

# Barriers and bridges to nature connection in Ireland

## NEAR Health Project

The NEAR Health project, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Health Service Executive under Grant Award No. 2015-HW-MS-2, supports the implementation of the EPA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 – ‘Our Environment, Our wellbeing’ and Healthy Ireland, the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland.



Ryan  
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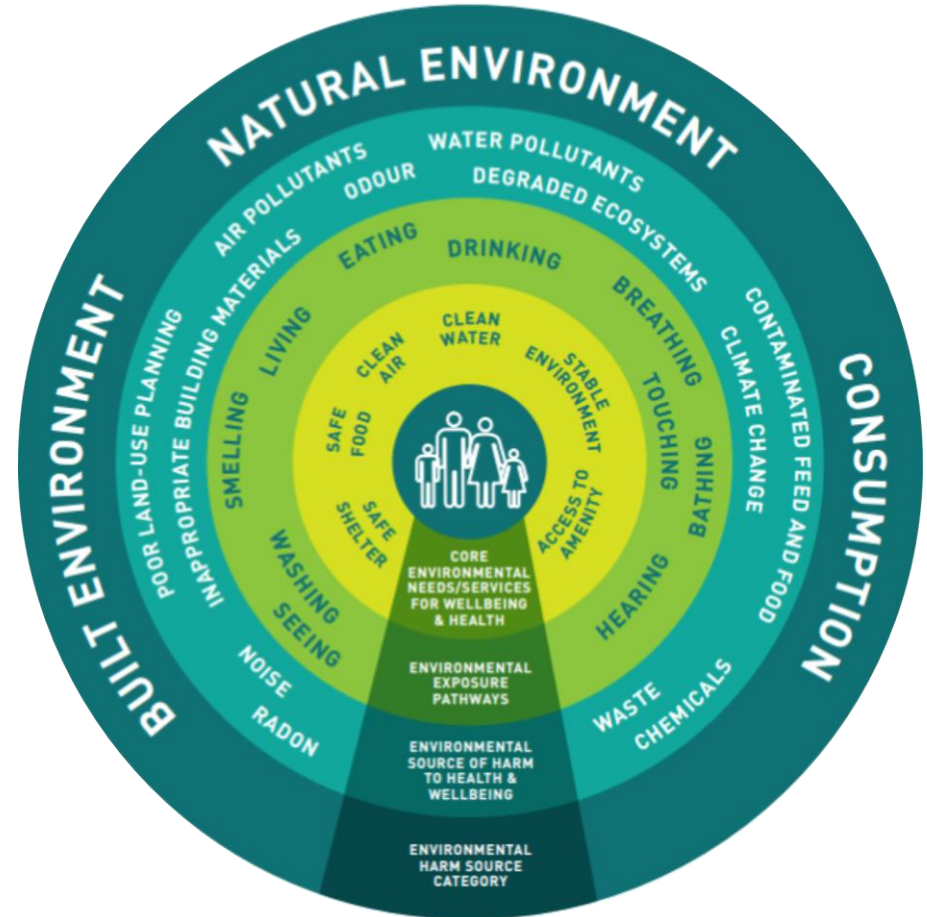


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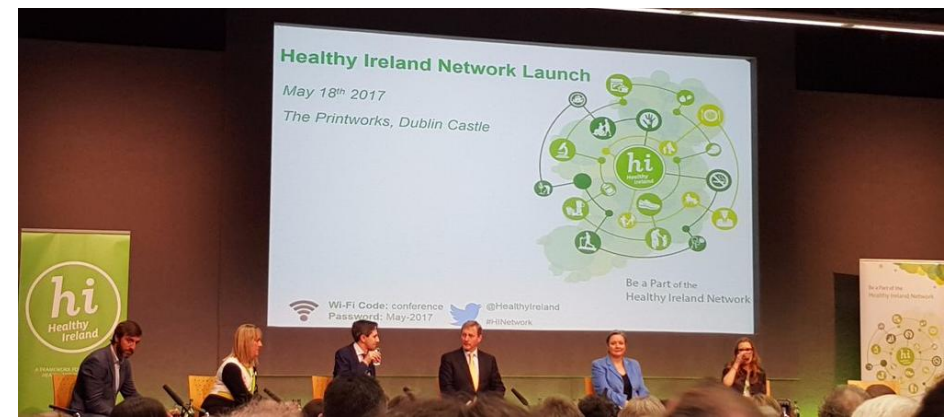
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# How are Environment and Health linked?





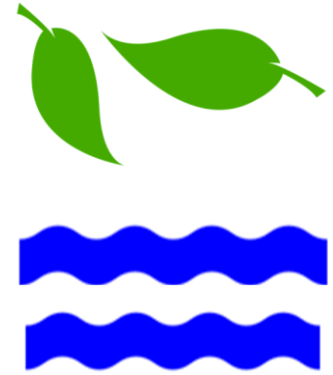
# Health and Wellbeing Drivers and Research



# Healthy places ...how does NEAR Health fit in?

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- combine elements of nature
- support us to live a life full of health and to contribute to society.



# NEAR Health Project

Engage **communities** with **natural environment** to benefit their **health** and **wellbeing**

- Appraise values, motivations, barriers and bridges
- Develop a framework to integrate health promotion and environmental awareness





# Project Team



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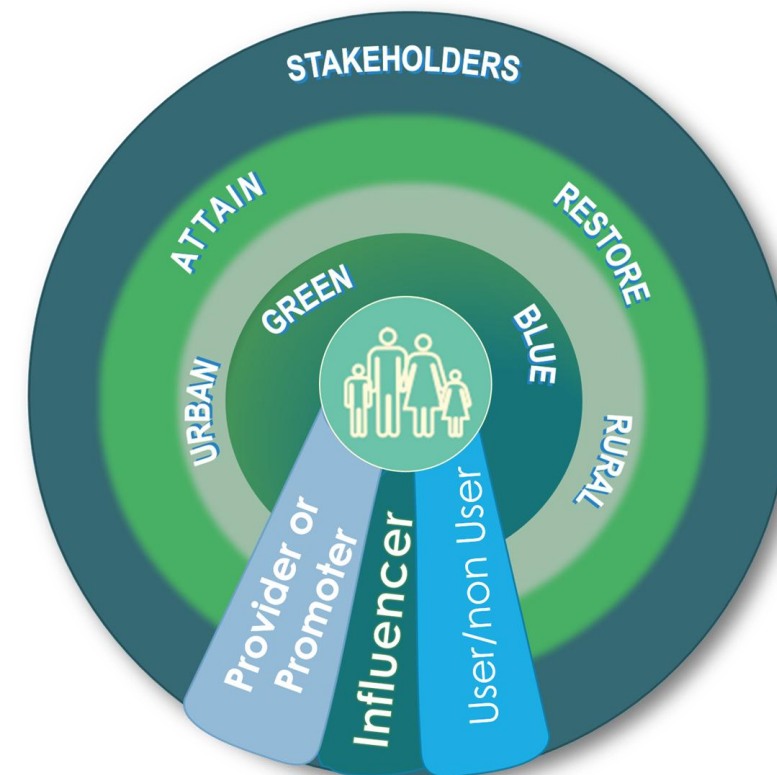
Gesche Kindermann



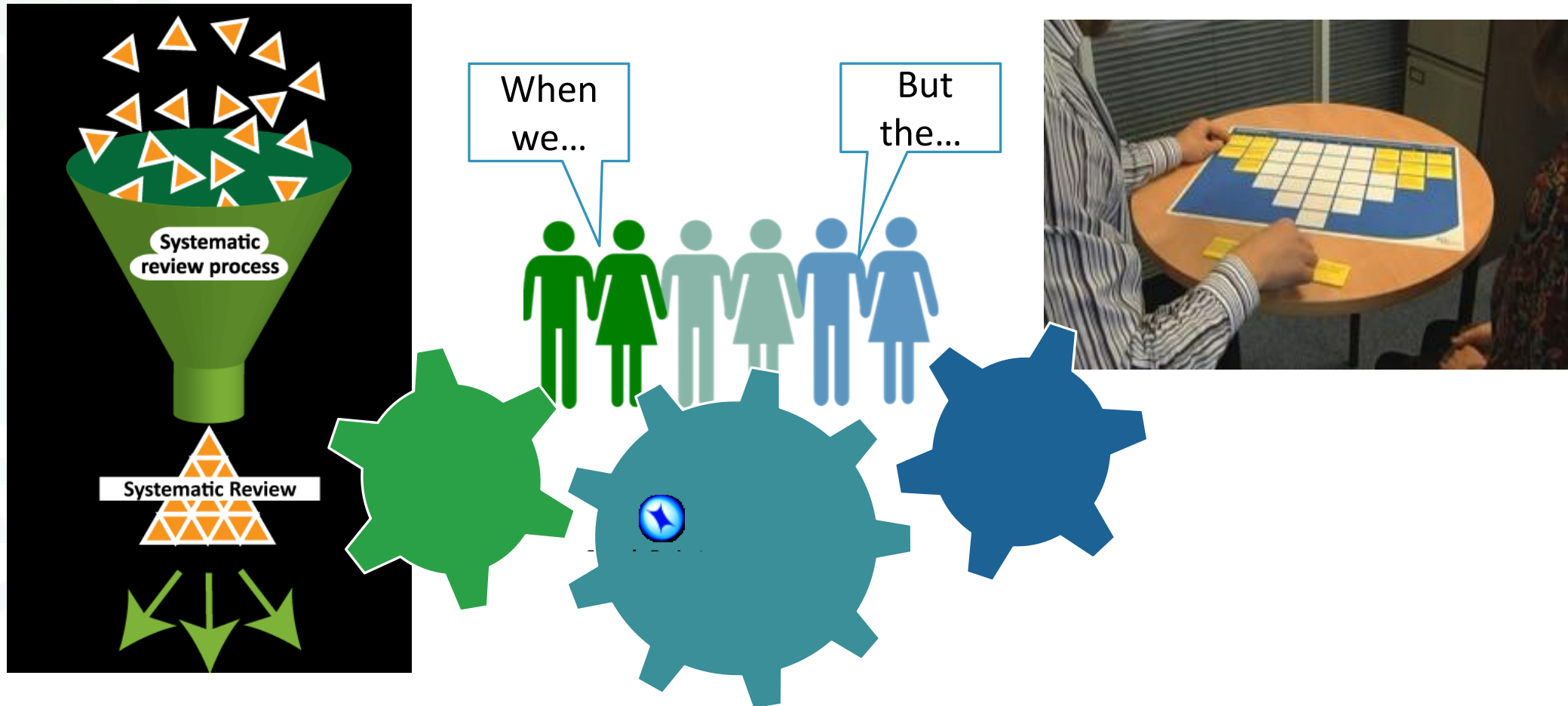
Diarmuid O'Donovan



Geraldine McDarby



# Methodological Approach



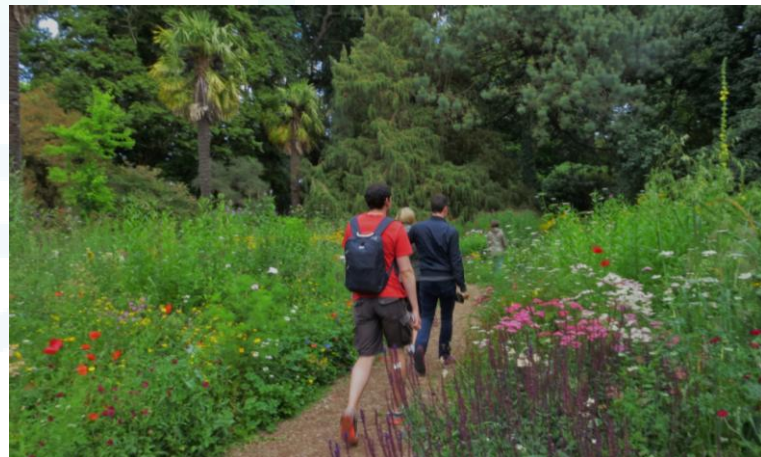


# What are Health Enabling (Blue) Places?





# What are Health Enabling (Green) Places?



# . Barriers to engaging with nature for health and wellbeing identified by studies assessing blue space interventions (prelim. findings)

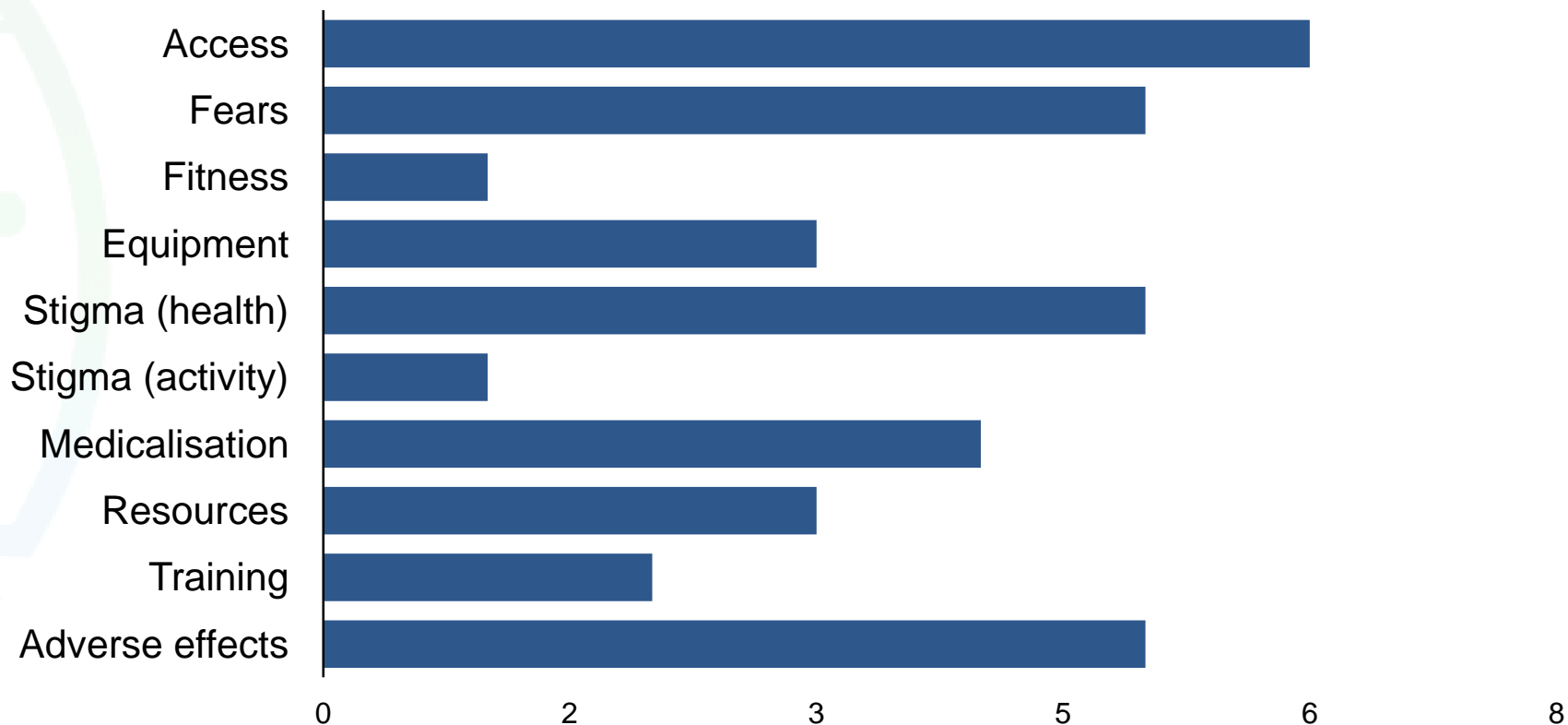


Figure 1. Barriers to engaging with nature for health and wellbeing identified by studies assessing blue space interventions (Systematic review; number of papers reviewed = blue space 26; green 15 papers)



From barriers to bridges...

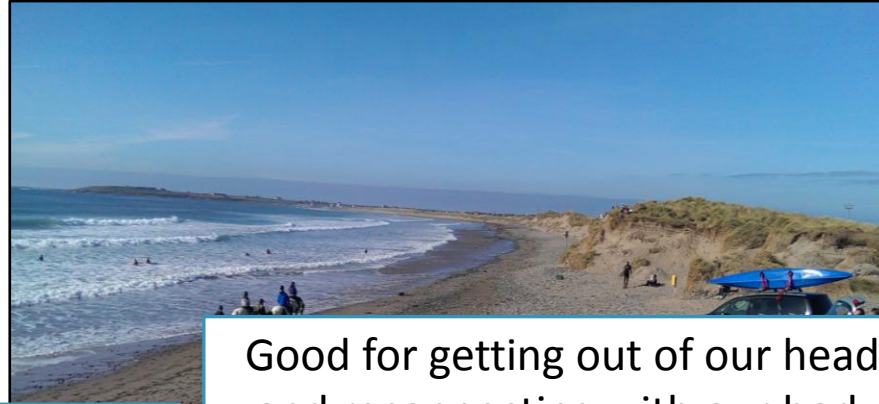




# Values & Motivations



Nature is all around us, it includes us, but a lot of the time people don't even see it.



Good for getting out of our heads and reconnecting with our body.



If I am stressed I need to go outside and that makes me feel better.



Being in nature is restorative and grounding.



I have never felt bad, anxious or stressed after a walk or being outside.



# Barriers



Availability of transport can be a real problem for some to access nature.



People don't know what to do or how to engage with the natural environment.

Fear of water.



Lack of time is always a big barrier.

Children are not encouraged to go outdoors.

It can be an effort to get away from the comfortable life that we have evolved to and to go outside.



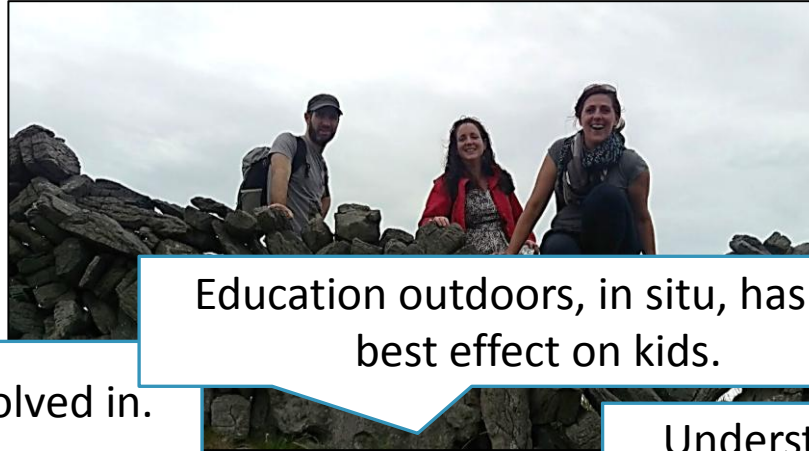
Access is one of the biggest and most basic barriers.



# Bridges



Local actions to get involved in.



Education outdoors, in situ, has the best effect on kids.



Understanding that nature is all around us.

Specialised wheelchairs for surf/sea/beaches, disability training and access.

Cold water is less of a barrier with more affordable, improved wetsuits.



Support and a sense of community is important as an entry point for engaging with nature.

Peer support and social events are key to engaging people in nature.



# What do **communities** want from their nearby environment in terms of health and wellbeing?



My family love to...



It would be great if....



# What would you like to do? Community as co creators and experts



Social events to do with other people...



Local actions to get involved with...





# How can we design an effective nature based programme of measures?

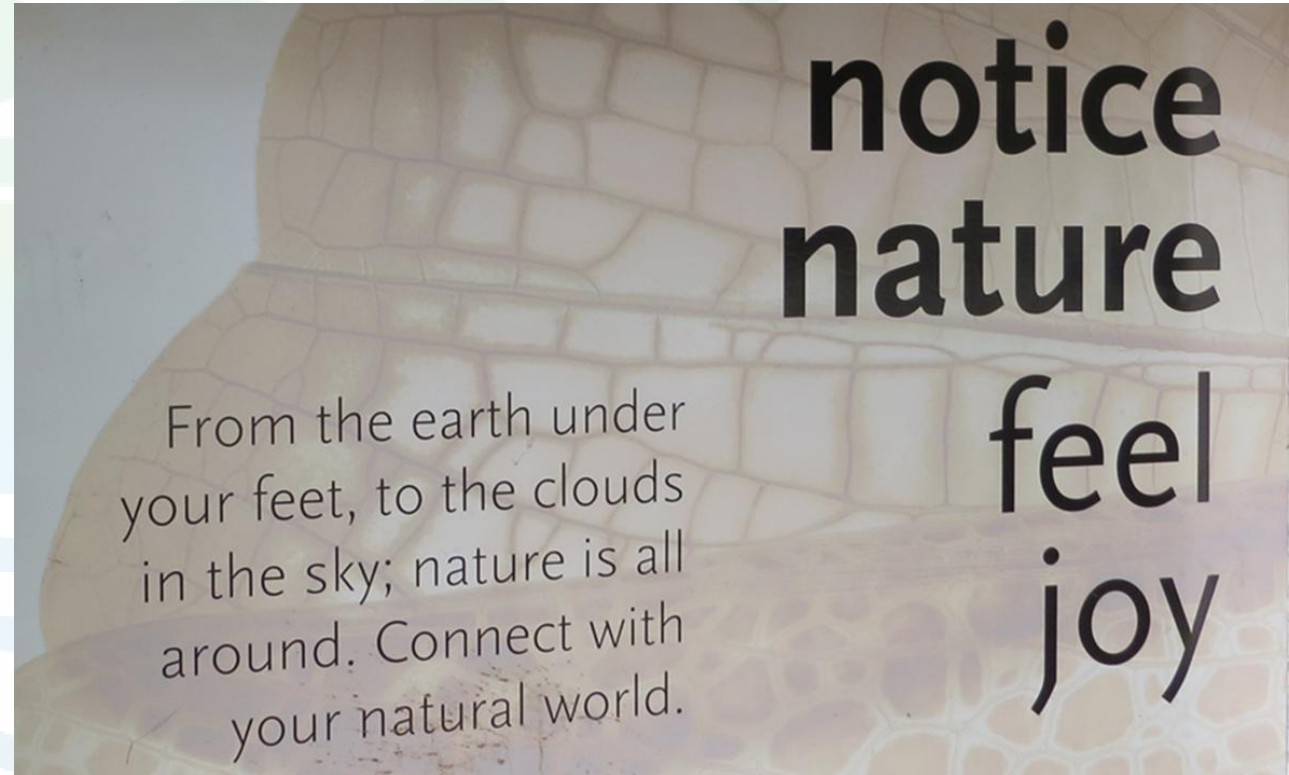




# Can we bridge barriers to connect people to nature for health and wellbeing?

Thank you for listening. Any Questions?

Thanks to the EPA and HSE for funding the project, all the stakeholders for telling us what they value.



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