Dynamic Dunescapes Dune Engagement Case Study

Beach Toy Share Library in Devon – July 2022

Sand dune system	Woolacombe Warren
Case Study Subject	Creating a beach toy share library for public use with National Trust and Dynamic Dunescapes
The Engagement Intervention	

Site background information

Woolacombe Warren is a small but heavily used sand dune system, and is one of two Dynamic Dunescapes sites in North Devon. These sand dunes have an interesting history - having been a golf course in the early 1900s before being used by the US military, who trained here extensively for the D-day landings.

Woolacombe is a popular holiday destination, with many of the visitors spending their time down on the beach and a large percentage of them also walking through the dunes

What was the issue/change you hoped to make?

Marine plastic pollution is a global problem, and beach cleans around the North Devon coastline have identified that plastic toys make up a percentage of the local offending items. This intervention was intended to help reduce the number of plastic toys being purchased and then discarded on the beach, and therefore cut down on local marine plastic pollution. Equally, whilst the dunes are heavily frequented by people, the aim of this library was also to encourage people to take a deeper interest in the ecology of the dunes, exploring the invertebrate life and looking closer at what lives there, as well as take some ownership of the habitat and undertake their own litter picks.

What was the suggested intervention?

To install a toy share library on the main route through the dunes to the beach, to provide toys that will be available for members of the public to borrow and return items, as well as to donate any items they no longer needed or wanted.

What did you do and how?

The Dynamic Dunescapes National Trust intern designed & constructed a wooden library cupboard with shelving and hooks. We then stocked it with a selection of items; We had been gathering & storing discarded but usable beach toys for some time, and these were used to fill the library. We also purchased a number of wooden & metal beach toys to fill it with in order to not go against our aims of reducing plastic pollution.

For inside the library, we created an information board with the help of a design student to explain the purpose and encourage people to make use of the library, and to explore the dunes.

On our trips through the dunes through the summer, we continued to sorted the contents and re-stocked items when necessary, supported by local community group Plastic Free Woolacombe.

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

We worked with a local artist who painted the library to show a range of dune species. The back & roof were also painted to resemble an old beach hut/tent, reflecting the history of the site as a popular Victorian holiday destination. We also worked with Plastic Free North Devon and National Trust, who helped to promote it on social media, as well as Plastic Free Woolacombe, who also assist with monitoring and restocking with toys collected during their own beach cleans.

How was the site / intervention monitored?

The library is checked during normal dune inspection walks, and restocked from supplies of beach toys whenever needed. People are encouraged to share their dune discoveries on social media by the information board inside.

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

No modifications were needed.

How much did the intervention cost?

£750- £450 for the materials, £200 for a stash of beach toys to fill it, and £100 in costs to create the information board.

Did the intervention work?

Please describe how. What has changed?

Yes. The library was frequently used over the summer, and we hope that it will continue to be used for years to come as more people become aware of it. Every use reduces the quantity of plastic toys being purchased and potentially discarded on the beach, as well as spreading the Dynamic Dunescapes message and encouraging exploration of the dunes as well as the beach.

What could be done differently next time?

Additional libraries could be created to increase coverage. This is tricky though, as the best locations are often near shops selling plastic beach toys, who are unlikely to want something nearby which will reduce their sales.

Media & Reports

Published media

An article on the library appeared in the NT Land & Nature 2022 update, and it was publicised by Dunescapes, National Trust & Plastic Free North Devon social media channels.

Images of the intervention