

Dynamic Dunescapes Dune Engagement Case Study

Nature Tots September 2021 Onwards

Sand dune system	Studland
Case Study Subject	Nature tots – outdoor activity group for parents and children in Purbeck
The Engagement Intervention	

Site background information

Our site at Studland is part of the Purbeck Heaths NNR and is visited by millions of people every year. We're working in the community to engage local people with the dunes and their rare wildlife to ensure the longevity of the restoration works carried out by the project.

What was the issue/change you hoped to make?

When mapping out nature engagement for young people, aged 0-25, we noticed a significant gap when it came to nature 'connection' in the 0-5 aged sector. This was a Purbeck wide landscape mapping tool, and while there were other activities happening across the landscape (e.g. monthly nature tots at Arne), there was still a gap for the more local audience of Swanage and a more regular basis, weekly.

This also coincided with an ask from the local community for a nature tots session. This occurred during one of the Planet Purbeck community meetings. It came out that some parents/guardians did not feel safe by themselves in nature/ didn't know how to utilise the environment to it's full potential.

We then trialled out a number of one-off nature tots events, which had high numbers and incredibly positive feedback. Once we got the capacity from the volunteers, we were ready to go. The aim of nature tots is to develop a local community group that supports one another and their little ones for outdoor play, to build confidence in individuals, and strong connections with nature.

What was the suggested intervention?

To create a space for parents and young children to enjoy nature and the outdoors safely whilst also taking part in fun and engaging activities.

What did you do and how?

Nature Tots was created with the help of two National Trust Volunteers who develop and lead the sessions. The group meets every Monday morning for activities in the dunes and surrounding habitats.

Who did you work with? / How did you engage with different groups?

The group was advertised through social media, local posters and website listings.

Strong contacts with schools & community groups were used.

How was the site / intervention monitored?

NT Volunteers lead each session, and a feedback session was run at the end of the first season. This provided parents with the opportunity to share what they thought was/wasn't working and ideas for future sessions.

What modifications, if any, did you make to your initial plan and why?

Great sessions can happen with little resources!

Highlight any issues/obstacles & how you overcame them?

Parents having different opinions of what the content of the sessions should be. We then formed a parent sounding session to discuss all of the concerns/ areas of improvements and developed an action plan to respond.

How much did the intervention cost?

Only volunteer costs.

What size was the area of the intervention?

Parents were predominantly from the Swanage area

Did the intervention work?

Please describe how. What has changed?

Parents have said that they are accessing areas of the NNR that they previously felt was too difficult with toddlers and the social element of the group has created a space the parents are looking to use in addition the organized activities.

External feedback

Constructive feedback from parents:

- The sessions have enabled the children and parents to use the National Trust as part of the children's development and has provided a social meeting place for parents.
- Positive feedback regarding how the sessions are planned and the variety of topics covered.
- Enabled some parents to explore the woods which they would not have felt able to do alone with a toddler.

- Like it when there is a conservation element or ecological focus to the sessions
- Like the way the sessions are facilitated, ie informality with a specific focus
- Sometimes the sessions are too long in the winter

What could be done differently next time?

Feedback sessions have highlighted a need for more equipment. Communal resources such as welly banks and a borrow box will be created moving forward and equipment including pond dipping nets and magnifying glasses are being sourced. It was also raised that sessions should be shorter in the winter as it becomes colder.

Media & Reports

Images of the intervention

