



Wild Ways Well

Today's Wild Ways Well task is simply to think about green health and how it could benefit you in your day to day life. Remember to follow the guidelines on Social Distancing, stay 2m apart from other people and only walk in your local area – and remember to wash your hands!

You'll **Be Active** by carefully walking outdoors (observing social distancing) exploring your local area, discovering new green spaces and taking a fresh look at familiar ones.

We can **Connect** with greenspaces and with the life that inhabits them by examining their lives and putting ourselves in their place. We can also connect with other people and organisations who are also using these spaces or who are interested in the life that lives there.

We can **Keep Learning**, Every time we take a walk in the outdoors there is more to learn, know one knows everything – There is a whole world of wildlife waiting to be discovered. You might also learn more about yourself and how you can best live your life.

We rarely **Take Notice** and look very closely at the world around us. It's amazing how much we miss out in nature when we just walk through without paying attention to what is going on. Lose yourself in the moment and really take in everything your senses are telling you.

We can **Give** by giving ourselves a break from the drama of the current events and focusing on the little things around us that give us pleasure and by sharing these with others, in person or online. We can give back by looking after our greenspaces, taking our litter home and helping others to appreciate these places.





Wild Ways Well



BE ACTIVE – Take part in health walks and practical outdoor activities. Explore your local paths, woods and greenspaces.

Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about their lives.

The Wild Ways Well project encourages people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health to get outside for some daily exercise and experience nature.

Remember to observe Social Distancing, stay 2m apart and only walk in your local area.

Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves you have a chance to slow down, relax and take your attention away from current events.

This guide will help you to try out some environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the internationally recognised Five Ways to Wellbeing mental health framework.

CONNECT – Meet new people. Connect with the people, the wildlife and the nature that's all around us.



GIVE – Your time to be in nature. Give something back by sharing experiences and undertaking conservation tasks.

TAKE NOTICE – Note the changing cycles of life. Use your senses. Listen to birds, smell the flowers, live in the moment.



LEARN – Identify plants and wildlife, try new crafts, learn new skills. Discover things about nature and about yourself.





What is Wild Ways Well

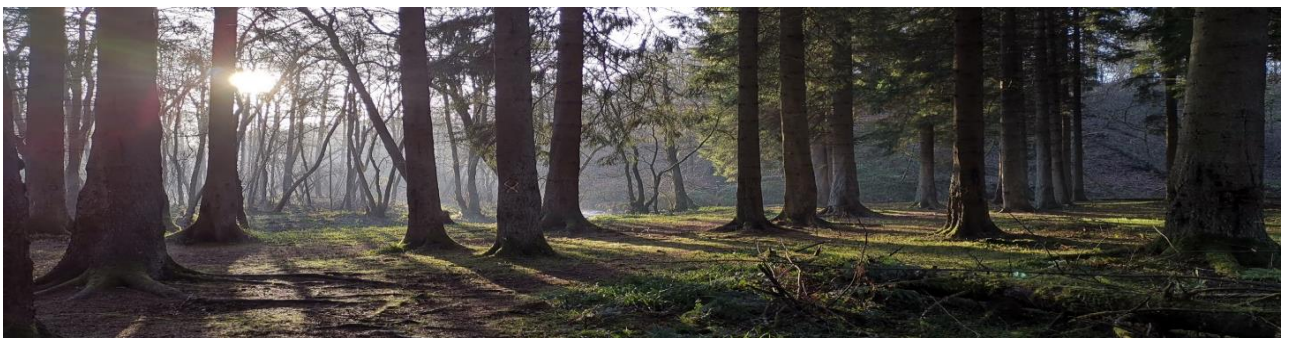
Wild Ways Well demonstrate what most of us already know instinctively. Spending time outdoors, amongst nature, makes people feel better about themselves and their lives. It is especially helpful for issues such as depression, anxiety, low confidence and social isolation.

Wild Ways Well gets people suffering from, or at risk of, poor mental health out into the greenspaces of Cumbernauld. Whilst out amongst the trees, parks and reserves participants get a chance to slow down, relax, enjoy being in the company of other like-minded people, and participate in a variety of environmental and conservation related activities designed to fit in with the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Wild Ways Well is structured around the Five Ways to Wellbeing, a framework for promoting good mental health in use by organisations all over the world including the NHS and the major UK mental health charities. The Five Ways to Wellbeing are a simple way of thinking about our mental health, they suggest five easy actions which we can all take to improve our happiness in our daily lives. Wild Ways Well takes the Five Ways and adapts them to an outdoor environment.

Example activities might include learning about trees, plants and wildlife; Forest skills like safe firemaking, shelter building and foraging; Conservation activities like wildflower planting or invasive species removal; Creative sessions focussed on photography, drawing, sculpting or storytelling; Wildlife recording and surveying and much more.

Wild Ways Well is not a replacement for more formal forms of therapy or medication but instead should be seen as a complement to a healthy lifestyle that could benefit anyone.



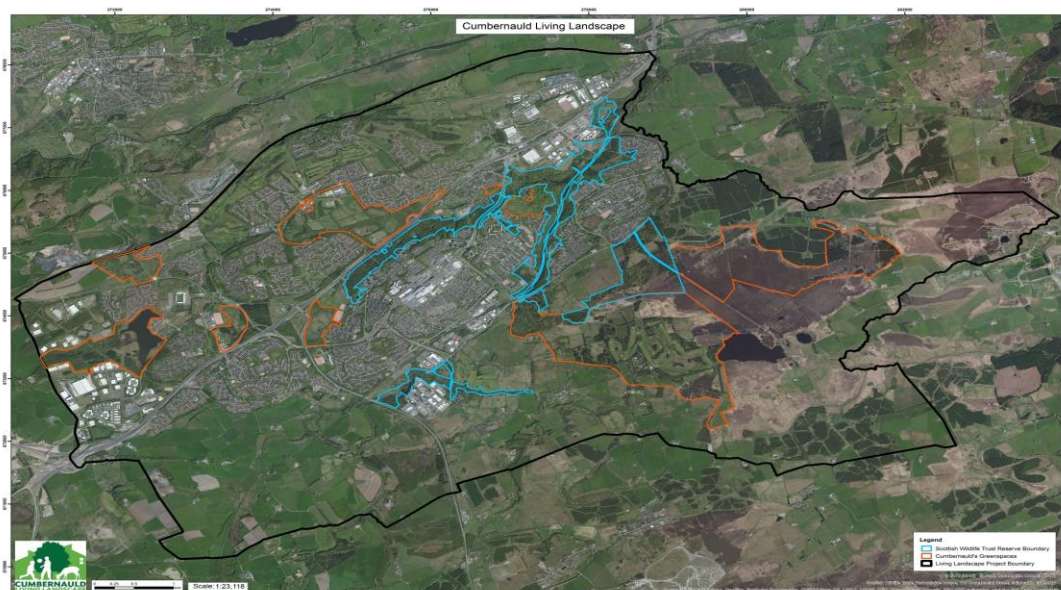


BE ACTIVE – Take part in health walks and practical outdoor activities. Explore your local paths, woods and greenspaces.

It's a little known fact that almost exactly 50 % of Cumbernauld is made up of greenspace. There are four Scottish Wildlife Trust Wildlife Reserves and dozens of parks and greenspaces managed by other landowners.

Almost everyone in Cumbernauld will have an area of greenspace within easy walking distance. Wild Ways Well encourages people to discover, explore and enjoy the nature that is already on their doorstep.

Participants learn new ways to relax and spend time amongst nature and are encouraged to return to the greenspaces in their own time. They will also learn how to interact with the environment in a safe, sustainable, environmentally friendly way, ensuring the greenspaces are protected and preserved for everyone.





TAKE NOTICE – Note the changing cycles of life. Use your senses. Listen to birds, smell the flowers, live in the moment.



We rarely Take Notice of the natural environment or our place within it. By practicing this skill we give ourselves time to breathe, to think and to be at peace. Everyone has issues or problems in their lives and the Wild Ways Well project does not aim to solve these. But a session out in nature with us can give you a couple of hours of free space and time to take your attention away from life's issues and concentrate just on being you.

- **Learn a bird song** - Every bird has a different call and as you walk through the woods or streets you'll hear all sorts of noises. See if you can begin to identify different birds by their song.
- **Look for a Bumblebee** – Bumblebees are amongst our most important pollinators, without them life on Earth would be very different. There are seven very common bumblebee species that you have a good chance of seeing on any walk around Cumbernauld. You can tell the difference between them by noting the different patterns and colours of stripes on their bodies
- **Smell the flowers** - Use your senses, instead of only exploring nature with your eyes try tuning in your sense of smell. Try and tell different flowers apart by their different scents or look for the fresh smell of a woodland or meadow after rainfall.
- **Find a rainbow** – Take a walk through a greenspace and try to make up a rainbow out of purely natural objects. Some colours are more difficult at different times of year but it is nearly always, just about, possible...
- **Watch a cloud** - Find a safe place where you can see the sky and lie on your back looking up at the clouds—can you make any patterns? Watch the weather change as the clouds move across the sky
- **Track some wildlife** – look for signs of the mammals that live in the greenspaces alongside you. See if you can find footprints, hairs, dens or beds of deer, foxes and badgers. How far can you follow their signs?





CONNECT – Meet new people. Connect with the people, the wildlife and the nature that's all around us.



Connecting with nature, with other people, with your community and with the wider ecosystem that we all share is vitally important. Wild Ways Well sessions always include a chance to sit and chat (if you want to, no one is ever forced to speak!) usually around a fire with a hot drink – and a toasted marshmallow or two! Watching wildlife, and spending time in a natural place helps you connect with the life that's all around you. You'll also learn about other groups and organisations which you can join to further your interests.

- **Go on a picnic** - wrap up warm (it is only spring!) and take your lunch outdoors with you. After a cold winter (or even colder summer) getting outside and enjoying the fresh air can be a great boost.
- **Start a nature art project** - pick a subject that you can follow for the whole season or even the whole year. Perhaps you could photograph a particular colour or draw the same spot in different seasons? You could make a collage of leaves or simply sit in a beautiful place and write. Don't worry about your ability, just express yourself.
- **Meet a tree** - pick one tree in your local area and get to know it thoroughly. Find out what species it is, work out its age—what events has it seen in its lifetime? Watch it closely, what other species live on it or depend on it? Get up close and touch its bark, sketch or photograph it. Just like people every tree is unique, there won't be another tree like your one anywhere in the world.
- **Collect conkers** - look for Horse Chestnut trees and collect their fruits. Peel off the spiky shells to get the tough glossy chestnut inside. Put it on a piece of string and see who finds the toughest conker!
- **Create a Mythical Landscape** - let your imagination go wild as you walk through the woods and look for shapes and structures that could be turned into mythical beasts and creatures. A fallen tree that looks like a dragon, a knot in the wood that looks like an eye or a mouth.





LEARN – Identify plants and wildlife, try new crafts, learn new skills. Discover things about nature and about yourself.

Learning should be a life long process, not something we only did at school, or do at work. Learning keeps our minds active, exposes us to new challenges and allows us to take pride in new achievements. Everyone can learn – but importantly, not everyone learns in the same way, learning by doing is just as good as learning from books or from other people and it's a good idea to try lots of different methods to find the one that works for you.

- **Watch the stars** – go out at night and look up at the stars. Can you find some constellations? How does the sky change over the year? You can learn the constellations that our ancestors knew – or you can make up your own!
- **Go on a fungi foray** – there are thousands of different fungus species in the UK – its unlikely that anyone knows the names of, or can identify, all of them. See what you can find, take photographs or make drawings and see what you can identify online or using guide books.
- **Learn safe forest skills** – on Wild Ways Well sessions you'll learn how to safely make, sustain and extinguish a fire – without using lighters or matches! Learning ancient forest skills like these brings us closer to our ancestors. It brings a real sense of satisfaction and confidence – plus it can be used to make a cup of tea!
- **Learn new routes** – find new ways around your local area, discover new paths and even new greenspaces themselves! There is wildlife and wild places on everyone's doorsteps – all you have to do is step out into them and explore.
- **Learn about yourself** – Try new things, look at the world, and at yourself, in a new way. Everyone has hidden talents and skills within them, challenging yourself can reveal new things about your character and your interests. Build confidence in yourself and your abilities.





GIVE – Your time to be in nature. Give something back by sharing experiences and undertaking conservation tasks.

We've all felt that little glow within when putting money in a charity box, giving a gift to a friend or just passing a compliment to someone else. Giving helps us to feel good about ourselves – whilst also doing good for someone or something else, a total win-win! Giving to others helps us to feel part of a community, to feel like we are part of something larger than ourselves and that our role within that is valued. It doesn't need to involve money, giving can take any form – you can give time, advice, wisdom, love, patience, attention... the list is endless.

- **Make a bug hotel** - Pile up leaves, twigs, moss, stones etc. into a heap and leave it somewhere secluded. It'll provide perfect habitat for all sorts of beneficial insects to live and breed in.
- **Volunteer** – Wild Ways Well has a 'volunteer pathway' after spending some time with us we can help you (if you want!) to volunteer with other aspects of our project or with other organisations.
- **Make a Wildlife Record** – Wildlife recording (writing down the wildlife you see) is one of the best and easiest things you can do to help conservation. To make a wildlife record you need to know What you saw, When You saw it, and Where you saw it. Go to the iRecord website (www.brc.ac.uk/irecord) and enter your record.
- **Plant a tree or a wildlife meadow** – You could do this in your own garden, but at Cumbernauld Living Landscape we have the permission and assistance of landowners like the Scottish Wildlife Trust and North Lanarkshire Council to help maintain and improve the wildlife habitats on their land. We can provide tools, equipment and opportunities to plant for the future.
- **Share** – you can share your wildlife experiences with others. Perhaps simply take a friend out into the greenspaces to share a cup of tea, or to see something you've found. You could write stories or poetry, draw, paint or photograph, and share these works online or to family.
- **Protect** – by taking an interest in nature you can help protect it. Feed wildlife, write to newspapers and politicians, repair and look after habitat that is vital to all sorts of wildlife.





Participant Quotes

"When someone suggested Wild Ways Well I didn't think it would be for me. I only came the first time to keep my partner happy. But I really enjoyed it and I felt amazing afterwards. I feel like I learned loads, now I go about telling everyone about the group and encouraging others to join."

"This group is brilliant, I haven't been here long at all but I really feel accepted, I feel like we're all old friends."

"I loved learning about nature, I've got a new respect for it."

"I know that I'm helping and that I'm valued. When I want to talk people will listen, and when other people need to talk then we'll listen to them. We all learn from each other and we all feel better."

"My partner was in a bad place and talking about suicide. We went to your sessions and he came back a different person. I really believe if it wasn't for you we could have lost him. You didn't just give him his life back, you gave my daughter her dad back, you gave us our family back."

"It boosted my confidence, it tripled my confidence. I feel like I could do anything now."

"I spoke to my mum for an hour on the phone after the session telling her all about it, she was amazed, normally me and my mum don't really talk much, she said I sounded like I was a different person, I was so excited and happy."

"You can see it on people, almost as soon as they get here, a weight lifts off them, you can almost see the stress melt away"

"I always feel so good about myself after I've been out with you. This group really keeps me going, I hate it when I miss it. I look forward to it all week."

"It's so amazing here, we didn't know anything about the history or the wildlife, it's amazing to think this is all in Cumbernauld. "





Join Wild Ways Well

We're offering everyone in Cumbernauld a chance to test the Wild Ways Well out for yourself and learn how you can bring nature into your daily life. Our sessions are free of charge and we provide all the materials and equipment needed. There is no need to have any previous knowledge or experience of nature or the outdoors.

Each session involves a short walk, a chance to relax and chat (if you want) over a hot drink and time to immerse yourself in the outdoors, as well as a chance to get in touch with nature and find out how it can help you – and how you can help nature in return.

You can join a Wild Ways Well 'Open' group as an individual, or if there are a number of people from similar backgrounds, or who already know each other, or or all coming from a single referring organisation then it is possible to form a 'Closed' group just for them.

Closed group programmes can be tailored to the interests, abilities and fitness levels of the participants involved. The project has successfully run groups of all ages and backgrounds. Past examples have included Families with young children; Teenagers; Senior Citizens; Disability groups; Refugee and Carers groups amongst others.

We recommend that people come on a number of sessions – a 12 week block is standard – but there is no requirement to attend every week and no maximum or minimum number of sessions you can attend. Attending for 12 weeks can allow you to earn a 'Discover' level John Muir Award.

Sessions are run weekly on weekdays and regularly at evenings and weekends. Everything is done at your pace and there will always be experienced, friendly guides and leaders, who understand mental health issues, there to help.

If you are an individual who would like to part, a group leader, or someone who would like to refer participants to the project you can find out more details on our website www.CumbernauldLivingLandscape.org.uk ; our Facebook and Twitter pages (@WildCumbernauld); or by contacting **Paul Barclay** directly - p.barclay@TCV.org.uk or on 01236 617 113





Why does nature make people feel better?

There are three main theories put forward to explain the benefits to health and wellbeing of spending time outdoors in green spaces.

Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan, 1995): ART suggests that nature provides an opportunity to recover from attention fatigue by providing fascination, a sense of being away, and a broadening of horizons.

Psycho-evolutionary Stress Recovery Theory (SRT) (Ulrich, 1983). SRT focusses on stress reduction both physiologically and psychologically and suggests that in the presence of resources that would have been beneficial to our ancestors we experience reduced negative affect and increased positive affect.

Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984): According to this hypothesis, because humans evolved in natural environments and have lived separately from nature only relatively recently in our evolutionary history, people have an innate need to affiliate with other living things. Satisfaction of this need and feeling connected to the natural world are thus predicted to produce broad psychological benefits, including increases in positive affect and decreases in negative affect.





Research Notes

Spending time amongst nature really does make people feel better about themselves and their lives. As well as its direct effect, interacting with nature has also been shown to increase the benefit gained from other forms of therapy. Furthermore, the effects are felt over all age groups, multiple time spans and irrespective of the individual's perceptions of the outdoors.

- A systematic review found evidence of improvements to self-reported wellbeing over and above the effect of physical activity. Compared with exercising indoors, exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression, and increased energy. Participants reported greater enjoyment and satisfaction with outdoor activity and declared a greater intent to repeat the activity later. (Thompson Coon et al., 2011).
- Improvements to positive affect and lower depression and anxiety have been observed from just 10 minutes simply sitting in a natural setting (Brooks et al., 2017).
- You don't have to like being in nature to receive the cognitive benefits of being there (Berman et al. 2008)
- Systematic review found lower levels of negative emotions, such as anger and sadness, after exposure to a natural environment in comparison to a more synthetic environment (Bowler et al., 2010).
- Nature helps us think more clearly when we're depressed – University of Michigan study shows memory and attention spans improved by 20% after a walk in Nature – even looking at a picture of a tree improved them by 10% (Berman et al., 2012).
- An average increase of 69% in self-reported well-being (using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale) was reported in patients suffering from depression who took part in 'a dose of nature'; a 12-week, nature-based intervention (Bloomfield, 2017).
- Natural environments have been found to be beneficial to psychological wellbeing by reducing stress and improving mood and concentration for most people. (Gatersleben, Birgitta and Greenwood, A (2016)
- Contact with nature gives improved results for mood measures such as stress, anxiety and depression (Brooks et al, 2017)





Grounding

Grounding is a great activity to self manage anxiety and stress. It simply means to focus your thoughts on what is happening to you, or what is happening in your surroundings, right now. Instead of worrying about the future, or dwelling on the past, we simply experience the moment. Grounding can not solve your problems, but it can take your attention away, give you respite and help to clear your mind from the stresses and anxieties of life.

To begin, take a walk in an outdoor greenspace. Find somewhere peaceful and safe and sit down.

Breathe

Take a deep breath in through your nose and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Build up a rhythm that feels comfortable. Try to breathe out for slightly longer than you breathe in.

- Try breathing in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Holding your breath for 4 seconds (or whatever feels comfortable)
- Breathing out through your mouth for 5 seconds.

Take your time, relax and breathe. Clear your mind and focus on the rhythm, counting your breaths. If you feel your attention drift away, that's fine. Acknowledge it, but as long as it safe to do so, refocus on your breathing.

Use Your Senses

Use all your senses to keep yourself in the present moment. Close your eyes and use the breathing technique above. Once you feel comfortable with your rhythm open your eyes and your senses.

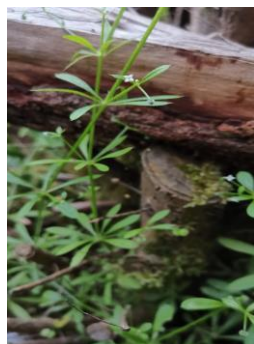
Take your time to take in the world around you. Once you feel ready name out loud

- **5 things you can see**
- **4 things you can feel** (the earth beneath you, gravity, the wind...)
- **3 things you can hear**
- **2 things you can smell**
- **1 thing you can taste** (can you taste the air? Or maybe sneak in a bit of chocolate!?)





Wildflowers to Spot this Week



Cleavers (*Galium aparine*) Perhaps better known as Sticky Wullie, Goosegrass, Bobby Buttons or Stickweed – the modern nickname of the ‘Velcro plant’ hints at its most famous feature, the ability of the plant to attach itself to almost anything, using small hooked hairs. The seeds readily stick to animal fur aiding seed dispersal. The stems are square shaped with whorls of leaflets round them and tiny white flowers. Uses in the past included straining milk, making ‘coffee’ and stuffing mattresses.



Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) This tall plant with bright purple/pink flowers is a common site on woodland clearings, paths, brownfield sites and any disturbed ground. In the past it was known as fireweed, ironweed and even bombweed – due to its ability to quickly colonise sites that had been on fire, cleared for railway lines or even disturbed by explosions during WW2. A single plant can produce 80,000 seeds, each with its own cottony parachute to help it spread in the wind. The seeds can be germinated by the heat of fires.



Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) – A member of the pea family, this scrambling plant has long leaves, growing in symmetrical rows. Long curled tendrils (the ‘tufts’ of the name) can spiral and grasp onto plants and other objects to help it climb and scramble up towards the light. The flowers are blue/purple and long, hard seedpods form in late summer. Sometimes known as bird vetch, another common name is fingers and thumbs (the seedpods sort of look like fingers with nails on the end). A great soil improving plant, it was often used as cattle food.



Links

Go further with your Wild Ways Well activity by trying these links once you come home

Cumbernauld Living Landscape www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk

Wild Ways Well www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/project/wild-ways-well

Activities www.cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk/get-involved/activities/

Facebook www.facebook.com/CumbernauldLivingLandscape

Twitter www.twitter.com/wildcumbernauld

The Conservation Volunteers www.tcv.org.uk/scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust www.scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk

SamH www.samh.org.uk

NHS Five Ways Well www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing

MIND coronavirus and your wellbeing www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership www.elament.org.uk/media/2229/19-ways-to-stay-connected-2.pdf

Nature and Wellbeing www.wildlifetrusts.org/nature-health-and-wild-wellbeing

Natural Thinking www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/our-positions-and-casework/our-positions/health

Our Natural Health Service www.nature.scot/professional-advice/contributing-healthier-scotland/our-natural-health-service



cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk