

TEPoP volunteer diversity workshop

7th October 2020

On 7th October 2020, the Terrestrial Evidence Partnership of Partners (TEPoP) came together for an online workshop to discuss volunteer diversity in biodiversity monitoring and surveillance schemes. During the meeting, participants discussed priority areas for volunteer diversity in schemes, past projects that have tackled diversity, ideas for projects that could help us target priority diversity areas, and short to long term actions that we would like to take to move towards a more diverse volunteer base. Ahead of the meeting, participants were sent questions about organisation diversity policies, projects and resources. The following provides a synthesis of matters discussed during the meeting and the material supplied ahead of the meeting.

The importance of volunteer diversity

The UK is a diverse country, but this diversity isn't always reflected in all aspects of our society. During 2020, there has been a particular global focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, particularly around race. The ecological sector has also been impacted by these discussions, and there is an interest and need to do better. The volunteers are the backbone to the TEPoP schemes and are highly valued. By reducing the barriers for participation to our schemes, we can improve the diversity of schemes and improve the information we collect on the environment.

Organisational diversity policies



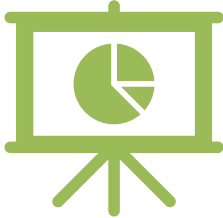
Of the organisations present at the workshop, some reported that they had existing diversity policies and strategies, many had policies in place that were related to diversity (e.g. equal opportunities) and some had no policies. The lack of policies in place does not reflect a lack of interest in this area as many participants voiced the importance of diversity to their organisations. Of the organisations represented at the workshop (Appendix 1), some were able to provide information about existing diversity policies ahead of the meeting which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Existing diversity policies and groups within organisations represented at the workshop. For organisations who were present at the workshop (listed in Appendix 1) but are not included in this table, this does not necessarily mean that they do not have policies in place or development.

Organisation	Policy/ diversity group
ARC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No policy in place
BCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal opportunities policy
BTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) statement: https://www.bto.org/about-bto/creating-inclusive-environment Diversity Working Group, formed in December 2019 which has a clear action plan and terms of reference Youth Advisory Panel https://www.bto.org/about-bto/governance-accounts/youth-advisory-panel
Butterfly conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An EDI strategy and diversity policy is in development Equal opportunities policy: https://butterfly-conservation.org/legal/equal-opportunities-policy
JNCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An EDI policy covering the whole of JNCC is in development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The JNCC Terrestrial Biodiversity Evidence Strategy (2020, https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/the-uk-terrestrial-biodiversity-surveillance-strategy/) has an objective “to grow a diverse network of skilled volunteers invested in biological recording”
UKCEH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDI policy: https://www.ceh.ac.uk/sites/default/files/UKCEH-Policy-Equality-Diversity-Inclusivity-v1.pdf Diversity has been identified as a priority for recording/monitoring scheme work

Current volunteer diversity in schemes



In the past, there has not been much activity within TEPoP schemes collecting or analysing diversity data for volunteers. For some schemes, we do not ask any diversity data from volunteers (e.g. the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme (PoMS) does not collect any demographic information from volunteers), others collect partial data (e.g. the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) collects information on age and gender) whereas some schemes only collect diversity data as part of one off surveys (e.g. the National Bat Monitoring Programme carried out a volunteer questionnaire in 2011). This lack of data

collection and analyses is in part related to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in place to protect personal data. In the past, TEPoP schemes have not had a need to collect volunteer diversity data and so have not collected it. This means that we do not have good information about where we are doing well or not for different types of diversity. During the workshop, 44% of participants reported that they were not sure how our schemes are doing for any type of diversity (Figure 1). With volunteer diversity expressed as a priority area amongst many TEPoP organisations and schemes, collecting this data becomes essential to inform actions and monitor progress.

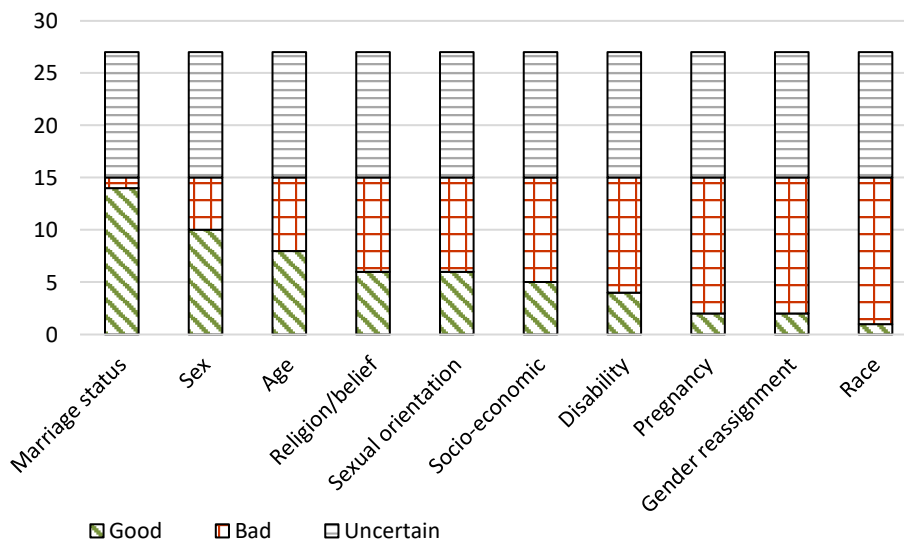


Figure 1 Poll results from the workshop on how good participants think volunteer diversity currently is in schemes. The green bar with diagonal lines represents when participants thought schemes had good diversity, the grey bar with vertical lines represents the participants who indicated that they were uncertain for all categories and the orange bar with hatched lines is the number of participants who didn't select uncertain or good (there was no "bad" category to select). Twenty-seven workshop participants took part in the poll, with 12 indicating that they were unsure for all categories. The categories where the most

participants thought schemes had good diversity were for marriage status, sex and age. The categories where the least number of participants indicated that there was good diversity were race, gender reassignment and pregnancy. It should be noted that participants might not have had empirical evidence to back their assessment and so these values are estimates intended to aid discussions.

Existing volunteer diversity analyses

Ahead of the workshop, participants were asked to summaries what we know from surveys about existing volunteer diversity. The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) reported that in the NBMP, there is lack of young volunteers. The British Trust for Ornithology gave feedback that whilst WeBS volunteers consist mostly of older males, in bird ringing programmes, there is a good gender balance with more younger females being recruited in recent years. Butterfly Conservation ran a 3-year project surveying all volunteers which revealed that there is almost an exactly 50:50 ratio of female to male volunteers. This highlights that not all schemes are in the same situation for volunteer diversity and may have different priority areas.

Types of diversity



There are many types of diversity that might be important for volunteer participation in TEPoP schemes. During the workshop, participants were asked to define the types of diversity that are likely to be important for schemes. The workshop groups were provided with a list of the protected characteristics (under the [Equality Act 2010](#)) as a starting point but did not have to stick to this list. Table 2 summarises types of diversity participants thought were the most important for TEPoP schemes. After the discussions, the top three diversity areas from each breakout group were fed back to the main

group. From this shared list, all participants were asked to vote on which types of diversity were their priorities. From the poll, the three highest priority diversity areas for schemes were socioeconomics, race and local demographics (Figure 2).

Table 2 Types of diversity important in schemes.

Type of diversity	Definition	Importance in schemes
Socio-economic	Extremes of wealth and poverty	Schemes tend to be more suited to volunteers from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Wealth should not be a barrier to participation. Socioeconomics is very broad and overlaps with many other areas (e.g. age, disability, race, education, urban / rural).
Race		There is a lack of ethnic diversity across schemes, with volunteers mostly being white. There is a lot of cross over with racial barriers, socioeconomics and the urban-rural gradient, e.g. there are high numbers of ethnic minorities in inner cities where it is harder to get involved in TEPoP schemes. The interest in wildlife and its value varies culturally which may also play a part. There are established groups that we could work with (e.g. walking groups for black women).
Urban / rural gradient	Where volunteers live	Most people live in urban or semi-urban areas; however many survey locations are in rural areas. Increasing the number of urban survey locations through complementary surveys like the garden bird survey could help.

Type of diversity	Definition	Importance in schemes
Access to nature		Ties many areas together
Local demographics	Reflecting the diversity of local demographics	It is important to meet the needs of local areas. Each local area has different needs and challenges in terms of diversity. Not all schemes are national.
Age		Most volunteers are older (e.g. over 65) and there is a need to attract younger volunteers. There are barriers for young people like accessibility, the skills and expertise required, and time requirements. Some organisations are currently focused on engagement with young people and access to nature (BTO). Drive for recruiting younger volunteers work but are tricky to retain due to time constraints. Some schemes have a minimum age requirement but even in the youngest age categories there aren't many volunteers (e.g. the National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS) requires volunteers to be 18+).
Gender	Men and women	Within schemes, gender is not seen as a large issue as it is balanced. Anecdotally, where recording has started in more recent equitable times, there is greater gender balance (e.g. bats). Some biological recording appears to be more favoured by women (e.g. botany). A barrier for women includes feeling unsafe. Areas where there tends to be imbalance with more men represented include positions of leadership and county recording (e.g. only 12% of butterfly country recorders are women).
Employment	Working age vs retired	There is over representation in schemes by retired people. A barrier for those in work is a lack of time to participate.
Disability	Physical, mental, or sensory	Digital developments can improve inclusivity, but we must consider activities to support and best utilise volunteers' time.
Experience	In survey/ taxa	We need to diversify schemes and gather wider taxonomic groups data for individual areas.
Projects	Diversity in opportunities	Diversifying the opportunities for volunteers beyond recording (e.g. work parties).
Family structure	Care givers and those with dependents	We need to provide more opportunities for families with small children or people with caring responsibilities. Activities directed at families could meet multiple goals (e.g. engaging children, providing free time for parents, retaining interest from the parents).
Pregnancy		Pregnant people are more likely to do activities at home than outdoors which is a barrier to participation in schemes.
Religion		Schemes have overrepresentation by atheists (anecdotally)
LGBTQ+		Activities could be done to improve LGBTQ+ in schemes such as pride events at National Nature Reserves.

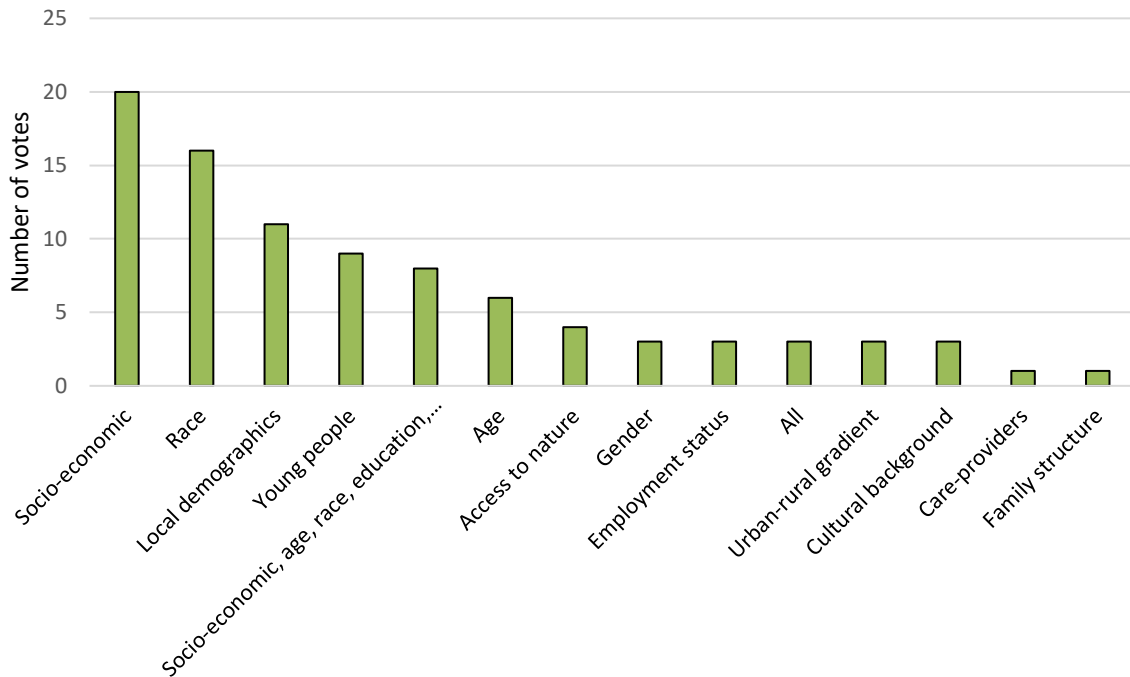


Figure 2 Poll results for the highest priority diversity areas within schemes.

Lessons learnt from past diversity projects

Ahead of the workshop and during the breakout groups, participants were asked to describe past projects that aimed to improve diversity. These projects are presented as case studies in Appendix 2. During the workshop, participants reflected on whether there were common things that made projects work or common pitfalls; these are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Common things that work and common pitfalls of past projects that have targeted diversity.

Common things that work	Common pitfalls
Connecting with networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on existing resources and expertise • Learning and sharing from other successful projects Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online workshops and training to improve accessibility, especially for woman and people with disability • Training to improve surveyor confidence and data quality Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad engagement beyond recording • Engagement through social media • Engagement of local communities, developing ownership and pride • Regular engagement with volunteers • Entry level schemes 	Connecting with networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of sharing reports/ intelligence between groups Monitoring volunteer diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not collecting enough information about who is involved in the project to measure the diversity • Not collating diversity information in meaningful ways Barriers for volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel can be a barrier for those taking part in the schemes • Time availability for training • Collecting diversity data can create a barrier for participation • Assuming that online training materials are accessible to all Unsuitable projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in combining online and field work in urban areas

Common things that work	Common pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-designing projects with the target audience • Advertising widely • Combining something familiar with something new (e.g. barbecue and bat walk) <p>Organisational changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up working groups or panels within organisation • Assigning specific members of staff to promote diversity within organisations <p>Project scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being focused on a particular type of diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Token gestures (e.g. an unsuitable project in a deprived area) • Simplified workflows that are good for engagement may not be good for monitoring <p>Project scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to do too much at once • Projects not transferring well to different scales (e.g. a local project may not work nationally) <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small schemes struggling to get any volunteers involved, let alone diverse volunteers • Not planning for the benefits of the project to continue once it has ended <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer run schemes can be tricky to deal with issues • Bad weather and “luck” can negatively impact projects

Future project ideas

After reflecting on the priority diversity areas and past projects that have worked, participants discussed potential projects that could help tackle priority diversity areas. These are summarised in the bullet points below:

All diversity

- Diversity training for all staff involved in diversity projects
- Monitoring negative incidents related to diversity and standardising a response
- Communications targeted at mass engagement and promotion of schemes (e.g. BBC Springwatch)
- Adapting schemes to be more accessible, with unstructured surveys targeting at wider audiences to supplement structured recording
- Improvements to online opportunities

Age diversity

- Projects to attract younger people using social media (e.g. Instagram). This is currently planned in the NBMP
- Engagement with schools and university, influencing curriculums
- Modifying recording schemes for hospitals and care homes as a form of therapy

Socioeconomic

- Geospatial distribution analyses of volunteer addresses

Urban areas

- Engaging youth groups in improving green spaces
- Monitoring urban butterflies (e.g. urban butterfly indicator)

Opportunities for change

After reflecting on the previous discussions, the participants were asked to come up with short, mid and long-term actions we want to take as individual schemes and TEPoP to effect change for volunteer diversity. These are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Short-term and mid to long-term changes participants want to see within and across TEPoP schemes. After the workshop, the changes were grouped by themes.

Theme	Short-term change	Mid to long-term change
TEPoP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A platform/forum to share learning and experiences • Celebrate and share success stories • Cross sector bid with co-design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate and share good practice
Monitoring diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add diversity monitoring to online sign-up forms • Analysis of current engagement by diversity • Use the data we already hold from our schemes to establish baseline diversity measures • Survey of volunteers to find out what diversity currently exists in schemes as a baseline • Devise a common series of diversity questions that might be adopted across schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater engagement of underrepresented groups in schemes • Analyses of where our monitoring gaps align with opportunities to diversify. Prioritise those gaps above other gaps. This ensures the diversification is sustainable in the business case for monitoring and not just a token.
Connecting with other organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to groups who are promoting engagement with nature in specific communities - what are their needs and opportunities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking national charities who work with disabilities about how we can make schemes more inclusive and work with them to achieve this • Look for links outside biodiversity e.g. cultural and family events • Consider ways to work in partnership with community organisations with their priorities
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the short-term needs to use other expertise (i.e. not species i.d.) in our schemes (e.g. communication, tech support etc.), especially any opportunities from those facing redundancy • Bring in greater input from the communities we are hoping to engage with • Share ideas how to reach new audiences on social media, including publicity routes that have been successful in reaching a diverse range of audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to cross promote with other volunteering opportunities (e.g. recruit recorders from green gyms or social prescribing; but also promote green gyms to people trying recording but it not meeting their needs) • Engage with other people's (=diverse) priorities in our schemes, so that our monitoring priorities are not solely set by civil service managers = aspects of "personalised ecology"

Theme	Short-term change	Mid to long-term change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link in and engage with Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty & Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts etc. to help create local demand for greater engagement 	
Ambassadors/ champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with ambassadors for different audiences e.g. expansion of the BTO Youth Ambassador and Representative project • Find a champion for higher exposure on media/social media 	
Changes to schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the terminology used in schemes to make it more accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a codesign approach where possible (e.g. through changes to current core monitoring schemes) • Make schemes more relevant to encouraging recording in an urban environment • Ensure support networks (e.g. data systems, verification tools) are sufficiently well-developed to deal with the success of bringing more diverse participants into recording, without overwhelming the existing volunteer network
The way we work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Equality Impact Assessment for all recording projects 	

Appendix 1: Organisations represented at the workshop

Organisation	Acronym
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust	ARC
Bat Conservation Trust	BCT
British Trust for Ornithology	BTO
Butterfly Conservation	N/A
Chilterns Area Of Natural Beauty	Chilterns AONB
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	DAERA
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	JNCC
National Museums NI	NMNI
NatureScot	N/A
Plantlife	N/A
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	RSPB
Science & Advice for Scottish Agriculture	SASA
Welsh Government	N/A
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	WWT
UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology	UKCEH

Appendix 2: Case studies of past projects targeting diversity

Organisation: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Project: Snakes in the Heather

Project duration: 4 years – 2019 to 2023

Type of diversity: All!

Targeted activities: Special Educational Needs (SEN), Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and others (LGBT+), Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME)

Success measures: Involvement in the project

Did the project work? Ongoing, but some successes to date

Any other notes: The Snakes in the Heather POs have aimed to expand the usual audience that participates in natural heritage projects, especially in the relatively affluent area of Dorset where much of the project is taking place. This is relatively unstructured, mostly involving outreach to existing networks and groups.

For example, a collaboration has been developed with a local project that involves reducing barriers for people with disabilities and SEN. There were due to be a series of workshops but these were cancelled due to the pandemic. They will be resumed when it is safe to do so.

Another example; a collaboration has been developed with a youth volunteer group managed by the council. This is a very diverse group; different races and asylum statuses, English as a 2nd/3rd language, behavioural issues and more. They were invited to do habitat management as part of one of their regular volunteer days which was very well received and will be repeated throughout the project.

We have found working with existing networks to be the most pragmatic in terms of time and resource, and even these relationships took some time to establish. However, the feedback from the volunteer group was excellent and highlighted that there were barriers, perceived or actual, to involvement with nature which we will continue to try to break down throughout the project.

Organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Project: Moths Count

Project duration: 3 years

Type of diversity: Communities under-represented in biological recording and nature conservation. New and diverse audiences – as wide as possible.

Targeted activities: 30 public moth events ran in partnership with other NGOs to reach as wide an audience as possible, including in urban areas.

Success measures: Delivery of the above events to a varied audience.

Did the project work? Yes – reached new audiences that hadn't engaged with biological recording before, for example we worked in inner London schools, and spoke at the Black Environment Network Conference.

Organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Project: Helping Hands for Butterflies

Project duration: Current project - ongoing

Type of diversity: Lower socio-economic groups and new volunteers in Scotland.

Targeted activities: Events including meadow creation within lower socio-economic areas / free online events accessible to a wide audience. Set up of wheelchair-friendly transect routes within local parks.

Success measures: Number of events delivered within target areas. Number of people engaged.

Did the project work? Project is ongoing. Online delivery of volunteer training has been extremely successful with more people taking part than would be expected with traditional face-to-face training workshops.

Organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Project: Munching Caterpillars Goes to Town

Project duration: 2 years +

Type of diversity: School children in Bristol whose schools were identified as being in a deprived area.

Targeted activities: Workshops in schools, public events in community centres and deprived areas of Bristol. Development of a volunteer network to lead future workshops.

Success measures: Number of events and workshops led. Number of children and volunteers involved.

Did the project work? Yes. Key achievements include a butterfly makeover at an inner-city community centre which now hosts a butterfly and child friendly outdoor space. School workshops have continued beyond the project due to student volunteers from the University of the West of England.

Organisation: Bat Conservation Trust

Project: Count Bat Project

Project duration: 4 years (2008-2012)

Type of diversity: groups that had been identified as under-represented in conservation activities, for example, visually impaired people, the Deaf community, learning disabilities groups, people living in urban areas of high deprivation, and black and minority ethnic groups.

Targeted activities: Locally held bat events allowing people to see how wonderful bats are and to encourage people to become more involved; Base level survey work involving minimum training; Medium level survey work involving the use of electronic bat detectors; Higher level, more complex, survey work adopting a variety of techniques for which specialist training would be provided; A 'Bat Champion' role overseeing an allocated area of land and representing bats at a local level; Volunteer Co-ordinator to help organise and train other volunteers.

Success measures: Number of events run, number and diversity of people engaged, and activities carried out by participants; review of what worked well and why/didn't work well and why.

Did the project work? Yes. Headline figures include: Over 20,000 people were involved in project events, 1500 bat sightings were added to the Big Bat Map and over 1,200 hours of volunteer time were generously donated.

Any other notes: Since the project finished there hasn't been measurement of the legacy of the project, e.g. how many people engaged have continued to be involved or engaged others.

Organisation: BTO

Project: Youth Advisory Panel

Project duration: Ongoing, 12 months so far

Type of diversity: Age and gender

Targeted activities: Youth Engagement Strategy, Youth Ambassadors

Success measures: Ongoing

Did the project work? Ongoing

Any other notes: We have created a Youth Advisory Panel and they have put together a Youth Engagement Strategy. One aspect of this is to recruit Youth Ambassadors into the Regional Network (see <https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/bto-youth-representative-job-description.pdf> for the volunteer job description)

See <https://www.bto.org/about-bto/governance-accounts/youth-advisory-panel>

An infographic summarising this project is included at the end of Appendix 2.

Organisation: Plantlife

Project: Building resilience in South West

Targeted activities: Project to train young people (secondary schools and their teachers) to keep up training tools to continue knowledge and skillset.

Did the project work? Successful in helping education and maintaining skills

Organisation: BTO

Project: Wetland Bird Survey

Type of diversity: Race

Targeted activities: WeBs survey often mainly white retired men. Trying to encourage getting more racial diversity into these surveys. Not specific yet, just ideas at present.

Project: iSpot working with Online Centres Network, working with them to promote iSpot to engage with nature

Type of diversity: Socioeconomic - Online access within communities

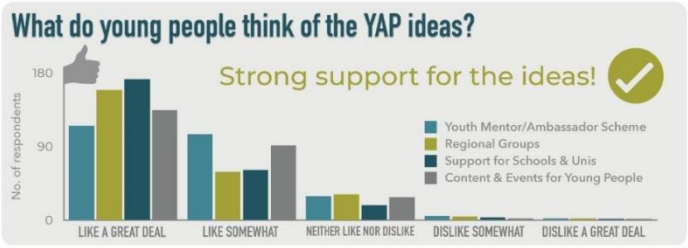
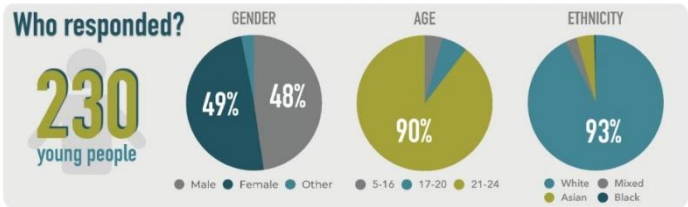
Did the project work? Didn't really succeed. All the centres within reach were in urban situations where it wasn't possible to combine field work with online work as these happen in different places.

BTO Looking out for birds

BTO Youth Advisory Panel YOUTH SURVEY

Results from a survey aiming to gather the opinions of young people on youth engagement with birding

YAP Vision... A diverse, vibrant community of young birders supported by BTO with accessible, youth-led opportunities inspiring young people to engage with nature and science.



What's next?

Working with BTO Fundraising and Regional Network teams

Developing & refining ideas

Start making these ideas a reality!

BTO Looking out for birds

The BTO @BTO #Birds