



Chiltern Rangers Theory of Change



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Our Theory of Change lies at the heart of what we do.

Here you'll find it presentsed in three different ways:

A text version on pages 3 & 4, a chart version on page 5
and a pictoral version on pages 6 & 7.

About Chiltern Rangers' Theory of Change

Chiltern Rangers works with communities to provide practical habitat management in Buckinghamshire and the wider Chilterns. We firmly believe that when local people are inspired to get involved in conservation activity, everybody benefits. Biodiversity is enhanced. Those taking part enjoy improved wellbeing. Communities also benefit from well managed, accessible green spaces in whose upkeep they have a hand. Our belief that better habitats, healthy people and healthy communities go together is at the heart of our theory of change.

Our beneficiaries

Many different people and groups benefit from our work, including people who enjoy getting out and about in the spaces we manage and others who enjoy these spaces from a distance. For practical purposes our Theory of Change concentrates primarily on the people with whom we work directly on conservation activities.

We want all sections of the community to work with us on habitat improvement so being inclusive is important to us. We also know that certain groups and individuals will benefit particularly from what we have to offer, and that some people may not become involved unless we work with partners to facilitate this.¹ Those with most to gain - and who we work with partners to reach - include people likely to experience the greatest health benefits from conservation volunteering (e.g. people with depression, anxiety or other mental health difficulties); people with learning difficulties including autism, carers/young carers; people who are socially isolated or whose access to nature might otherwise be limited; children and young people; and people for whom volunteering can open up pathways into education, training and/or work.

The evidence and assumptions behind our theory of change

Active engagement

Our Theory of Change assumes that our impact will be increased if people are actively engaged, have fun, volunteer again and take on more responsibility. This rationale is backed up by research, e.g. by TCV's Green Impacts project and by a recent systematic review.² Success will depend on how well we reach and inspire people, including by understanding their motivations, and on making sure our opportunities are accessible and inclusive in every sense - all shown as key enablers on our Theory of Change. Tracking the different aspects of 'active engagement' will help us better understand - and keep on improving - our volunteers' 'journey of change.'

1. See Morris, J and others, *Access for all? Barriers to accessing woodlands and forests in Britain*. Local Environment Vol 16 (4, April 2011)

2. See e.g. Husk, K and others, *Participation in environmental enhancement and conservation activities for health and well-being in adults*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (2013); TCV Volunteering Impacts Report 2014

Benefits of volunteering

Many studies point to the multiple benefits of volunteering in general and conservation volunteering in particular. Our Theory of Change concentrates on the outcomes most commonly identified, including development of skills and confidence, increased social contact, stronger feelings of connectedness to nature, increased physical activity and enhanced mental wellbeing.³

What makes a better habitat?

The seminal 2010 'Lawton Report' Making Space for Nature called for a step change in nature conservation involving the creation of 'more, bigger, better and more joined up' wildlife sites to form a 'more coherent and resilient ecological network.' We think our contribution can be judged

- on the area of habitat we actively manage, aided by our 'drag and drop' conservation sessions. These grow, and link, the Chilterns' special places for wildlife by reaching habitats that are often forgotten and bringing them into active management.
- on the improvements we make to habitats consistent with the academic literature. Examples include: creating new nature reserves in school grounds; creating more micro-habitats; creating new rides, glades and river meanders; putting up bird and bat boxes; and protecting water quality by monitoring the riverfly population.
- through the number and findings of ecological condition surveys that we carry out. While there may be reasons outside our control which mean these do not show improvements. these surveys will help us to track trends and identify priority areas and actions.

Understanding partner objectives and whether these are met

Our Theory of Change recognises that the partner organisations with whom we work will have their own objectives in working with us. In many cases they will also be better placed than us to see what difference volunteering with Chiltern Rangers makes to the people taking part. It is therefore important that we ask partners what outcomes they are looking for and how these can best be measured.

Benefits of Forest Ranger schools

Chiltern Rangers' Forest Ranger sessions combine the Forest School approach to learning with coaching children to work as Junior Rangers, improving their Forest Ranger School habitat for wildlife. Academic studies find good evidence that spending time in natural environments helps children manage their emotions, aids motor development, benefits their health and contributes to positive environmental attitudes that last into adulthood.⁴ Evaluations of other Forest Schools also point to benefits including improved social and communication skills, greater motivation for learning and appropriate risk-taking. We aim to build our evidence base further in discussion with partner schools.

3. See e.g. Fujiwara, D. et al, *Wellbeing and civil society: Estimating the value of volunteering using subjective wellbeing data*. Department for Work and Pensions Working Paper 112 (2013); R Casiday et al, *Volunteering and health: What impact does it really have?* (2008) Haldane, A., *In giving, how much do we receive? The social value of volunteering*. A Pro Bono Economics lecture to the Society of Business Economists, London, 2014; Bragg, R, Atkins, G. *A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care*. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 204 (2016); Bragg, R, Wood, C, Barton, J & Pretty, J, *Wellbeing benefits from natural environments rich in wildlife: A literature review for The Wildlife Trusts* (2015).

4. See e.g. Gill, T, *Children and nature: a quasi-systematic review of the empirical evidence*. A report for the London Sustainable Development Commission (2011).

Our beneficiaries		Our activities	What these lead to	Our final goals	
People of all ages backgrounds & abilities who live, learn, work in or visit the Chilterns, especially those with most to gain from engaging with nature.		Outreach Marketing & comms Partner engagement Corporate engagement Taster sessions/ demonstrations	Active engagement Good take-up of practical/other volunteering opportunities. Participants have fun and gain satisfaction from taking part. More people take part more often & take on more responsibility. More people spending time in and around the Chilterns.	Healthier people People with better physical and mental health and wellbeing	
		Running practical events Green Thursdays Conservation Villages Be a ranger days 'Drag & drop' conservation sessions Ecological surveying Forest school sessions Community events	Participants gain confidence, knowledge & skills including skills for work.	Healthier communities More people enjoy access to the natural environment and look after it together	
Partner schools, businesses & community groups			Participants feel more socially connected	Habitat is bigger, better and more joined up natural capital enhanced	
Landowners/ managers			Participants are more physically active & enjoy enhanced mental wellbeing		
Chiltern Rangers Staff		Training and supporting volunteers	Participants feel more connected to and responsible for nature		
The Chilterns landscape and environs		Advising on, planning & delivering habitat improvements	Increased area of habitat under active management		
			Jobs created Partner objectives met		
Some key 'enablers'	Being a sustainable social enterprise	Good reach to partners & communities including through trusted ambassadors	Creating accessible & inclusive opportunities to volunteer & enjoy the landscape	Inspiring people to get - and stay – involved	Being up-to-date with the latest scientific thinking

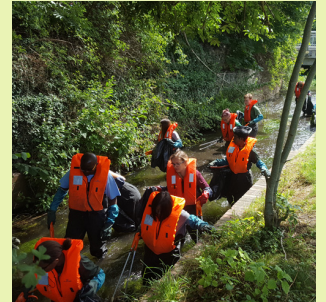


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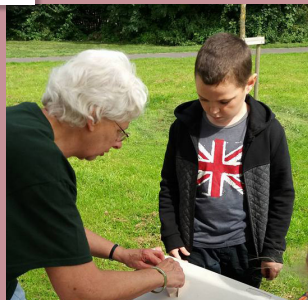
Our beneficiaries



Our activities



Some key 'enablers'



What these lead to



Our final goals





Chiltern Rangers CIC

Kingsmead Depot, 60 Fennels Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks HP11 1SL

Tel: 01494 474 486

Email: info@chilternrangers.co.uk

