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Making space for nature

OUR WORK IN THAMESMEAD

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INTRODUCTION

Using nature to enhance and celebrate Thamesmead

The CLEVER Cities project aims to **tackle urban challenges** and promote social inclusion by bringing people **closer to nature and each other**.

The project spans cities across Europe, South America and China and focuses on a number of areas - from improving environments and making places greener to encouraging local communities to collaborate.

The Making Space for Nature Community Fund in Thamesmead, London, has been part of the project since 2018. The Fund was an innovative grant scheme that enabled local people to realise their own projects. This unique grant scheme empowered the community to bring their ideas to life, resulting in impressive transformations and countless co-benefits. Notably, the process gave the community control and funding, fostering community capacity, well-being, and social cohesion.

Since it was established there have been a variety of successful projects completed across a number of areas including green space regeneration, health and wellbeing, recycling, and nature and food workshops. All have been led by individuals, community groups, churches and schools, which have become an active network within the community. They've all made a huge impact and received overwhelmingly positive feedback, showing the power of people and nature in creating greener, happier communities.



Making Space for Nature is delivered in partnership with Peabody London, Groundwork London, the Greater London Authority, and the Thamesmead community. It's funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 776604.

In partnership with

THAMESMEAD  



SUPPORTED BY
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£60,766
total grants
awarded

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Enhancing Thamesmead

Making the most of what's on the doorstep

Designed to make Thamesmead a better place to live, work and play through nature programmes and learning initiatives. From promoting residents' wellbeing and boosting mental health to nurturing wildlife and breathing new life into old spaces, the wider area has been enhanced for everyone to enjoy.



Growing Together

Led by: Willow Bank Primary School

Promoting healthy eating habits and environmental awareness through the creation of an edible, sensory garden. The outdoor space provides fresh fruit and vegetables to families in the area and plays host to after-school clubs to promote community engagement and education.

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Woodland School Learning Programme

Led by: Matthew Harris and Karen Fletcher

The woodland garden at Bishop John Robinson CofE Primary School includes everything from trees and bug hotels to a wild meadow and outdoor classroom. This outdoor learning garden initiative aimed to give students an engaging environment to pique curiosity, creativity, and connection to nature.



Back to Nature

Led by: Rebecca Walker

Launched by St Margaret RC Primary School, this initiative promoted outdoor learning for children by stimulating their senses, imagination and language and included a Back to Nature classroom for children to engage with nature and learn away from the desk.



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Church of the Cross

Led by: Rev Jonathan Macy

Bringing church volunteers together to makeover a large area around the church into a haven for nature. The volunteers collaborated to create the space, improve the soil and start planting to create a community garden for all to enjoy.



Planters for Birchmere Good Life Garden

Led by: Bryan Lockwood

Expanding and upgrading the existing garden capacity to accommodate larger school groups and more visitors. From constructing raised beds and installing new equipment to making wooden tables and replacing the wooden fence with a metal one, this project created an attractive garden while bringing together a diverse group of people including children, the elderly, individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with mental health difficulties.



Crossness River Action Group (CRAG)

Led by: Anji Petersen

Removing plastic and other waste from Thamesmead reed beds in a bid to encourage local residents to take an active role in the community while benefiting local wildlife. Located at Crossness, essential equipment was bought to help clear and maintain the area through ongoing regular clean-ups.



Gallions Copse Community Garden

Initiated by: The West Thamesmead Community Association

A neglected green space near Gallions Park is being redesigned into a vibrant community garden through 'resident engagement', with the inclusion of local flora, walking paths, benches, bins and space for gardening.

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Art Nature Thamesmead

Led by: John Hogan

This community project aimed to add vibrancy and nature to the area through the creation of a mural on the side of John's house. Started in 2021, the completed artwork includes an installation of climbing plants and flowers. It's now a local attraction, with lots of people stopping by to admire the integration of art and nature.



Plinth Project

Led by: Debo Adegoke

This project was centred around repurposing 'found' objects into planters to engage the community of growers. The planters were made of pallet wood cladding and inspired by a traditional cloth called Sanyan, woven by the Yoruba people of Nigeria. You can see the finished planters at the Lakeside Centre by Southmere Lake and Thamesmead Growers Garden on Titmuss Avenue.

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YMCATG Gardening Project

Led by: Kirsty from YMCA

Creating a sensory garden at the YMCA nursery to encourage children to plant and maintain herbs and learn about healthy eating habits. The project educates children and provides the community with an outdoor space that encourages healthy eating, with the Café aiming to use vegetables and herbs grown in the garden for homemade dishes.



Complete Wellness Garden

Led by: Ruby Eggleston

This transformation of a churchyard into a wellness garden puts community wellbeing at its heart. The programme has seen St Paul's Church provide a completely new therapeutic space with wildflowers, shrubs, a garden, meadow and paved footpath. As well as engaging with the local community, the team also collaborated with volunteers from Good Gym to bring the garden to life. Phase two of the project saw more opportunities for volunteers to learn, plant and grow, fostering community engagement.

Fragrant Pathways

Led by: Tim Rice

Transforming the outdoor space at Titmuss Avenue Baptist Church into a tranquil place to enjoy. Fragrant plants, bulbs and wood chippings have added a touch of nature to the churchyard.



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Windrush Gardens Windrush Primary

**Led by: Shupa from
Windrush Primary School**

Transforming the unused space behind the community room into a garden and growing area. After finding inspiration from trips to Claridge Gardens and Birchmere Park, the team built and painted raised beds, giving children the chance to learn about gardening as well as creating an inviting space for the community to enjoy.



Hawksmoor Primary School Making Space for Nature Project

Beautifying the space in front of the school with new planting to attract wildlife, bees, and insects, has created a safe space for nature to flourish and an area for passers-by to admire.



Well-being Garden

Transforming an area close to the main entrance of the Harris Garrard Academy School into a garden to promote mental and physical well-being amongst the school community. With a greenhouse, raised beds, a new seating area and water feature, this space can now facilitate gardening activities and serve as a peaceful environment for all to enjoy.



Thamesmead Bloomin

Led by: John Hogan

Capturing the natural beauty of the neighbourhood through the installation of hanging baskets, climbing and potted plants, and fresh herbs, Thamesmead Bloomin is all about encouraging residents to nurture nature on their doorstep. The project has received additional funding to help people taking part get even more involved with day-to-day activities, from adding colour to balconies to promoting growing and maintenance skills. Round two of the project has built on the progress already made to further boost people's mood and establish a sense of pride in the community.

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Promoting Thamesmead

Shining a spotlight on what makes Thamesmead special

Designed to encourage people to get out and about and explore all the area has to offer.

From showcasing some of the town's natural wonders to capturing a behind-the-scenes look at community initiatives, this is all about giving people a glimpse into life at Thamesmead and what makes the area so special.

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Virtual Tour of Community Gardens in Thamesmead

Led by: Uy Hoang

In collaboration with Sarah Garrod from the Thamesmead Community Benefit Society, this virtual tour of community gardens in Thamesmead aimed to showcase the gardens and their importance to the local community. Artwork produced by local garden users and audio clips from local gardeners were incorporated into the tour, which was shared online, meaning people from all over the world could learn about the community gardens in Thamesmead.



PROMOTING THAMESMEAD

Thamesmead Wild Chorus and Thamesmead Wonder Walks



Led by: Calum and J D Swann

Immersive experiences, such as the installation of a live broadcast at Tump 39, and organised nature walks to see local birds and wildlife, were all efforts to promote nature appreciation, education, and engagement. The walks took place around Lesnes Abbey Woods and North Thamesmead, while the broadcast was streamed live at the Thamesmead Ecological Area. The audio stream of nature sounds was also featured on the Thamesmead Now website for the duration of the project.

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Creating a sense of togetherness

Designed to bring people together to connect, inspire and learn from each other. Community initiatives have not only helped residents develop new skills and understand the spaces around them, they've also helped create a sense of belonging by encouraging like-minded people to collaborate through art and creativity.

WORKSHOPS & COURSES

Allotment Residency

Led by: Miyuki Kasahara

An Introduction to Natural Gardening and Soil Ecology included a series of outdoor practical workshops to educate residents on the relationship between soil and food, i.e. how healthy soil provides healthy food. Miyuki taught people how to test their soil samples for levels of carbon dioxide (which is a sign of climate change), and how to make natural fertiliser from ingredients found at home. The workshops were interactive and fun, providing people with a chance to learn about sustainable farming and soil ecology, and culminated in a community film screening from wildlife camera recordings.



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Inside Out Project

Led by: Waterways Children's Centre

Offering support to children in the area. The Forest School's series of outdoor activity sessions helped 0 to 5-year olds learn about respecting nature, planting vegetables, and pond life during school holidays. As well as encouraging children to learn about nature and healthy eating while being outside, the centre has also been praised for building a support network for families in the community.



Art Therapy Outdoor Workshops

Led by: Nicky Sutton

Promoting good mental health and well-being by encouraging a deeper connection with nature. The workshops took place in various outdoor locations across Thamesmead including woodlands, community gardens, tumps, and estate courtyards. They gave people an opportunity to benefit from the therapeutic effects of spending time in nature and engaging in creative activities.



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Food and Seed from Scratch

Led by: Ozge Ali

Interactive workshops along with cooking and growing classes, encouraged the local community to learn about healthy eating habits and sustainable living. With up to 30 people attending at one time, the eight workshops were hosted at community centres, including Birchmere Community Hub and the Atrium, and empowered people to learn new vegan dishes and cook from scratch while making new connections.



Cook and Grow from Seeds Two

Led by: Ozge Ali

Continuing on from the first round project, Cook and Grow from Seeds 2 aimed to teach people how to cook and grow from seeds, with a focus on using leftovers and encouraging people to grow in their own space. Held at the Atrium Community Centre and Garden, the project continued to promote sustainable living and food production in Thamesmead through the creation of a photo book with 50 menus and photos from sessions.

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BRICK

Led by: Thamesmead Texas

This initiative centres around developing a sustainable brick made from organic and industrial materials unique to Thamesmead. Thames Water provided local clay, lime, reeds, and human waste from local sewage as materials. Part one will include workshops where local residents can participate in a small production line and keep their own brick as an art form - the bricks will then be displayed at a Print Fair. In part two, the group are planning to seek more funding with the aim to create a compost toilet made from the sustainable bricks.



Dancing in the Park

Led by: Kerry An Chan

Promoting outdoor dancing to Latin American music, specifically "Forro" dance, and bringing together people of all ages to make friends, have fun, and enjoy some fresh air. The series of 90-minute classes were held weekly for 16 weeks. They combined nature and dance to create a unique experience that encouraged the local community to socialise in a healthy and active way.



Birds and Nature

Led by: Claire Hallinan

Initiated by The Hawksmoor Youth Hub and Moorings Residents Community Group, this project focused on providing workshops for young people and families to make bird boxes and plant mini gardens. The finished bird boxes were placed around the local Moorings community and a picnic was held to celebrate the project's success.



Moss Whisperers

Led by: Eva Lis

A series of six workshops aimed at teaching people all about moss and its impact on the ecosystem. The long-term plan was to establish a public moss garden, however, the workshops soon turned into a creative session where participants made moss monsters from moss and clay, creating a greater awareness and respect for nature.

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Sarah Garrod Photo Workshop

Led by: Sarah Garrod

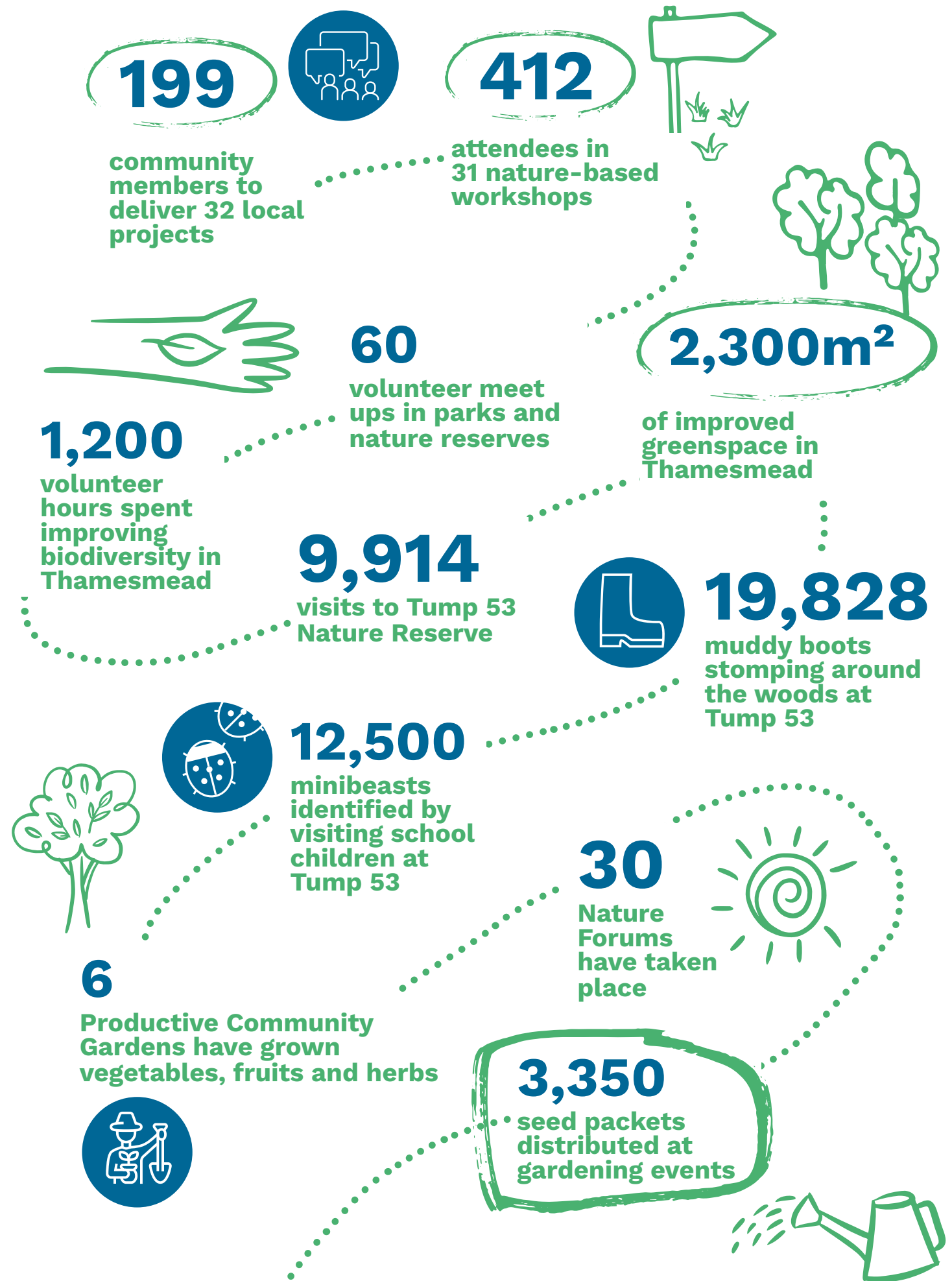
A two-hour photo workshop using plants and 'cyanotype' (a photo printing technique) to encourage people to learn new skills. Hosted in outdoor spaces like the allotment, garden or nature trail, the workshop inspired people to explore their creativity using natural materials.



Gardening and Well-being Workshops

Led by: Moorings Neighbourhood Forum

A series of workshops focused on helping people grow their own food and learn how to cook healthy meals while enjoying the therapeutic benefits of gardening. Hosted across five sessions covering a number of themes including food growing, cooking, and creating visual memory, the workshops aimed to bring people together in a creative environment and educate them on growing and gardening activities.



**We hope the Making Space for Nature
Community Fund will inspire other landowners
and developers to empower their communities
and spark positive change.**

www.clevercities.eu