculpture Trail, many of the group really did take notice. There was lots of really amazing photographs taken of the sculptures and different settings in the wood, and there was also lots of individual interpretation of some of the sculptures. Throughout the sessions, there was always a lot of appreciation for the places we were.

**Give...**

When the group went to Whalley Forest Garden, they did a number of things which 'gave back' to the site. During the session we identified a number of different bumblebee species across the site, which is great information to have. We also helped regular site volunteer Martin to do some simple practical management tasks and created an insect/pollinator hotel to leave at the site.

Figure 1. '5 ways to wellbeing' has been devised by the New Economics Foundation. We have related these steps to some of our observations from individuals' behaviour in the PEN sessions.

## Lessons learned and Tips for the Future

### More efforts need to be made to engage with a more diverse audience on the PEN sessions.

There was a large difference between number of males and females across the whole project. This may be to do with the types of sessions on offer, the advertising reach of the project, or simply the fact that Community Restart and their partners have fewer women in their networks. More work could be done to reach out to more female individuals, perhaps going along to group meetings and taking the time to explain the project and the opportunities they could get involved in. The same work could be done to encourage more individuals from the BAME community to get involved.

### More efforts need to be made to engage with individuals who don't currently volunteer, work or take part in activities outdoors.

Whilst in most sessions the group was made up of people who did already take part in activities outdoor and people who didn't do a great deal outdoors, more could be done to try and encourage those who don't currently benefit from being outdoors regularly. This again may require more presence at group meetings, explaining the sessions. Theoretically those who don't currently get outside regularly may be less likely to come along to PEN sessions, however those are the individuals that this project are particularly trying to engage with.

### We cannot necessarily assume that the journey from pick up points to the session will take half an hour.

Whilst the transport ultimately worked out very well, one thing to note is not necessarily to assume that each journey will take 30 minutes. Dependent on pick up point and venue, the transport time may take longer than 30minutes, which may need to be incorporated into the activity planning.

### Partnership with Community Restart

The partnership with Community Restart is incredibly beneficial for the project. However, a more structured communication plan should be put in place as the session leaders should always know how many individuals have signed on to the session and where the bus is picking individuals up from. In the pilot study, as can be seen in Table 3, some sessions received a higher number of participants than booked onto the session. This could cause a problem if more than 15 people attend a session, and so the LP and Community Restart may want to look at ways to refine the registration and communication system.

### Some of the sessions could be longer

Even with the original decision to have just three hour sessions because of commitments and needs, the feedback from some of the PEN attendees was that the sessions need to be longer. I think that showed in a few of the sessions, when we ran out of time with the activity. For the future, I think some sessions, dependent on activity, could be longer, however the implementation of this would also depend on the logistics of planning for longer session, in terms of transport, how participants react to a longer session time, extra finances this would incur and extra communication required with the attendees.

### Contingency Plans

We were very lucky with the weather during the PEN pilot programme. No session had to be cancelled or abandoned because of bad weather, and the only week where we had rain, the session was altered slightly so that we weren't outside throughout the whole session. The aim of the PEN sessions are for individuals to get the opportunity to take part in activities outdoors, in the natural environment, and so individuals should be aware that sessions will still go ahead, even if weather conditions aren't the best. However, where weather conditions are particularly bad, such as heavy rain and wind,

contingency plans need to be put in place which can bring the session indoors or into a site with more shelter. A few contingency plans can be used throughout the whole programme, as long as there is a site and activity which can be used at the last minute if needs be.

A contingency plan may also be needed in case an external facilitator can't run the session last minute, or if there are problems with a particular venue or site.

Contingency plans should be planned and organised from the beginning of the programme.

## Always have extra batteries or a spare camera, and remember the milk!

Where cameras or Dictaphones or other pieces of equipment are needed, especially for evaluation, each group leader should ensure there is a backup device or batteries present, in case of malfunction or batteries run out.

Refreshments should be offered where possible, however there should be no claims made that refreshments will be offered at every PEN session. If refreshments are being offered the group leader should make sure to have every component to make a hot drink – unlike the multiple occasions where I forgot milk or a gas canister for a stove!

## Staff and volunteers in each session

Even though the participants of the PEN sessions are all adults and capable of looking after themselves, it is still beneficial to ensure that there are enough members of staff or volunteers for the type of activity and number of participants. There was the occasional session in the pilot programme where I think it would have been more beneficial to have an extra volunteer to help me lead the session.

It would also be beneficial to have a 'back up' member of staff or volunteer, in case someone wasn't able to help out in the session at the last minute, which also happened in the pilot programme.

## Better judge capabilities and remember to reiterate comments included on the risk assessments

In terms of specific sessions which may involve individuals working in smaller groups, with people they don't necessarily know, it is important to make sure that groups are formed based on physical capabilities, or, more importantly, that everyone in the group is reminded to be aware that other people in their group may walk at different speeds, need more regular breaks etc. Some of these reminders will be things included on risk assessments, but the group leader always needs to be sure to reiterate comments about walking on uneven ground, walking at the pace of the least quickest individual etc., as well as more session specific comments about tool use, safety concerns etc.

## Evaluation is harder than you think

The PEN pilot programme was also an opportunity for us to look into different evaluation methods. We found that it was quite difficult to obtain specific evaluation and feedback through more structured formats such as feedback forms and obtaining direct quotes. Most individuals, even after getting to know us quite well, did not want to go into very much detail about the effects the sessions may have on mental health and well-being, and there was less interest in the structured evaluation side. The best feedback was obtained during general conversations with the individuals and with less prompts, they were more likely to tell you their opinions and stories. Also something to remember is that individuals have different levels of reading and writing skills, and so to simply fill in a feedback form may be more difficult than you expect.

With the experience from the pilot study, the PEN project may need to look at plans for more long term evaluation and what evaluation is needed to meet aims or links with the 'What's a Hill Worth?' project. If specific feedback is needed to form quantitative evaluation, then this may need to be obtained by Community Restart or an individual's other support networks.



## PEN Celebration Event

We decided when planning the pilot programme, it may also be good to have a celebration/evaluation event after the 12 week programme finished. This event was planned to gather some more evaluation about the project, but also as a way to celebrate the end of the project with the participants and say thank you to all the facilitators, staff and volunteer helpers.

The event took place on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July from 1pm – 4pm at The Good Life Project, Hodge House Allotments, Nelson, a week after the last PEN session. The event was well attended by participants on the PEN sessions, particularly those who were already involved in the Good Life Project and the event was enjoyed by everyone who was there. Mike Woods, the PHLP archaeology intern, also attended the event, along with some of his artefacts and some clay. Some of the individuals made their own pots, and many asked Mike lots of questions about his work. We also had photos, some quotes and session descriptions on display, which were observed by many people, and we also had people who hadn't attended the PEN sessions asking more about the project. Some of these questions were answered by participants themselves, which was also a good indication that the PEN attendees were proud to show off their achievements and talk about their experience on the project. Some of the individuals who attended the PEN sessions and who hadn't seen any photos via social media took some of the photos home with them after their event, which again could be used as another indication of how much they enjoyed their time on the project and how they were keen to show their friends and family what they had been involved in.



Photos from the celebration event



## Conclusion

The PEN pilot programme has proven to be a useful exercise in terms of gathering evaluation about what types of activities individuals enjoy, whether a project such as PEN attracts any interest and the logistics behind planning for sessions, in terms of transport, registration, session times etc. The experience of running the pilot programme and all the feedback can be assessed and utilised so that the main PEN project can be planned and delivered more effectively and can provide as best a benefit to participants. In terms of activity and content for the future PEN sessions, the observations and feedback made from the wide array of sessions in this pilot would encourage more diverse activities, which encompass as many Landscape Partnership projects as possible. This evidence shows that practical activities would be enjoyed, as would more creative or knowledge based activities.

## Outcomes and Legacy

From the positive feedback and evaluation obtained, the vast majority of the participants enjoyed the PEN sessions they were a part of. There was very little negative feedback from any individual and the positive feedback can only add to the evidence that taking part in the PEN sessions had positive effects on mental health and wellbeing. Many of the participants have expressed enthusiasm in continuing with the PEN sessions when the main PEN project begins next year, and so we have definitely developed an interest in this project and in the wider Landscape Partnership scheme.

In terms of a pilot project, this programme has allowed us the opportunity to observe and evaluate the logistics of the sessions, provided us with some experience of working with this specific audience and allowed us to deal with some problems and understand the need for contingency plans. The transport service used worked well, but as a crucial component for this project, it was still beneficial we had the pilot study to test this.



The group visited Whalley Forest Garden and learnt more about permaculture and pollinators.

The large range of activities offered gave the PEN participants the opportunity to learn new skills and take on board knowledge about a range of different topics. These new skills and knowledge can now be used by in other areas of their life, and in some cases may encourage more research or more of an interest to get involved in similar outdoor sessions in the future. Many of the sites visited in the PEN project were new to most of the participants, and so they were given the opportunity to discover new places and the potential is there for them now to revisit these sites with friends and family if they wish. The PEN sessions gave individuals the opportunity to meet new faces and develop social networks, as well as learn about other local groups and projects which they could get involved in. We feel that all these outcomes lead to positive influences on mental health and well-being, and that participants benefited from the sessions.

Continuing on from the PEN sessions, some of the participants are taking steps to do something new and different. For example one participant, who only started coming to the PEN session because of his interest in archaeology, then decided he wanted to come to every other session after this one, and has now started volunteering one day a week for the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. One of the other participants, who attended the majority of the PEN sessions, is now taking steps to become a mentor for INSPIRE (drug and alcohol rehabilitation service), which involves attending a college course. We cannot say that these steps have been taken simply because of the PEN programme, however, especially for the Wildlife Trust volunteering, we feel the PEN sessions can only have had a positive impact on these steps.

The outcomes and legacy from this pilot PEN project have provided us with evidence that it was a success, particularly for giving the participants involved new opportunities which were highly enjoyed. This indicates that the PEN project within the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership has a high possibility of also being very successful, meeting its aims and engaging with a large audience. We would like to thank the partners involved in making this pilot study a success: Community Restart, external facilitators who led sessions or provided a venue, volunteers who helped run some of the sessions, Charlotte Hughes who provided lots of support throughout the project, and of course the participants who attended the sessions.