

Thriving in Nature Celebration and Learning Event at Asthall Manor

Panel notes

On Wednesday 13th May 2026, around 45 people gathered at Asthall Manor near Burford for the second year of Oxfordshire Community Foundation's Thriving in Nature Fund event.

This fund helps more people prosper by engaging with green spaces and the rural environment. Supported by a collective of donors, the fund makes grants to local charities that improve health and wellbeing and nurture work opportunities by uniting people with nature.

The guests consisted of donors to the fund; charities that had received grants from the fund; and others interested in the fund.

OCF staff facilitated two informal panel sessions at the event, where grantees and funders shared their experiences and perspectives.

Sponsored by

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Grantee panel

What the grant was for and how it is going

- Delivering a range of activities, including creative workshops using natural and biodegradable materials, outdoor sessions such as Tai Chi, and trips to local green spaces
- Engaging a high number of participants, including both adults and children, with some activities bringing families together
- Strong engagement and consistent attendance, with many participants returning
- Activities are free, helping remove cost as a barrier
- Enabling access to outdoor spaces, including for people who may not otherwise have the opportunity, and in some cases visiting for the first time

Why flexible funding is important

- Enables projects to grow and develop beyond initial ideas
- Supports moving from volunteer-led work to having paid roles
- Supports staffing, coordination and development
- Helps organisations be taken more seriously and take part in wider conversations and partnerships
- Supports work connecting communities and landscapes
- Allows activities to adapt and respond when things do not go to plan



Examples of change seen in people worked with

- Feeling more relaxed and happy
- Motivated to continue coming
- Feeling part of the community and building relationships with others
- Attending feeling low or isolated and leaving feeling uplifted

What is special about nature in improving wellbeing

- Being outdoors helps people feel calm and relaxed
- Being in nature gives people a break from everyday life
- Nature brings people together
- Connecting with the outdoors instead of being on their phone or watching TV

Funder panel

How funders work with OCF on their local giving

- Working with community foundations like OCF to give locally
- Using OCF's local knowledge and expertise
- Relying on OCF to reach charities and communities they could not access directly
- Building long-term relationships through OCF
- Working with OCF to connect organisations and share knowledge

Inspiration to be part of this collective fund focused on people and nature

- Bringing people and nature together, not one or the other
- Working with like-minded funders
- Pooling resources to achieve greater scale than they could do themselves

Feedback from Thriving in Nature grantees that encourages continued giving

- Stories and case studies that bring the work to life
- Pictures and videos showing what is happening
- Honest feedback about what went wrong as well as what went right

