

A Landscape for Everyone: Beyond the familiar



Final report of an 18-month action-research project
funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Taj and Maria from Suffrage Sisters

Scarlet Hall

Community Engagement Worker and project lead

Andy Lees

Programme Manager – Nature & Cultural Heritage

North Pennines AONB Partnership
November 2022

Contents

Introduction	2
Initial project scope	4
Adapting the project scope to the emerging context	6
Going beyond familiar concepts	9
Challenges and learning: three case studies	10
What we learnt, and what we'll do	15
Some draft principles	29

Introduction

From June 2021 to November 2022 the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership received funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to run a project called 'A Landscape for Everyone'. The project aimed to engage with more diverse communities, to co-design opportunities to build connections with the North Pennines AONB, and at the same time support organisational learning about the barriers that limit possibilities for visiting and connecting.

There has been a long-standing awareness in the organisation of our lack of engagement with a diverse range of people, including those from lower income groups, and a tacit acknowledgement of the need for us to do more work on this. There had been efforts in many earlier projects to address some known barriers, and more recently work aimed at engaging children from lower income families and to engage with neurodiversity. *A Landscape for Everyone* is a significant next step in our journey. The project emerged out of a dynamic and interrelated national and global context including the Covid pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Glover review (The Government's Landscapes Review 2019) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund requirement for applicants to engage with new audiences who experience some form of exclusion.

Today we recognise diversity as the mark of a healthy and resilient society. However, many landscape bodies have not moved smartly enough to reflect this changing society, and in some cases show little desire to do so.
(Glover 2019)

Our vision of a landscape for everyone is a beautiful one; it has given us something to steer towards together and has inspired people to get involved. Yet we now have a deeper appreciation of how hard this work is. There are no easy answers, and it is lifelong work.

Along the way we, that is the staff involved, have questioned our values, our language, our assumptions, and the stories we tell about ourselves and about our landscape. We've recognised the importance of building relationships of trust as outcomes in themselves. We've started to recognise when it is our role to speak up for others and when to make space for others to speak for themselves. We continue to learn about our own diversity of experience and thought. We are learning to value knowledge and experience from outside our team and our culture, and we are exploring how we might bring this knowledge and experience into our everyday work.

This report describes the project journey and ends with a series of reflections on the issues we encountered and a series of principles and ways of working which emerged. The learning from this project, amongst staff, requires reflection and will take a while to be absorbed fully but is already having an impact on our future project design and everyday practice.

We have always known that this is not a usual project. It will not end when the funding ends. We cannot simply perpetuate familiar ways of doing things.

A note about this report

Writing this report together has been a lively process. It has taken us back to the tensions we struggled with and the conflicts that emerged. As we write and edit together, we also get to understand more about each other's perspectives, and develop more of a shared understanding, both of what happened and what we want to happen next.

We hope it will be of value to the groups and individuals we worked with, our colleagues in the North Pennines AONB Partnership and other AONBs, and to the National Lottery Heritage Fund as they encourage organisations to work with more diverse audiences. We also hope it will inspire and resource many more conversations and, from these, new relationships and ideas will grow.

In an effort to not simply replicate familiar ways of doing things and in awareness of how the language of institutions and funders can exclude, we bring different writing styles to this report to try and reflect principles of embracing diversity within this document. Having said that, we have sometimes had to embrace a new vocabulary to describe what we are learning. Where we think words might need explanation they are written in bold italics and hyperlinked to a glossary section. We also know that using written words and English in long documents is not accessible to everyone. We have produced an audio version of the report, narrated by AONB staff.

Finally, we write this report having just finished a collaborative writing process with co-researchers from *A Landscape for Everyone* **action-research** group. This report draws from and adds to the reflections shared in the action-research group's *Looking Back Dreaming Forward* document, and we are so grateful to all the co-researchers who dedicated time and energy and supported our learning.

Reasons to write. A reason to read

21st October 2022

We are here. 16 months since Scarlet arrived with the North Pennines AONB and 20 months since Andy wrote the funding application. We (Andy and Scarlet) are committed to writing an end of project report. Yet, a tension that has run through the project reoccurs as we talk together about our vision for the report. Who is in our minds as a reader as we envisage writing this? Who are we accountable to? Those who hold the money, or those who experience exclusion?

On the one hand we have a long-term relationship with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and we want to show them that we've done a good job. On the other hand, we also wish for this report to contribute to ongoing trust building with different communities, through being honest about what we have learnt and what we are committing to. Can we do both at the same time?

After a year of our *A Landscape for Everyone* **action-research** group, we have more confidence to name and value tensions when they show up, we have skills to recognise relevant **rank dynamics**, and we appreciate the value in welcoming a diversity of opinions. Our aspiration here then, is to write something that speaks to both the funders and those who experience **marginalisation**, and that gives all readers a reason to read it.

Initial project scope

A Landscape for Everyone was designed by drawing on our past experiences and some limited knowledge of practice elsewhere. We primarily looked at the Campaign for National Parks' Mosaic project, which recruited and developed community champions. Our project was conceived, following a suggestion by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) officer to apply for a Covid Recovery grant stream, to help us address some basic gaps in our experience and knowledge about engaging with more diverse audiences. At the time the pandemic was highlighting how large parts of society lacked access to nature.

The initial design was to carry out research to better understand the barriers that marginalised groups and communities face in connecting with the North Pennines. The NHLF's feedback was that it had to/would be a stronger application if it also included a programme of activities with these groups. The proposal was re-worked, and a grant application submitted in January 2021 that was approved in March 2021. The grant was conditional on the project being completed by 31st March 2022 and achieving the following approved purposes:

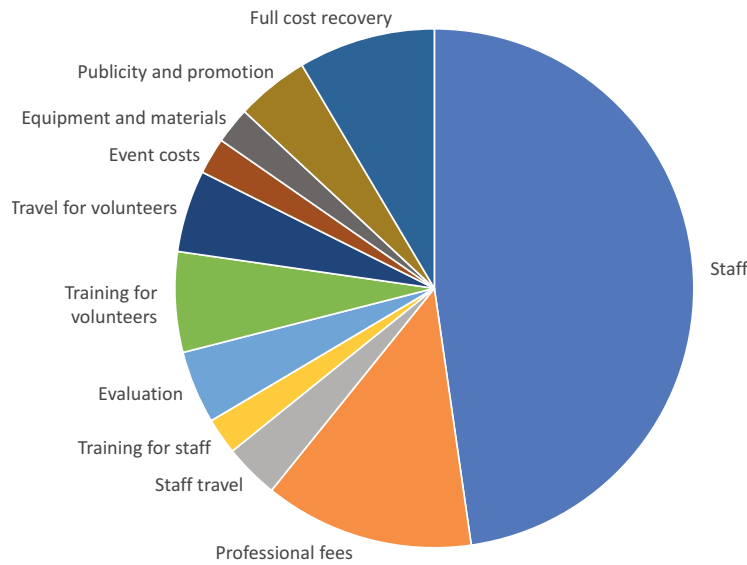
- Establishment of an advisory group made up of representatives from the North Pennines AONB Partnership, Local Infrastructure Organisations and community groups, to guide the delivery of the project.
- Recruitment of a Community Engagement Officer and the design of training for participants, staff and the AONB board in areas relating to visitor engagement and inclusion.
- Development of relationships with selected groups and their members, to recruit, train and support 'champions' and to help co-design the project activities. Familiarisation events held to make the champions feel at home in the North Pennines, familiar with the

landscape, wildlife, farmers, communities, and tourism businesses, and with the infrastructure and tools they will need to plan a day out.

- Delivery of a series of training events for champions and leaders to ensure that they have the confidence and skills needed to lead groups safely in the countryside, learn about natural and cultural heritage as appropriate, and feel welcomed.
- Champions supported by the Community Engagement Officer to co-design and co-deliver their own activities in the North Pennines with a view to organising and leading groups independently (with more remote support) later in the summer.
- Appointment of an evaluation contractor to work alongside the Community Engagement Officer, drawing out lessons learnt and feeding them back to the Officer and advisory group. They will also gather evidence relating to work with underrepresented groups in other current AONB NLHF funded projects so that this learning can be consolidated and drawn into a forward strategy for widening participation.

A community engagement (CE) worker, Scarlet Hall, was appointed in May 2021, beginning work in mid-June 2021 on a 4 day a week contract initially until 31st March 2022. The project's initial design for engagement was conceived with a fairly open geographic and demographic scope. The project's initial assumptions were that "national research and our own analysis of visitors/project participants shows that we are missing younger people, people without transport & those from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) and deprived communities."

The project had a budget of £88,460. Permission was granted in November by NHLF to extend it by eight months, until 30th November 2022, financed through the contingency money and the CE worker reducing their hours from four to three days a week.



A Landscape for Everyone budget (£88k)

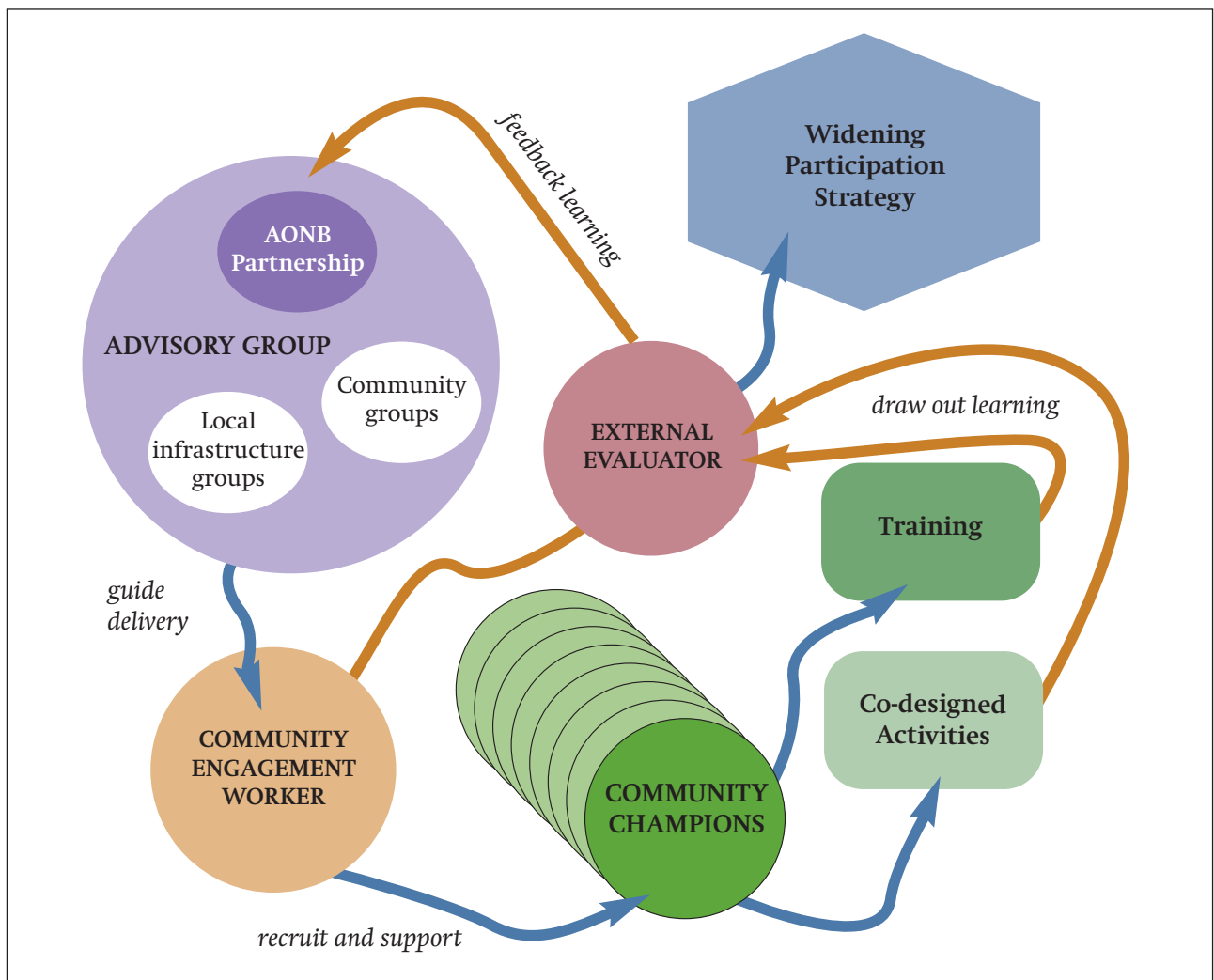


Figure 1: Initial Project Design

Adapting the project scope to the emerging context

The first phase of work was envisaged in practical terms: set up the advisory group, appoint the external evaluator, start contacting different groups. Yet there was also a recognition that this project was different to our other projects, both in the desire to establish relationships with people with very different lived experiences to that of the staff team and to embed learning in the organisation. Despite it being a short-term project, we gave ourselves the space to think and consult more about what approach to take, and a significant redesign emerged.

Firstly, we received feedback to our draft advert for *Lived Experience Advisors* in which we were encouraged to think if there was a way to build guidance and accountability into our work which didn't restrict people's collaboration with us to the role of an advisor based on their marginalised identity.

“Do I always need to know what I think you need to do, to show up and take part in conversations about making the North Pennines AONB more welcoming to more people?”

The CE worker was also curious about the original separation between the advisory space and the evaluation process, and whether bringing these together might better support the aims of both developing relationships, embedding the learning in the organisational culture, and building a strategy for widening participation. Following conversations with different colleagues and external partners, an **action-research** approach was agreed by NLHF in September as an alternative to evaluation frameworks which remain more separate to the project. Paola Roza, an external facilitator, was contracted to work alongside the CE worker in the development and facilitation of the action-research group, and to contribute to ongoing evaluation. This was a new approach for the organisation.

Alongside the action-research group, the CE worker continued their work to establish relationships with different individuals and groups over the eighteen months of the project, with a view to engagement in the North Pennines AONB or with the AONB Partnership. Initial conversations were had with a variety of groups, some of which grew into collaborations.

Conversations

- All in Youth – a youth project aimed at ending racial inequality
- Pride in North Cumbria – a youth project for LGBTQI+ young people
- El Salvadorian community member

Conversations and short-term collaboration that eventually fizzled out

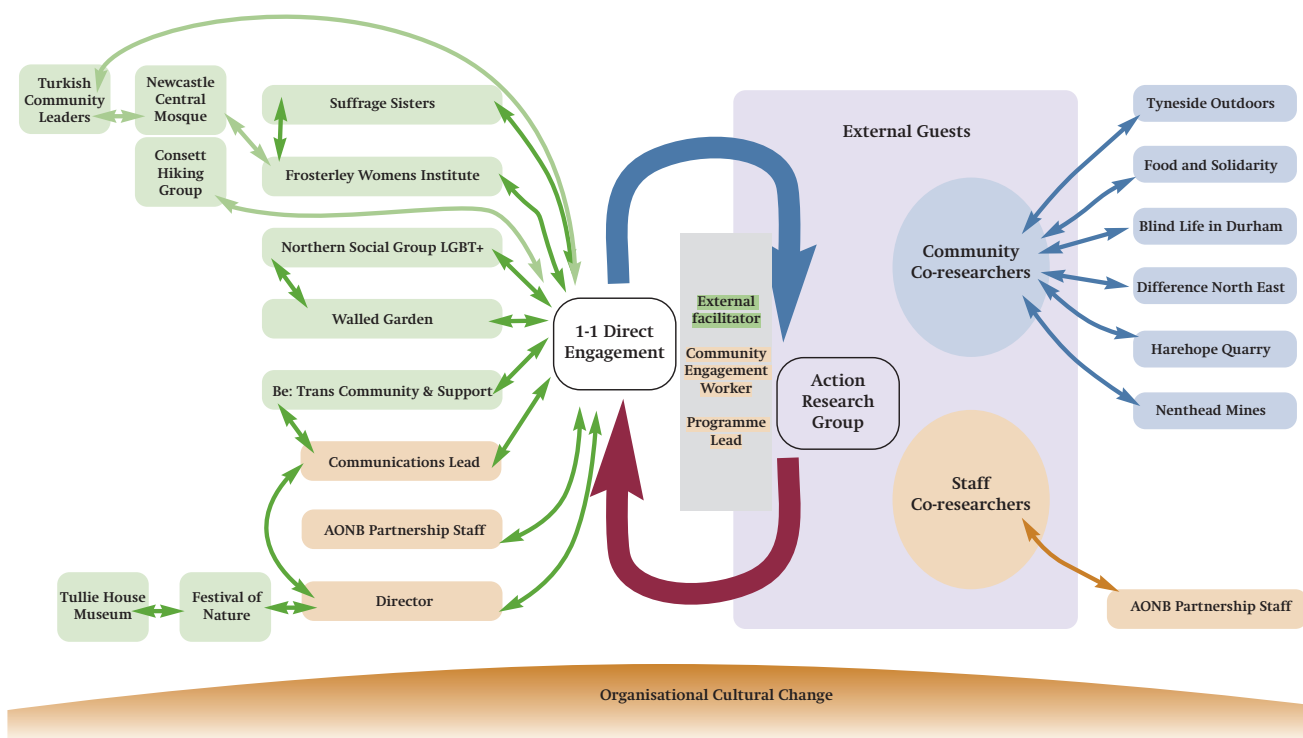
- Comfrey Project - a therapeutic growing project for refugees
- Turkish refugee community members

Conversations and collaborations that are still alive

- Food and Solidarity – a mutual aid group
- Northern Social Group LGBT+
- Be: Trans Community and Support
- Suffrage Sisters – a women's peer support group from Newcastle
- Consett Hiking Group – a non-competitive walking group open to all

The Venn diagram overlap between the groups above and those willing or able to take part in the action-research group process was relatively small. It remains a question as to what effect this had on the dynamic of the action-research group.

The CE worker also met with people living in the North Pennines to explore the potential for actively hosting and welcoming groups, expanding the initial scope of the project. They



A Landscape for Everyone: Community Network Map

also engaged with residents from the Allen Valleys, including farmers, and with Frosterley Women’s Institute in Weardale.

Building equality in relationships across our diversity

The following section is written in the first person to capture Scarlet (CE worker)’s thoughts as they navigated the expectations of the organisation, the design of the project and the challenges of the work.

Scarlet: I had arrived as a newcomer to the Northeast of England in June 2021, as unfamiliar with the North Pennines AONB, and the North Pennines AONB Partnership, as the communities I was now going to be building relationships with. I felt joy and new connections growing as I explored the woods and moors, nurturing my potential to ‘engage’ other people in this landscape. But nearer to the villages and humans and organisations, this changed. Andy was surprised to hear me recount how I held my map up clearly as a sign of good intention as I

tried to find my way through the rights of way in a farmyard. I did not know this place. I did not know if I was safe as a queer outsider person. I also appreciated how my whiteness and lack of visible gender non-conformity afforded me an ease of moving through space without being seen as the ‘other’ or different. And I was also sitting with how I had landed this job inescapably through many middle-class and non-disabled privileges I carry. I wondered who hadn’t been offered the job or hadn’t even thought about applying.

As I reflected on my own [rank](#) and complicity in systems of harm¹, thought about inviting people to the North Pennines, and talked with AONB colleagues and community folks, some early questions emerged:

- How will the organisation respond to harm caused and conflicts that might/will happen between staff, providers and participants? Is the organisation ready to receive criticism and feedback from both people wanting to challenge the status quo/from the margins and

¹ This practice is inspired by critical feminist methodologies that affirm how we are all implicated in systems – there is no outside.

from people wanting to keep the status quo/from the mainstream?

I arrived in post already aware of the role that says to institutions: don't put on activities that don't make a real change, don't use us to get your next grant funding, are you really interested in redistributing power and resources?

- How aware is the organisation and staff of the power dynamics that cause patterns of exclusion and harm, and how aware are we that we are complicit, through practices and behaviours, in reinforcing these patterns? Are we ready and willing to try and shift power dynamics?
- How does the organisation practice diversity, equality, and inclusion within the staff team?

Sitting with these questions, I decided that a priority for *A Landscape for Everyone* would be to influence and shift the organisational culture, including:

- growing our capacity to engage with conflict as a catalyst for transformational change
- developing greater awareness of [rank dynamics](#) within the organisation
- supporting an understanding of diversity as always present, rather than just present when the obvious 'other' is in the room
- growing awareness of how aspects of the organisational culture are itself a barrier to new audiences engaging with the North Pennines.

I anticipated that organisational cultural change would lead to more capacity to build healthy, honest and aware relationships across differences in [rank](#) and lived experience, long beyond the ALFE project window. The [action-research](#) group was a key space that supported this change work and fed into the approach I took engaging staff. Alongside this, I developed an experiential learning and training program to engage staff: 1-1 peer mentor sessions with staff, meetings between senior staff, external facilitator, and myself, modelling different behaviour, opening conversations to understand existing culture better and exploring people's appetite and barriers for change, and working with our communications team to develop organisational readiness for promoting EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) messages and responding to criticism.

My background is in grassroots community organising and participating in social movements dreaming and organising for co-liberation, both here in the UK and in Latin America. Many people have resourced me over the life of this project and in Appendix B I give thanks and links to some of these people.



Harvesting collective learning at action-research session

Going beyond familiar concepts

Throughout this process there has been the need for us to take on new vocabulary, when there is no word in our organisational language or vocabulary that adequately does the job. This has not always been easy and there is now a greater appreciation that these concepts allow us to see and name things which have previously been invisible to some and have already supported us to change how we do things.

Here are some examples of words/concepts which were not common currency in the organisation but which we can now use to help our thinking (and which are used throughout this document):

Intersectionality

Intersectionality was first coined by women of colour to make sense of their experience of how being black and a women intersected. Now, intersectionality is often used to acknowledge that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination, oppression and privilege, that we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and that these experiences overlap and intersect.

Learning about intersectionality has helped us think about how we work with different groups in more inclusive ways. These concepts come from wider social justice movement and academic efforts, where language is developed to better describe, perceive and change complex social realities that create exclusion and disadvantage.

Rank

Rank is the power we have relative to one another in relationships, groups, communities and the world. Rank is fluid and complex, and it depends on both the immediate context of the

relationship and the wider context of society². In other words someone can have high rank in one situation and lower rank in another. Some kinds of rank are gained through life experience, others we are born into. There are different kinds of rank:

- **Social:** e.g., ethnicity, gender, age, economics, religion, sexual orientation, education, health, body shape, and language
- **Structural:** e.g., formal positions at work, relationships to people of high rank, status in a community
- **Spiritual:** e.g., power we get from feeling we have justice or a divine power supporting us
- **Psychological:** e.g., secure in ourselves, high self-esteem and self-awareness

Action-research

Action-research typically follows a systematic and cyclical pattern of reflection, planning, action, observation, and evaluation. The goal of action-research is not to add to a general body of knowledge but, rather, to inform local practice, engage in professional learning, build a community practice, solve a problem or understand a process or phenomenon within a particular context, or empower participants to generate self-knowledge.

Marginalisation

Marginalised groups and communities are those that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions. People can be marginalised due to multiple factors - sexual orientation, gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, displacement, conflict or disability. Poverty is both a consequence and a cause of being marginalised.

² <http://rhizome.coop/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/intro-rank.pdf>

Challenges and learning: three case studies

The next section focuses on three key stories/experiences that happened; each one showcasing relationships that grew through the direct engagement work; two with community groups and one with senior staff. These relationships required commitment and effort from all involved – they weren't straightforward as people came together across different lived experiences and with different privileges. All three experiences were influenced by and benefitted from the action-research group process, and in turn they fed into that process.

1 Changing perceptions through hospitality

Trust Building: Frosterley Women's Institute, a group of women living in Weardale, co-hosted, with the North Pennines AONB Partnership, an intercultural stargazing night for the Suffrage Sisters, a predominantly Muslim women's peer support group from Newcastle. This arose following conversations between the CE worker and Taj from the group about the importance of a warm welcome, given how prevalent Islamophobia is in society. [You can read a blog about the event here.](#) Following this event, which had been a huge success in that everyone said they really enjoyed themselves, the key organisers from each group were offered a space to reflect on the trickier parts of it, at an action-research group session. They spoke honestly about the fears they had about bringing the groups together, and about how they dealt with the Islamophobia that was in the room. This was a significant moment for the three of them in their trust, and for the wider action-research group.

Changing perceptions: Knowing that Islamophobia is, in the majority, based on misinformation, Taj hosted a lunch in her home for the WI, offering the women a non-judgemental space to ask questions and address

myths. Following this, the WI visited the Newcastle Central Mosque for an evening talk, quiz and dinner. By the end of the night, even the most reluctant or honest of the group had shifted their attitudes. Through mutual hospitality and the Suffrage Sisters willingness and commitment to education, damaging perceptions about Muslim people had changed.

Solidarity: The three key organisers had a get together in the North Pennines to continue getting to know each other more, and for the CE Worker to bring in their own experience of marginalisation as a queer person. Together the group talked about how they related to queer and trans existences, and solidarity was offered to the CE Worker.

Danger and Protection: Later, on an impromptu walk, they misread the map and got challenged by a homeowner. Taj commented that the police would have been called if we had been "three hijabis". This drew their attention to both how islamophobia can make **visiting rural places a dangerous endeavour** and how **whiteness protected** us in this situation. Shortly after, the group also had to adapt the walk, in response to an invisible health condition of one person. Scarlet reflected that this had not been anticipated due to prioritising the more visible aspects of a person's identity over the more invisible aspects.

Intergenerational Differences: In August, the Suffrage Sisters were invited for afternoon tea in Frosterley. This was followed by a walk to the River Wear. Notably most of the WI ladies, who are older than the Suffrage Sisters, did not have the physical ability to join the walk, limiting the potential for what the two groups could do together. The WI had expressed interest in connecting with the mothers of the Suffrage Sisters. For now, this doesn't seem possible because of the older generation of women being

more reluctant to leave the home and having less English.

What started as a one-way idea of hospitality, quickly grew into a web of mutual hospitality, in large part due to the open and food orientated hospitality practices of both groups. The relationship that has grown has brought new experiences and encounters for all involved. It is still tentative and there is still limited understanding of each other's different lived experiences *and at the same time* there is commitment from all involved to continue this journey together.

2 Developing opportunities for workshop leaders from marginalised communities

Participatory activity design: The CE worker reached out to LGBTQ+ Northern Social Group (NSG), a 2500+ member Facebook group with a central organising team that puts on social and wellbeing meet-ups across the northeast. The CE worker introduced *A Landscape for Everyone* and asked members if they would be interested in visiting the North Pennines, what would they like to do, what they would like to offer and **what would need to be in place to make it accessible for people.** People's comments on the thread included:

"I live out in the sticks and feel a distinct lack of 'queer community'...I just can't deal with cities so have just accepted the lack of community. Maybe it doesn't have to be that way."

"I've been doing some research with older LGBTQ+ people and one prevalent topic is doing things for people who are ageing without children. ...It's not so much about kids being there but more about the heteronormative conversations about children/grandchildren that make some feel uncomfortable or excluded."

"there's an overwhelming (in a good way) amount of resources and support for LGBTQ+ youths in the

northeast but alas, once LGBTQ+ people reach a certain age group it all falls away and we are left to fend for ourselves if we are no longer part of the club/pub gay scene!"

"This sounds amazing. We're both wheelchair users and I'm also profoundly deaf/BSL user. I'd be particularly interested in art type events."

Workshop leaders from marginalised

communities: One NSG member introduced themselves as a gender queer, visually impaired artist and bushcrafter. The CE worker got in touch, and one phone call later, they had devised a plan to run accessible bushcraft workshops for the LGBTQ+ community together. The CE worker wanted to explore the potential of developing opportunities for workshop leaders from marginalised communities. The bushcrafter wanted to offer his skills in a voluntary capacity to give something back to his community. He had not previously taught groups and so together they designed an activities programme that would allow them both time to get to know each other, the site and to build their skills and confidence.

"I even surprised myself by pushing past my own self limitation. I had a wonderful time not only teaching but being part of a wider idea and it greatly widened my knowledge of tutoring bigger groups of people, only having taught a couple or so at a time before this. And of course, I got to experience the awesomeness of hugging giant sequoia trees" Bushcraft leader.

A host for inclusive bushcraft workshops:

Three workshops were hosted by the Walled Garden at Minsteracres, one of only a few venues in the North Pennines which offers a blend of warm indoor spaces, wheelchair accessible toilets and immediate access to outdoor spaces and habitats. We visited the site twice beforehand so the bushcrafter could familiarise themselves with the space and prepare materials for the activities. The CE worker found a personal assistant for the bushcrafter, drawing on the new contacts made through the action-research group.

Community building: The lived experiences of the bushcraft leader informed how they welcomed, taught and held a learning and social space. He brought his full self to the role, sharing personal stories and inviting people to share honestly and openly. As participants learnt bushcraft skills, they also shared experiences of living with disabilities, and swapped tips for dealing with an ableist world. In the first smaller session, a culture of mutual care was fostered in a short space of time, with connections between people continuing beyond the workshop.

Safe to fail: In the second larger session the group did not seem to connect well. A few reasons: last minute changes to the plan, not working well as a lead team, not enough preparation between the PA and the leader to be able to work together while teaching a large group, mental health flare up for the CE worker. On top of this, they also had to decide to ask someone not to come, due to a last-minute change to their access needs and not being able to accommodate that in this outdoor space. A plan to camp over together was changed at the last minute and relationships between the CE worker and bushcraft leader were strained.

Going forward: The pilot partially worked. We learnt that the intention to offer opportunities to workshop leaders from marginalised communities can lead to very special workshops and connections in a short space of time. We also learnt that when they are new to teaching, we need to go slowly to build trust, collaboration capacity and ensure adequate support at all stages.

3 Emerging organisational conditions for working through barriers to inclusion

Proposal from the margins: The CE worker and a colleague working on citizen science initiatives proposed a peer learning event with staff and

wider colleagues to learn more about queerness in nature and the field of queer ecology (which attempts to draw attention to a persistent historical bias to assume heterosexuality as its benchmark for normality in nature and to change this norm). The event would allow the group to share stories and examples in order to ensure our storytelling is both accurate, and inclusive to a wider audience. Queer was a comfortable word for some involved and uncomfortable for others. No alternative suitable concise word was offered, and they agreed to use it in the proposal and to continue the conversation at the peer learning session.

Top-down decision-making: The proposal was put to the Senior Management team, who made the decision to stop the peer learning event going ahead on the basis that an event with this title wasn't something the organisation felt ready to support or endorse. Whatever the reasons for the decision, the decision-making process adopted in this instance was a top-down approach, made without consultation. From the CE worker's perspective this top-down approach contributed to the ongoing exclusion of queer lives and ideas from public life. This was a 'hot' moment with intense feelings circulating for those involved. While the organisation culture is made up of a lot of diverse qualities and practices, there has been a tendency to work around and avoid conflict, rather than approach it through open dialogue, which informed the way this conflict played out.

A solutions focused response was taken instead, with a reframing of the initial proposal. This enabled a learning session about the gendered and sexual diversity in nature to take place in May 2022, with external expert guests invited to share their work on queer ecology to a small group of (mostly senior) staff. Following this, it was agreed that the CE worker could develop a proposal for bringing this theme into the upcoming Festival of Nature. Through collaboration with Tullie House Museum, two younger queer people (in their twenties) came

forward and together they developed a proposal for a space at the festival which would combine education about queerness in nature with a social and meeting space for LGBTQI+ people visiting the festival.



Naming power dynamics: The issue of decision making, and power dynamics had not been addressed and it returned, with strong feelings from different roles. Senior staff expressed concern around the potential backlash for using the word ‘queer’ in AONB Partnership’s external communications, and this concern translated to continuing to enact veto power. The CE worker felt strongly that this was not inclusion in practice due to the absence of a collaborative approach, that it reinforced patterns of power and exclusion that they could not support, and the CE worker withdrew their labour on this project. The Rainbow Glade went ahead in June, with other staff stepping up to support the external queer people to host the space, including preparing to respond if there was any challenge.

Accountability and repair: In September 2022 the Director of the AONB Partnership met with the CE worker in person and offered an apology. He reflected on how he wasn’t in a position at the time to publicly defend the organisation’s use of the word queer (and queer ecology) in this context, believing that the backlash it might generate could undermine the otherwise entirely positive work. He recognised the harm caused in failing to consult on a decision that affected others. In hindsight he wished he had supported the work to happen and dealt with whatever pushback there was. The CE worker shared how they had experienced the behaviour as ongoing exclusion of queer people’s existence and contributions, and that it had triggered impacts on their well-being and possibility of finding belonging in the North Pennines AONB and they shared how they worked hard to not get stuck in the role of the ‘victim’.

Organisational culture change: This conflict was not solely between senior staff and the CE worker; it was an expression of an organisational culture. In November 2022, the Director and the CE worker invited staff to a learning session in which they reflected on the conflict openly together. They shared how time, support networks and boundaries had enabled reflection, learning and repair, rather than rupture, to happen. A wider conversation emerged around creating enabling conditions for even more distributed leadership, internal democracy, and especially an awareness of rank in the team. Questions emerging are:

- How can senior staff be supported to become more aware of how their higher rank role influences their interactions with more junior staff? How can we deepen our understanding of the risks of exposure?
- What learned patterns of relating to ‘the boss’ do we bring with us from elsewhere? What is needed to unlearn patterns of staying quiet/carrying grievances/ going along with it?

That these questions emerged through open conversations shows us that the internal conditions are now much more conducive towards enabling open and honest conversations that can support internal inclusion practices. The action-research group played a vital enabling role in supporting these internal conditions to change, through bringing greater awareness, new language, insights into the organisational culture from the outside, and sense of shared responsibility.

Speaking out: This whole process has created better conditions in which to approach external communication work where there is fear that it might result in criticism from those who feel challenged that issues affecting marginalised communities are being raised and given attention. These conditions include:

- a stronger commitment to taking bolder steps to amplify stories, practices and messages that build inclusion and challenge injustices and exclusion.
- an understanding that collaboration, trust and good listening between involved staff and partners is vital to feeling confident, prepared, and able to work together in perceived higher-risk external communications work.



Building trust through uncomfortable conversations

What we learnt, and what we'll do

In each of the following sections we summarise what we think we have learnt and consider some of the things we should do, or are doing, next. Many of these principles emerged from the reflective space of the action-research group. For more insight into the process by which these principles emerged refer to Looking Back, Dreaming Forward, the action research group report.

Where appropriate, we also draw out some principles for further discussion within the AONB Partnership. They will, no doubt, need to be reworked and reworded to fit with the ongoing work on organisational values. They are designed to guide and inform how we practice inclusive engagement within and beyond the organisation. We consider them relevant to how

we work as a staff team, and how we work with partners and communities in all our project work. We recognise that understanding these new concepts takes time and dialogue in order to incorporate them into our organisation's language.

We have summarised the principles at the end of this section if you want to [take a shortcut](#).



AONB Staff sharing their vision for A Landscape for Everyone (Sept 2021)

Relationships and connections should be the goal

As Scarlet connected with groups, they were adapting to each group's local context and understanding of protected landscapes, their organising capacity (staff or volunteers or individual) and ways of organising (e.g., relationship based, outcome based). Two people they spoke to were keen to begin the conversation with an activity-oriented focus. Both had substantial experience of connecting with protected landscapes and rural places in England and both were keen to facilitate that opportunity for their wider communities. For most other people they talked to in the earlier stage, the priority was on establishing relationships; spending time together, introducing Scarlet to others from their community, learning more about what the North Pennines AONB Partnership was and trying to understand who this person was that was inviting them to a place they didn't yet know.

The model of recruiting and training community champions, perhaps a more institutional standardised approach, did not easily fit with the diverse, messy and ad-hoc panorama of possibilities and limitations that was emerging. Scarlet chose to let each relationship find its own way, or not, giving space to get to know each other and to connect over shared food and wider conversations, bringing the AONB agenda in and out of focus at different times.

Through this work we have learnt that our initial focus on 'visiting' the North Pennines has not been helpful. Relationships are at the heart of efforts to practise inclusion, and possibilities for connections that may eventually include visits or exchanges stem from relationships of trust.

The entry point to building relationship with place and people is accessibility. Accessibility is about making sure that people can be in the same room, or place. As well as physical barriers

to access, there are also psychosocial and cultural barriers. Psychosocial barriers are about people's perceptions of a place, and possible interactions with other people. They include concerns about safety, not feeling welcome, unsure of where they are allowed to go or fears of getting lost. They can be compounded by negative experiences. Examples of cultural barriers encountered during this project include seeing storytelling about a place which assumes a particular audience, a lack of culturally specific food, and images of Jesus in a church visit where he is portrayed as white. Psychosocial and cultural access work could look like working with North Pennines communities to offer a warm welcome to all visitors, telling stories that connect to more diverse audiences and working with food providers to diversify menus.

We need to take our funders with us on this journey. Relationships are not the normal currency of funding agreements and are hard, if not impossible, to quantify; we need to be focused less often on 'how many?' and more on 'how good?' or how meaningful?.

A draft principle

Building relationships with marginalised groups takes a lot of time and the outcomes are not certain. The **relationship** should be the goal, not an activity or event. That means taking time, meeting on each other's ground, and with less expectation.

Building relationships with marginalised groups takes a lot of time and the outcomes are not certain. The relationship should be the goal, not an activity or event. That means taking time, meeting on each other's ground, and with less expectation.

What next?

We will continue to talk with our funders and potential funders about this important principle

and ensure we allow space in project funding bids for relationship building and uncertainty of outcome.

Some community engagement workers have already started to work with groups where they are, for example spending every other session with a youth group on their patch. Others have expressed a desire to spend more time with fewer groups in future projects in order to build

more meaningful and long-lasting relationships. We are considering setting up a staff volunteer 'time bank' scheme with well-networked community organisations in areas of multiple deprivation, as one way of building a long-term relationship with those outside of the AONB with very different lived experiences to many of us.



Afternoon tea at Frosterley, Weardale

Who should we work with?

We had begun with a general aim to understand more about the barriers that people in our missing audiences face in connecting with the North Pennines. But who to work with? Were we trying to connect with a particular demographic or understand more about a particular barrier, for example racism or classism? On the one hand, for example, we wanted to address racial inequalities in the environment sector and in rural spaces. On the other hand, our nearest neighbouring communities on the north-east side of the AONB are predominantly white, working-class, former coal mining communities. Compounding these apparent dichotomies is the false assumption that racialised and class experiences, and the experiences of other marginalised identities, are separate experiences – that we are only addressing one or another.

The CE worker's approach to connecting with people was mostly through direct introductions. This resulted in decisions on who and what to prioritise which grew organically from the first contacts made. There was an intention to connect with a diverse range of groups and so both an open and targeted approach was taken to ensure a broad range of groups. We took what researcher Ashlee Christofferson calls a multi-strand approach to equality issues, in that we conceptualised diverse community groups as predominantly focused on a single identity.

This has led us to think about the relative merits of targeting groups versus a more open approach - following leads and suggestions in a more organic fashion. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses as described below. Although in practice most project work uses a mixture of these approaches, it is the awareness of these strengths and weaknesses which is important in project delivery and design:

Approach 1

Based on the CE worker's own contacts and then following suggestions from these communities

Project example: A Landscape for Everyone

Possible merits

- Introductions based on trust – good start to relationship.
- Can lead to groups which we would not otherwise have met / known about.
- Possibly greater ownership of project work

Possible disadvantages

- Audience shaped by the biases of the CE worker – their lived experience, their comfort zone, their networks.

Approach 2

Selecting large institutions as the audience for work, in order to capture a whole cross section of society in one place

Project example: Expanding Horizons project, where primary schools were a key audience

Possible merits

- Ensures that no-one is left out of the experience (it's not self-selecting).
- Can address geographical inequalities for example by focusing on schools with high percentages of children on Free School Meals

Possible disadvantages

- May not provide the right conditions for everyone to thrive.
- There's a risk in these types of groups that those who are normally disadvantaged are still disadvantaged because in a group we cater mainly to the majority and the societal structure of the institution.

Approach 3

Targeting a specific group based on their disadvantage or identity

Project example: Earthworks project, where visually impaired people were one audience targeted by the project

Possible merits

- Provides a safe environment for those groups to explore new situations.
- Reaches groups with which we have no previous personal or organisational link

Possible disadvantages

- Relationship starting from cold contact - will take time to develop trust.
- Possible to focus on the obvious marginalisation and ignore other hidden issues, e.g., a focus on making things accessible for people with limited sight, and then finding that limited mobility was a bigger access issue because it hadn't been considered in any detail.
- May lead to over-emphasis on work with groups with obvious and visible marginalisation.
- Can sometimes be used to tick a box without addressing underlying issues (e.g refugee groups often easy to access and work with and provides visible engagement with an under-represented audience, but not necessarily representative of the attitudes and experiences of settled, 1st, 2nd generation migrants)

What next?

Other community engagement workers in the organisation have already made decisions to practice longer-term and deeper engagement with individual groups rather than engage with large numbers with less impact.

We will have ongoing conversations with our funders, and between ourselves, about our mix of engagement practices; from spreading the net wide to diving deeper into a more meaningful relationship.

Those of us who have been part of the action-research group process have recognised the value in spending our limited resources in continuing the dialogue in this relatively small group rather than trying to replicate it afresh elsewhere. This may mean we talk to fewer people in the short-term but will build relationship and the potential for much more meaningful connection (see next).

A draft principle

We should be aware of the decisions we are making when we are deciding who to work with and why, and the potential consequences of our choices. We should remain aware of the shortfalls of each of these approaches and attempt to address those shortfalls through project design.

Collaborating with communities needs resourcing

Community organisers, facilitators, and organisations that have the trusting relationships with their wider networks are vital to working towards the vision of *A Landscape for Everyone*. Yet community organisations have been particularly impacted by austerity, with many closing due to funding cuts.

The AONB Partnership financial situation also feels precarious, at times, and constantly dramatically underfunded in terms of the need to address our twin priorities of nature recovery and meaningful engagement of people in their nature and heritage. However, we recognise that we are better resourced than many we want to work with.

A principle of our work with the action-research group has been to ensure that individuals who are participating as co-researchers and not salaried are able to receive some financial remuneration for their time, skills and effort. This was done according to self-assessed need, with any co-researcher being able to choose to access a pre-agreed amount. Valuing co-researchers in this way has made a significant difference to the success of the action-research process.

A draft principle

Voices from marginalised communities are essential for us to work effectively to build inclusive engagement, but individuals and groups who can bring these voices to the conversation have many more pressing priorities. The only sustainable engagement will be one of **mutual benefit**. To enable mutually beneficial engagement, we need to provide practical and financial support as well as solidarity.

What next?

We will build in financial support into funding bids to allow voices from marginalised communities to help us shape or deliver our work.

We will seek mutually beneficial objectives which we can help to achieve through collaboration, using our experience as partners, our track record with funders and our institutional resources (cashflow, communications etc.)



A tender moment after an honest conversation

Welcome to the North Pennines? Hospitality matters. Right to access matters

“Why would I bother coming if I was not welcome?”

A warm welcome was named early on as a prerequisite to visiting the North Pennines. Taj Khan from the West End of Newcastle shared with Scarlet over a meal how she no longer visited rural places in England since wearing a headscarf because of too many instances of racism and islamophobia.

Who could offer hospitality? Scarlet, as an outsider themselves, did not yet feel able to welcome people. Indeed, they had only recently moved to a village in County Durham from a big city and were still feeling unsure if they would be welcomed and could thrive in rural places.

Can a warm welcome by a small group of people change the attitude of people who are routinely excluded from a sense of entitlement to exist and thrive in rural places, or are even invisible in them?

Engagement with local communities within the AONB around the role of hosting became an important new strand of the work and became a vehicle for addressing psychosocial and cultural barriers through changing perceptions about Islam, Muslim people (and ‘foreign’ halal food) within the North Pennines. See case study 1 above.

At the same time, the AONB Partnership is committed to supporting people to feel at home in the North Pennines **without any invitation being needed**. The question of how to extend a warm welcome and reinforce people’s inalienable right to access and connect with the North Pennines remains.

A draft principle

A warm welcome and hospitality are important factors in allowing more people to feel ‘at home’ in the North Pennines, but we need to go further. Everyone has a right to be here and feel ‘at home’ and we should work to develop that feeling of belonging for all.

What next?

We will work to develop the capacity of hosts within the North Pennines, and to help build long-term relationships between hosts and visiting groups

We will develop projects which allow farmers to welcome new visitors to their land, for example through CEVAS (the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme) training, farm visitor infrastructure, or remotely using video and QR codes on rights of way.

We will carefully consider messaging around visitor welcome, rights, and behaviour, emphasising the messages that all are welcome and have a right to be here, and that through these rights come a relationship with the landscape and the possibility to care more deeply for it.

Applying an intersectional lens

We understand that people and groups experience disadvantages which intersect and compound each other. We are aware that within any groups people will have a mix of privileges and disadvantages that are dynamic and context specific. No inequality is inherently more or less important, and this is not an excuse to ignore inequalities or to erase work addressing racism.

A draft principle

We should apply an intersectional lens to all our work through practices such as recognising difference, not putting people or communities in silos, seeking other points of view and building awareness of power and rank dynamics.

What next?

We will continue to build relationships with marginalised communities, so we can better understand how inequalities shape one another and make changes that can benefit all people.



A tired but content bushcraft teacher at end of the workshop

Reasonable adjustments

During the action-research group process, we thought about the term 'reasonable adjustments' which is commonly used to describe the changes organisations should make to reduce or remove disadvantage for disabled people (often in the workplace). This seemed to be a helpful way for us to look at how we adjust our work, or ask others to change, to reduce or remove the disadvantage felt by people who are marginalised in other ways too. For example, this could apply to the support which is required by those nervous of visiting because of fear of reaction to their dress or skin colour, or provision of suitable clothing for those on low incomes who wish to take part in outdoor activities.

A draft principle

We will use the principle of reasonable adjustment when co-designing project work with our partners, especially engagement work, and ensure we apply for adequate budget (including of staff time) to make the adjustments we have identified.

What next

Consideration for new work or adjustments in new or existing projects:

We will consider and develop projects which relate to the infrastructure needed for access. This might range from something as simple and direct as ensuring all venues have easily available and accurate information on their websites about physical accessibility, to projects which amplify the calls of our community partners and advocate with them, to improve and reduce costs of public transport.

Where appropriate, we will develop our access budgets for future projects to extend more comprehensive offers of BSL, closed caption for online events, translation, child-care, and outdoor kit.

Representation matters and is complex

Knowledge and perspective gained through lived experiences may be uncomfortable for some to hear and it may disturb the status quo. We seek to welcome that disturbance, knowing that there is insight and potential here. We know it comes with risks for the person speaking from the margins and we will keep working on the conditions that can support these perspectives to feel confident and appreciated.

How do we support voices from the margins to be heard in our organisation, and across our landscape, to help shape our work and our thinking? And how can we do this without reducing people to their marginalised identities, heaping additional burden on individuals who are already disadvantaged, or creating an institutionalised class of spokespeople? We need to keep talking about the complexity of representation as we build networks and trust that can ensure we have a wider reach. Applying an intersectional lens (see above) will help develop the conditions so we can do this.

A draft principle

Advice and guidance from those with different lived experience to our own is vital to this work of greater inclusion. In seeking this advice, we should remain aware of the danger of reducing advisors to their marginalised identities, ignoring marginalisation that is not visible, and ignoring our own diversity.

What next?

In thinking about how to set up some kind of advisory group we have recognised the need for some independence for that group, the difficulties of selecting individuals as 'representatives' of different kinds of marginalisation, and the real challenges of marginalised groups finding the time and resource to attend to this work on our behalf.

To this end we are seeking funding to help us extend and expand the action-research group process in a way which recognises the challenges above.



Are we only looking in the mirror?

Telling new stories

There is a role for us to speak out and to tell different stories from different viewpoints. While we do not want to speak on behalf of others, we also don't want to leave it for others to do all the work of sharing perspectives which challenge the status quo.

Stories may take the form of website blogs and vlogs from new contributors or first-time visitors (what does it feel like to be in this landscape?), interpretation of North Pennines history imagined from a marginalised perspectives (what was it like to be a Cornish migrant to the North Pennines orefield, or what might it have been like to be a gay lead miner?), or simply amplifying social media content about the countryside from marginalised perspectives.

Telling new stories or helping others to share theirs, can both raise awareness of the inequalities that people face in accessing the North Pennines and help people to see themselves in this landscape.

Where we have worries about reputational damage we should try and remember who is it that we are listening to. Are we more concerned with the potential for a backlash from those who are uncomfortable with hearing from diverse perspectives than we are about those who have quieter voices? Are we more concerned about getting criticised by those with more power than those with less? By being in relationships with more people with different lived experience to us we are more likely to have these quiet voices in our head reminding us of our responsibility.

To do this well we know that we need to prepare and work closely together so that we can tell new stories and respond appropriately and with care to any challenges we face.

A draft principle

We should seek to be good allies of marginalised groups by turning up the volume on stories which expose and normalise diversity in our landscape and organisation.

What next?

We will seek to better resource the communications team to enable sustained collaboration with engagement colleagues and marginalised groups (medium term).

We will offer training in concepts such as queer ecology to all staff and encourage them to bring stories of nature's diversity into their work where contextually relevant.

Develop relationships with contractors, staff and volunteers from marginalised backgrounds and value the new perspectives their involvement can bring.



Telling the stories of the people who couldn't attend

Recruitment approaches

The project direction was shaped by the CE worker and their lived experience and started with their contacts. So we have also reflected on the role that our recruitment has played in the approach we have taken, and vice versa how our thinking about the approach we should take might also have influenced our recruitment. It has raised a few questions that we need to bear in mind for the future.

Some elements of the job description such as ‘experience of working with a broad range of people, including those from rural communities, deprived urban communities and BAME communities’ and ‘experience of developing and managing education and training programmes for a variety of audiences including young people’ indicated our need for someone with experience of working with marginalised groups. Could we have made more effort in the job description and advertising to allow those with marginalised identities to see themselves in this role?

In recruiting for the CE worker for the *A Landscape for Everyone* project we took advice from others on how to attract a wider range of candidates from different backgrounds and followed that advice to hold on-line Q&A sessions before the interview deadline. It is impossible to know whether this did attract more and different applicants than would otherwise have happened, but it was a positive experience for the staff who held the session and for those participants who provided informal feedback afterwards. It was a chance for us to share something of the culture of our organisation and for potential candidates to check us out before applying. We also felt that it was probably a good way for potential candidates to come to a clearer decision about whether the job was for them, perhaps ensuring that the applicants we did get were better suited to the role than had we not done this.

A draft principle

Project officers can have a significant influence over the direction and ethos of a project, and so who and how we recruit affects how we work and who we work with. We should be careful to use pre-application information (adverts, job descriptions, Q&A sessions) to reach a wide audience and to use language which allows people from a wide variety of backgrounds to see themselves in each role.

What next

Q&A sessions are now recommended as standard practice for most recruitment in the organisation and written into the staff handbook.

We should review our advertising approach, including our advertising budgets, to reflect the need to get adverts to a wider audience and to make adverts and job descriptions clearer and jargon free.

Evaluation

Through experimenting with a new (for us) approach to evaluation, this whole project headed off in an unexpected and much more interesting direction. This new approach emerged out of different conversations we had early on. Firstly, a recognition that any third-party evaluator would have to earn enough trust of the different people involved to collect any meaningful data. They weren't neutral or outside of the dynamics that perpetuate exclusion. Secondly, we heard the critique of extractive practices in evaluation, whereby data is taken from some to generate resources (recommendations, reports, funding) for others. We wanted to experiment with something that might move us towards equity in evaluation, whereby the process of evaluation serves everyone.

Through the action-research group, evaluation moved towards belonging to a community of people who are invested in wanting change. As a group, we evaluated previous sessions, held space for people to reflect on challenges in a community of peers, we invited guests in to reflect on their work with the CE worker. Evaluation became a way to notice our habits and imagine doing something different.

Looking back at the months we have spent collaboratively writing reports on the action research process and then the wider project, we notice how much doing this has deepened our shared understanding and widened the ownership over the process, both with staff and community co-researchers. We have had to be braver and give more honest feedback to each other. We have stretched and deepened our relationships to each other and to the work.

A draft principle

Move further towards evaluation which empowers all those involved, not just our staff unit and our partner organisations.

What next?

Feedback is a gift. We need to learn to see it that way and to prepare to ask for direct honest feedback as well as preparing the conditions to allow it to happen.

In future evaluation design we will encourage staff to throw out any assumed rules around evaluation. We should ask: What is the engagement aim of the project and how can evaluation contribute? Is a third party needed? What skills could a third party bring? Can we look outside the box of who we think an evaluator could be? How can the evaluation serve all those involved? How do we ensure we are receiving honest feedback, and are we creating the conditions for honest feedback to be forthcoming?

For staff, we need to ensure that reflection (self or in a group) is a part of everyday practice around engagement activity. This should be encouraged by building this time into project design and by making it explicit in job descriptions.

Our staff Engagement Group will provide a forum for regular reflection on recent work and on feedback, challenging our learnt behaviours around giving and receiving feedback and asking questions such as: What went well? What could have been done better? How did we elicit honest feedback? How did we receive that feedback? As a collective it could also encourage regular reflection in smaller groups and one to ones, but group feedback is more likely to help embed collective learning.

Organisational culture and climate

We thought and talked a lot about organisational culture during the project; values (espoused and real), atmospheres or climates, norms (e.g., informal ways of making decisions or getting proposals agreed by senior staff) and assumptions and beliefs (conscious and unconscious). With the help of the action-research group, we came to see more clearly how this cluster of things we call organisational culture influences how inclusion is practiced within the organisation (e.g. with and between staff and volunteers) and how it influences relationships with external groups and individuals.

As a result, we have also become clearer about how some aspects of our organisational culture have limited our capacity to practice inclusion. We have mixed feelings about sharing self-critical insights here because this is seldom done. In including critical reflections, we have some fear that these could be misinterpreted as an indictment of the organisational culture. This is not the intention. Our organisational culture is one which has encouraged and facilitated this process and we are actually quietly proud that the reflective work we have done together means we are able to share more honestly. We trust that this honesty is part of the groundwork to building both a more inclusive organisation and new collaborations with marginalised groups.

Here are some examples:

- Not seeing diversity: there were assumptions expressed by both senior and junior staff at the start of this project that we are mostly a homogenous group – that diversity is out there. While this has some truth to it, it is also true that there is diversity within the staff team, and that aspects of people's identities are marginalised when we don't recognise this.
- We are the good people: there were assumptions that we are good people on the

right side and that the problems causing exclusion are all external.

- Lack of open dialogue on tricky issues: Some, more junior, staff felt they couldn't have open conversations with senior staff present. And there was an assumption among senior staff that junior staff felt able to express themselves openly. Through facilitation we were able to become more aware of these assumptions and feelings and to begin some more open dialogue.
- Decision making: As described in Case 3, decision making varies between decentralised and a more top-down approach. We are a hierarchical organisation like most others. Within this hierarchy much decision making is devolved and decentralised within parameters which are understood. But not all decisions for an organisation can be devolved and decentralised and this can set up a tension with more inclusive decision making. We are now, at least, more aware of this tension.
- Conflict avoidant: Many of us are conflict-avoidant and have well-honed strategies to avoid conflict. This means people often fixate on how to get it right, not only to minimise harm but also to avoid conflict. Too much of this means staff get stuck and don't give things a go. When we come together to discuss issues of discrimination and marginalisation there is pain in the room emerging from different ways people have experienced inequalities. This pain needs time and space to come out. Through *A Landscape for Everyone* we have learnt that conflict can bring out important truths which would otherwise remain hidden. It can mean people are stepping into greater agency and it can lead to the status quo being challenged.

Facilitation is the vital capacity to move a process along in a way that values inclusivity, collaboration and cooperation. It keeps space open for complexity and emergence (rather than repeating old ways of doing things), values

diverse and seemingly paradoxical perspectives, and helps people understand more of the whole system (not giving in to either/or thinking). Facilitation skills have supported us to become more aware of these barriers to inclusion. It has been difficult for us to start some conversations about difficult things. Facilitation has got things moving – it has supported us to have harder braver conversations and helped us to value all the different perspectives and to see the learning that is happening, even when it feels hard

Draft principles

Together in our differences: Diversity is present in every group. We should create space for it through checking our assumptions of sameness and practicing curiosity. We should try and remain aware of our rank and its impact on others. [At times we all behave in ways which negatively impact others, differently to the way we intended. If we occupy a higher rank role, we need to be doubly aware, given it is harder for lower rank people to feel safe to feedback when this happens].

Trust conflict: Rather than fixating on ‘getting it right’ when it comes to practicing inclusion, instead we should take the best course of action we can with the knowledge we have. *At the same time*, we should be prepared that conflict may arise, and that it could teach us. We should work to stay curious and open to challenges and criticisms.

Facilitation is vital: We should value facilitation more and find opportunities to build it into our organisational culture.

What next?

We will seek to understand the diversity of experiences of more junior and newer staff including how they perceive the organisational culture and their sense of exposure if they give feedback to senior staff or take risks.

We will create more spaces for honest feedback about issues, experiences and reflection on rank dynamics. This may require facilitation, and the context will determine whether this needs a trained and appropriate staff member, an external facilitator, or by all participants also taking role of the facilitator.

We will consider the need for staff training in facilitation skills and in conflict resolution skills and think about these skills in relation to the recruitment of new staff.

We will review decision-making processes, to explore how it can more fully contribute to our aims for inclusion and equality. This may include learning from organisations that are working towards shared governance, distributed leadership, and other more participatory and collaborative practices, and finding ways for involving staff in the process.

We will write engagement guidance for the staff handbook in consultation with wider staff team, drawing on the learning from *A Landscape for Everyone* and the experiences of other engagement workers.

Develop our ongoing reflective learning culture. Dedicate staff time to this work. Build learning into project design. Run training that supports the embedding of our principles for inclusive engagement.

In 2023, we will be writing our 2024 - 2029 Management Plan. We propose that we will devise **an inclusive consultation approach that can ensure wider audiences can input into our management plan**, and that the plan reflects the Partnerships vision for inclusion and diversity in the North Pennines.

Appendix A: Some draft principles

Relationships and connections should be the goal

Building relationships with marginalised groups takes a lot of time and the outcomes are not certain. The **relationship** should be the goal, not an activity or event. That means taking time, meeting on each other's ground, and with less expectation.

Who should we work with?

We should be aware of the decisions we are making when we are deciding who to work with and why, and the potential consequences of our choices. We should remain aware of the shortfalls of each of these approaches and attempt to address those shortfalls through project design.

Collaborating with communities needs resourcing

Voices from marginalised communities are essential for us to work effectively to build inclusive engagement, but individuals and groups who can bring these voices to the conversation have many more pressing priorities. The only sustainable engagement will be one of **mutual benefit**. To enable mutually beneficial engagement, we need to provide practical and financial support as well as solidarity.

Welcome to the North Pennines? Hospitality matters. Right to access matters

A warm welcome and hospitality are important factors in allowing more people to feel 'at home' in the North Pennines, but we need to go further. Everyone has a right to be here and feel 'at home' and we should work to develop that feeling of entitlement for all.

Applying an intersectional lens

We should apply an intersectional lens to all our work through practices such as recognising difference, not putting people or communities in silos, seeking other points of view and building awareness of power and rank dynamics.

Reasonable adjustments

We should use the principle of reasonable adjustment when co-designing project work with our partners, especially engagement work, and ensure we have adequate budget (including of staff time) to make the adjustments we have identified.

Representation matters and is complex

Advice and guidance from those with different lived experience to our own is vital to this work of greater inclusion. In seeking this advice, we should remain aware of the danger of reducing advisors to their marginalised identities, ignoring marginalisation that is not visible, and ignoring our own diversity.

Telling new stories

We should seek to be good allies of marginalised groups by turning up the volume on stories which expose and normalise diversity in our landscape and organisation.

Recruitment approaches

Project officers can have a significant influence over the direction and ethos of a project, and so who and how we recruit affects how we work and who we work with. We should be careful to use pre-application information (adverts, job descriptions, Q&A sessions) to reach a wide audience and to use language which allows people from a wide variety of backgrounds to see themselves in each role.

Evaluation

Move further towards evaluation which empowers all those involved not just our staff unit and our partner organisations.

Together in our differences

Diversity is present in every group. We should create space for it through checking our assumptions of sameness and practicing curiosity. We should try and remain aware of our rank and its impact on others. [At times we all behave in ways which negatively impact others, differently to the way we intended. If we occupy a higher rank role, we need to be doubly aware, given it is harder for lower rank people to feel safe to feedback when this happens]

Trust conflict

Rather than fixating on 'getting it right' when it comes to practicing inclusion, instead we should take the best course of action we can with the knowledge we have. At *the same time*, we should be prepared that conflict may arise, and that it could teach us. We should work to stay curious and open to challenges and criticisms.

Facilitation is vital

We should value facilitation more and find opportunities to build it into our organisational culture.

Appendix B: Resources (people and their ideas) which have supported *A Landscape for Everyone*

Note: many people's practice and work straddle these categories.

Relational practices to move beyond systems of domination

Paola Rozo, individual/collective awareness process facilitator (our external contractor)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paola-v-rozo-51492354/>

Dare Carrasquillo and Larissa Kaul 'Relational Skills for Complex Times' <https://www.animistarts.art>

Anu Priya: <https://www.anupriya.co.uk/home>

Laura Miller <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laura-miller-98b401197>

Sarri Bater: <https://www.openedge.org.uk/sarri-bater.html>

Tada Hozumi <https://www.tadahozumi.org/cultural-somatics>

Processwork UK School www.processworkuk.org

Disability Justice

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*

Nic Cook <https://differencenortheast.org.uk>

Trans liberation

Alok Vaid Mernon <https://www.alokvmenon.com/>

Shon Faye *The Transgender Issue*

Travis Alabanza *None of the Above*

Access to Nature and Land

Sheree Mack <https://theearthsealovepodcast.podbean.com/>

Kelly Smith <https://kellysmithonthego.com>

Nick Hayes *The Book of Trespass*

Anita Sethi *I Belong Here*

Decolonial Ideas

Adrienne Maree Brown *Emergent Strategy*

Afua Hirsh *Brit(ish)*

Akala *Natives*

Analouise Keating *Post Oppositional Politics*

Audre Lorde *Sister Outsider*

Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times*

Charity so White

Emma Dabiri *What White People Can Do Next*

Tyson Yunkaporta *Sandtalk*

Queer Ecology

Bruce Bagemihl *Biological Exuberance*

Eliot Schrefer *Queer Ducks (and Other Animals): The Natural World of Animal Sexuality*

Joan Roughgarden *Evolutions Rainbow*

Sage Brice www.sagebrice.com

Sophie Strand <https://sophiestrand.com>

Co-researchers in the Action-Research Process

Abdul-Aziz Kouamé

Alex Kaars Sijpesteijn

Elaine Edgar <https://www.epiacumheritage.org>

Georgia May <https://www.georgiamay.uk>

Gerard New <https://www.tynesideoutdoors.org.uk>

Jill Essam <http://harehopequarry.org.uk/135-2>

Jim Welch <http://www.blindlifeindurham.org.uk>

Jo Ede

Joyce Jackson <https://durham.thewi.org.uk/find-wi/frosterley>

Julie Kirkley *Birds Taxis Ltd*

Laura Harrington <https://www.lauraharrington.co.uk>

Lizzy Benn

Lya Vollering

Kerryanne Higgens

Marsha Garrett *All in Youth Project*

Mwenz Blell

Naomi Foster

Paul Doyle

Pete Jackson <https://www.nentheadmines.com>

Simone Rudolphi <https://www.simonerudolphphotography.com>

Taj Khan

Traxion Bull

Thanks also to Lucia Thompson, [Kat Wall](#), Nici Dunkelman, Louie Howie, Natasha Machin for many conversations that informed this process.