

Nature Connected Organisations Handbook

A guide for connecting
organisations with nature
for sustainable futures
and workplace wellbeing



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INTRODUCTION

There is now widespread recognition that the climate and nature crises are interlinked. A crisis for the climate is equally a crisis for nature, and both are potentially catastrophic for humankind. Actions that harm nature escalate the scale and pace of the planetary and societal risks we face. Organisations across all industries and sectors need nature, with more than half of the world's GDP (\$44 trillion) depending on nature and its services.¹ The risks we face are not restricted to business—nature is humanity's life support system. Without global action to protect and restore nature and prevent climate change, the planet will become unliveable.

Organisations can play a key role in addressing these existential threats by changing their operations, missions, and actions to help nature and the environment. However, they have an even greater potential role to play in addressing one of the root causes of the planetary emergencies—the breakdown of the human-nature relationship. Daily lives are organised in ways that create distance between people and the more-than-human world, with reduced opportunity for the kind of close engagement, appreciation and care for nature that can foster closer bonds. Without a close emotional bond with nature, people are unlikely to take action to look after and renew the natural world.

As a species, and as part of nature, humans are designed to tune into the more-than-human world, responding in physically, emotionally, and psychologically positive ways to nature. On an individual level, having a close relationship with nature is essential for health and wellbeing, while on a broader level, a society that is connected with nature cares for it—protecting, regenerating, and nurturing the natural world. Nature connectedness can restore the human-nature relationship and establish conditions for a sustainable and prosperous future.

Organisations have powerful opportunities to effect change on individual, organisational, and societal levels. Increasing the nature connectedness of staff members for their individual wellbeing and pro-nature behaviour will have flow-on effects for their families and communities. Developing organisational structures and cultures that facilitate connection with nature helps staff, while also benefitting the organisation, interested parties, and the wider community of which it is a part. Nature connected organisations can link up as part of a resilient network for sustainable futures.

This handbook outlines the science of nature connection, explains why nature connection is important for organisations, and offers a framework and tips for bringing nature connection into an organisation. It identifies opportunities for connecting staff with nature, opportunities to develop spaces and processes that are nature connecting, and opportunities for going deeper and growing organisations with nature connectedness embedded into their organisational culture. The guidance will be useful to organisations across sectors—from small, medium to large businesses, charities and NGOs, public sector organisations, and community groups. It is designed to be useful for people at all levels of an organisation, including CEOs, trustees or directors, sustainability leaders, human resource managers, wellbeing champions, or employees wanting to initiate steps towards nature connection in their organisation.

Whether you are already a nature-positive organisation dedicated to fostering healthy human-nature relations, or have no idea where to begin, this handbook will help take you further along your journey towards greater sustainability and wellbeing—joining the rapidly growing community of organisations that are finding ways of reconnecting people with the rest of nature for happier humans and a healthier planet.

Nature

Nature connection

Connection

NATURE CONNECTION

Nature connection is about our subjective sense of relationship with the natural world, based on our psychological connection with nature rather than physical contact with it. Being connected with nature is about more than simply spending time in it—it's a state of mind, a reflection of how we feel towards, think about, and relate to nature. People with a strong sense of nature connectedness feel like they are a part of nature and seek out, notice, and appreciate all aspects of the natural world.

As a psychological construct, nature connectedness can be measured using validated scales. This allows for scientific research to be carried out in order to identify which people have higher or lower levels of nature connectedness, and to test ways of improving these levels.

Research has shown that:

People with high levels of nature connectedness are happier and more satisfied with life.^{2,3,4}

People with high levels of nature connectedness are more likely to engage in pro-nature behaviour.^{4,5}

Nature connectedness can be improved through practices involving active engagement with and appreciation of the natural world.⁶

A nature connected individual also has a positive impact on their friends and family, their colleagues and organisation, their communities and society, and ultimately, the planet.

While many people recognise that nature is 'good for us', what is often overlooked is that how people feel about nature is more important than how much time they spend in it. Nature connectedness matters more than exposure to nature in predicting wellbeing and pro-nature behaviour.^{7,8,9} This means that to support wellbeing, we need to do more than simply encourage people to get outside—people need opportunities to notice and appreciate nature and connect emotionally with the more-than-human world.



Nature

Growing nature connectedness

Connection

Improving nature connectedness is not simply a matter of spending more time in nature. It is the quality of our time in nature that matters—we need rich and meaningful moments with nature, rather than just minutes in it. Research has shown that the most effective ways of increasing levels of nature connectedness are simple everyday practices that encourage noticing and appreciation of nature¹⁰. Listening to bird song, pausing to appreciate a beautiful tree, or taking a photo of wildlife are the sorts of active engagements with nature that have been found to strengthen our relationship with nature and make us more likely to want to help it.

THE FIVE PATHWAYS TO NATURE CONNECTION

Work done by the Nature Connectedness Research Group at the University of Derby has identified five pathways to nature connectedness—ways of engaging with nature that

lead to closer bonds with the more-than-human world.¹¹ See our [Nature Connection Handbook: A guide for connecting people with nature](#) for more about this.



Nature connection for organisations

The science and practice of nature connection has tremendous potential for organisations seeking change for their people, environment, business success, and impact on climate and nature.

What is a nature-connected organisation?

Nature-connected organisations recognise, value, and nurture close relationships with nature. They are committed to fostering strong human-nature relationships, to the protection and restoration of nature, and putting nature first. A nature-connected organisation appreciates its interdependence with nature, and realises the power it has to bring environmental, social, and economic change by strengthening human-nature relations. It achieves this by helping staff connect with nature, by creating environments that support nature connection, and by embedding nature connection into the heart of the organisation's operations and vision.

Why be a nature-connected organisation?

A focus on nature connection unites staff wellbeing and sustainability agendas.

While organisations may recognise the multiple threats arising from a broken human-nature relationship, and work to mitigate the effects of this, it is just as important that they recognise their potential to bring positive change into the world by taking steps to heal that relationship. Whether as part of an organisation's sustainability and corporate social responsibility programmes, or employee wellbeing programmes, a focus on nature connection can deliver integrated social and environmental benefits for staff, communities and society, and the natural world.

By aiming to close the gaps between humans and the more-than-human world, nature-connected organisations support the mental wellbeing of their staff, make direct contributions to nature's wellbeing, and champion transformational change to a more sustainable future for all. Altruism isn't the only reason to become a nature connected organisation—a focus on nature connection can boost the financial and operational success of an organisation, with healthier and happier staff leading to greater productivity, reduced sick leave, and increased creativity and innovation. Sustainability targets can be met and exceeded through nature-positive initiatives, and greater buy-in from staff engaging in more pro-nature behaviour as a consequence of their nature connectedness.





Employee wellbeing

People with strong levels of nature connectedness feel happier and function better than those with lower levels. Increasing the nature connectedness of staff can improve employee wellbeing, with flow-on benefits for staff sickness, performance, and retention.



Employee pro-environmental behaviour (PEB)

People with greater nature connectedness are more likely to help the environment and nature. Nature connected staff are more likely to take actions that minimise environmental harm (e.g., recycle, use sustainable travel, reduce electricity use) and proactively help protect and restore the natural world (e.g., plant for pollinators, support conservation activities), which benefits sustainability in the workplace and at home.



Sustainability

Nature connected organisations take actions that mitigate climate change and its impacts, and help protect and restore nature for a nature positive future. Improving an organisation's relationship with nature is a crucial element towards meeting targets for climate and nature.



Performance and productivity

Nature connectedness benefits people's cognitive performance and creativity. Creating environments that encourage people to engage with nature and support nature connectedness will reduce stress levels and improve concentration and attention.



Innovation

Putting nature connection at the heart of an organisation opens new opportunities for products and services that reflect an appreciation and care for the more-than-human world. Nature connection can contribute to all aspects of an organisation's activity—informing product design and development, service delivery, communications and marketing, organisational structure and processes, and stakeholder engagement.

The overarching benefits for an organisation becoming nature-connected are for:

- Nature
- Climate
- People
- Society

A nature connected organisation has impacts beyond the organisation itself—modelling and promoting a positive relationship with nature for other organisations and interested parties, contributing towards a nature-positive zero-carbon future, modelling new ways of relating to the more-than-human world and the importance of putting nature first, nurturing a culture based on recognising and valuing the interdependence of people and nature, and helping people and society more widely appreciate the benefits of feeling closer with nature.

The tree framework for nature connected organisations

Nature connected organisations are like strong, healthy trees.

The tree framework can be used as a tool for organisations to become more nature-connected, with each part of the tree corresponding to different aspects of the organisation: the crown represents staff, the trunk relates to structures, roots are culture, and soil is community. An organisation can strengthen human-nature relationships by exploring opportunities relating to each part and developing a plan for growing their own nature connection tree.

The parts work interdependently, as a system, with the health of each contributing to the health of the overall tree or organisation. Trees form forests and work collectively to bring health and wellbeing to people and the broader environment, in much the same way as a nature-connected organisation can make a powerful contribution to a society which cares for the natural world.

Crown: Staff

Like a tree's crown, staff produce energy that feeds and sustains an organisation, they bring in external resources, grow and innovate, generate legacies, and enrich the culture.

Trunk: Structures

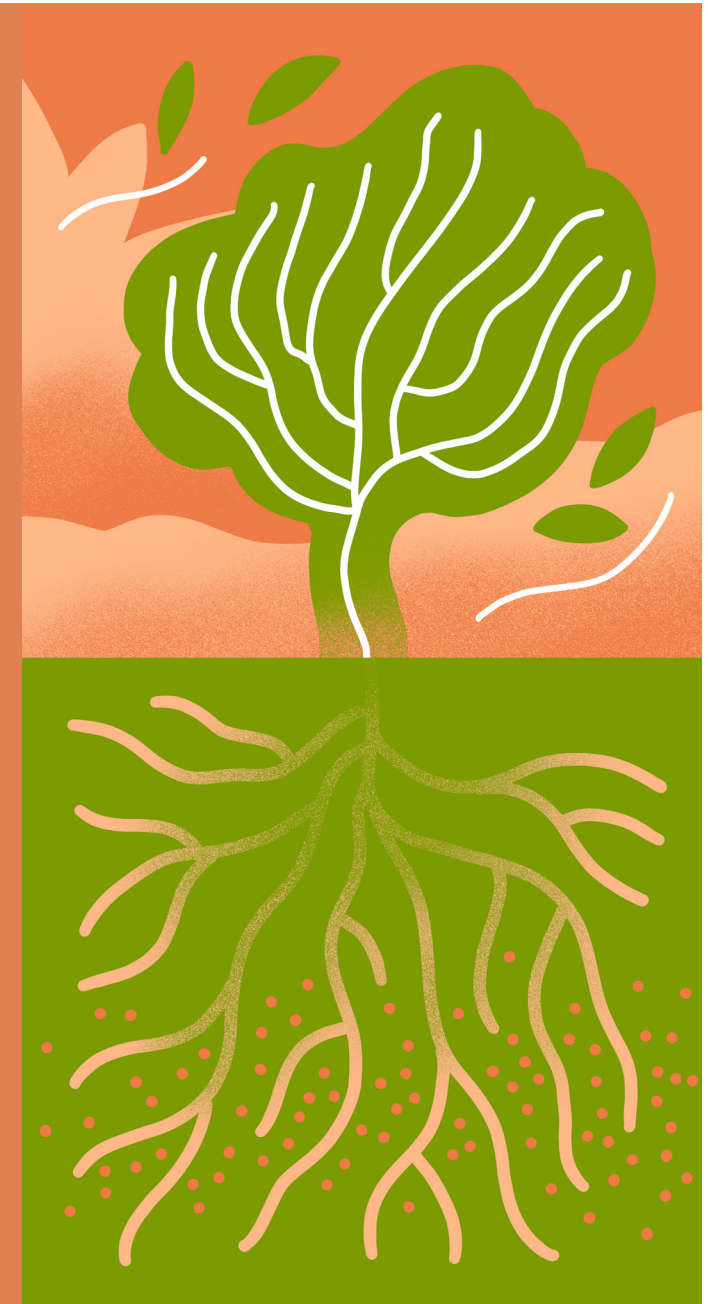
Physical and organisational structures are like a trunk—a container and framework that shapes and protects an organisation, and moves energy from crown/staff to roots/culture and vice versa.

Roots: Culture

The culture of an organisation is its roots, serving as an anchor, offering stability, and producing the values and principles that nourish an organisation for sustainable growth and health.

Soil: Community

Just as the life and organisms of the soil feed a tree and help trees communicate with each other, organisations enrich and are enriched by the communities and networks they are a part of.





Crown: Staff

Help staff reconnect with nature through activities, awareness raising, and staff development to support wellbeing, contribute to nature's wellbeing, and nurture stronger relationships with nature for a more sustainable future.



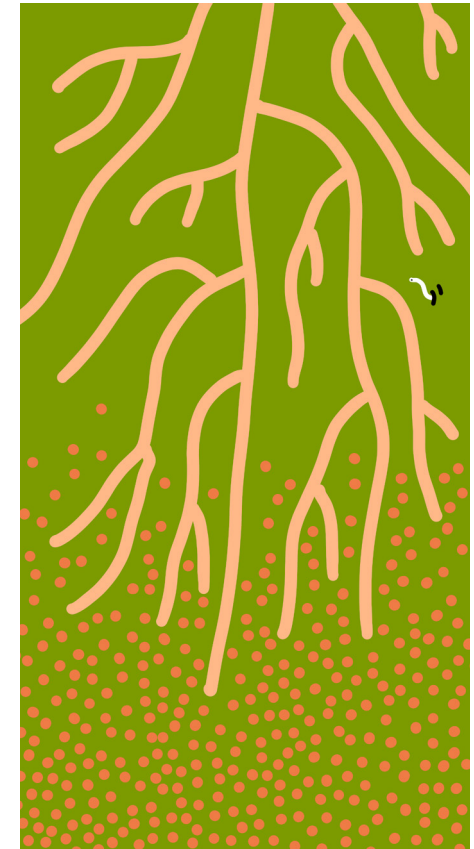
Trunk: Structures

Create conditions for nature connection through the design of physical and virtual spaces, championing nature, and adapting processes, practices and systems to bring nature into the day-to-day operation of an organisation.



Roots: Culture

Embed nature connection into the heart of the organisation by bringing human-nature relationships into organisational mission and values, and normalising and nurturing closer relationships with nature.



Soil: Community

Encourage the nature connection of those beyond the organisation by offering support, guidance, and partnership, joining networks with those who share values and practices, and help everyone connect with nature.

Becoming a nature connected organisation

Staff: Take actions to invite and encourage all staff to grow a closer relationship with nature.

1. Encourage nature connection practices and activities.

Support staff to develop regular nature connection practices. Research shows that repeated active engagement with nature is key to developing sustained nature connectedness.⁶ It does not take a lot of time or a special environment to practice nature connection, just a few minutes a day being with nature is all it takes to feel better and grow closer to nature.

→ Daily nature connection practices can be suggested as invitations for people to take ten minutes a day to notice and appreciate nature. Examples include noticing three good things in nature every day for a week, taking awe walks, finding a sit-spot for daily nature engagement, virtual nature experiences, or exploring nature in arts and culture. For guidance, see our [Nature Connection Practices pack](#).

→ Photography-based treasure hunts can be run as a staff activity, with a weekly theme being chosen to invite staff to focus their attention on a particular quality of nature. Themes could include a focus on shape and pattern, light and shadow, detail, life,

colour, or beauty, or you could use the pathways to nature connectedness as prompts—inviting work that represents experiencing nature through the senses, nature's beauty, the emotions nature inspires, nature's meanings, and compassion for nature. This practice helps establish a collective tuning-in to an aspect of nature and offers a lens for experiencing the natural world. Sharing what people produce helps extend an appreciation of nature and could be used to build a resource for the organisation (e.g., desktop backgrounds or screensavers, images or art to display in workspaces).

→ Nature-based work practices bring nature into the working day. Introduce and support the notion of taking micro nature breaks throughout the working day. Taking a couple of minutes to appreciate nature outside a window or in a garden, tending a pot plant, or watching birds on a feeder, can boost work performance and wellbeing while helping grow connections with nature. Support working outside, with outside working spaces, walk-and-talk meetings, or sitting outside for video calls.

→ Staff activities and challenges can offer opportunities for nature engagement alongside social connection. For example, nature-based scavenger hunts; house plant or seed growing challenges; creating nature maps; sharing walking routes and nature spaces.

2. Raise awareness and understanding of nature connection

Help develop staff understanding of nature connectedness and its value for personal and planetary wellbeing. Many people are aware of the health benefits of nature, but there is less awareness of the importance of developing a stronger relationship with nature and how to increase nature connectedness.

The University of Derby Nature Connectedness Research Group has produced resources that provide introductions to the concept of nature connectedness and how to improve it. This includes a free online course on nature connection, and a Nature Connection Handbook (see links on [page 33](#)). The Nature Connectedness Research Group, and other providers, may be able to support your organisation with a webinar, workshop or Q&A session for staff

3. Offer nature-connecting staff development, training and away days

Nature can be a focus of organisation events and staff development activities. Away days could be held in natural settings and incorporate nature connection activities. Various organisations offer nature-based leadership and development programs. Your local Wildlife Trust may be able to offer sessions for teams and help connect you with local providers, and forest bathing and nature-based wellbeing organisations could help facilitate nature engagement opportunities. Staff within your organisation who have strong personal connection practices could help design and develop nature connection activities for colleagues.



1. Practices and activities

- Daily nature connection practices
- Photography treasure hunts
- Work in nature and nature in work



2. Awareness and understanding

- Information
- Workshops
- Online course



3. Staff and team development

- Away days in nature
- Nature-base staff development
- Nature-related CPD

Structures: Develop and celebrate physical and virtual spaces and organisational processes that nurture nature connection.

1. Create physical and virtual green spaces

Bring nature into shared workspaces. Grow houseplants and herbs, display fresh and dried plants, and showcase natural treasures. Management could gift plants or seeds to staff—giving plants personal names can encourage conversations about their growth and wellbeing. A nature table, shelf, cabinet, or wall-space invites people to notice and share nature's treasures. Bring nature images into the work spaces, with images as desktop backgrounds and screensavers, nature videos or live feeds from wildlife cameras shown on large screens, or nature-based paintings on walls. Some may have an opportunity to incorporate nature's sounds and smells into the working environment.

Find and design outside spaces for nature connection. Bring nature into courtyards or building walls, yards, walkways, gardens, and grass areas. Replace single-species grass areas with meadow grasses, wildflowers,

shrubs, and trees. Use containers on the ground, hang baskets or plant vertically where space is limited. If you already have nature-rich areas, make sure there are places to sit, lie down, or stand and enjoy nature's beauty and views, with benches, logs, chairs, tables, cushions, hammocks, and swings. Staff can share nature landmarks, spaces, and trails either on site, in nearby parks and nature areas, or commuting routes. Create collaborative nature maps.

Are there opportunities to create areas of refuge and calm for both humans and nature? Consider options to create sensory gardens, or plant herbs, vegetables and fruit for humans, birds, insects, and mammals. Your organisation could take on a local allotment patch. Provide homes, food, and safety for nature with leaf and branch piles, mini-ponds, bird feeders and baths, bee and insect hotels, or bird, bee, and bat boxes. Staff can be involved in the design, development and care of the spaces and nature that visits.

While remote working teams may not have a base to create physical shared green spaces, staff can be encouraged to boost nature in their own working spaces. Remote teams can nature-hack their working spaces by creating a view, adding plants or nature-based art, or using plant-based essential oils and natural materials for working tools.

Create an online space for people to share and discuss nature connection experiences. You may have an existing online space within your organisation, or you could use free software and websites. This can be a place to share photos and artwork, nature observations, experiences, and reflections on nature connection practices.

2. Nominate nature champions

Nature champions can help identify new opportunities for growing nature connectedness within the organisation, encourage activity and engagement, and help coordinate activities. A nature connector may be someone in a wellbeing, sustainability, or organisational development role, or it could be an individual with a strong connection with nature. In larger organisations you could have a team of nature connectors and champions. Ensure that nature champions are recognised for the work they do, and provided resources to enact plans.

3. Incorporate nature connection into organisational processes and practices

Nature connection can be embedded into human resources and organisation development processes. Review the procedures and systems used within your organisation to identify areas for nature connection to be incorporated. For example, an induction pack could introduce new employees to the importance of nature connectedness and tips for increasing it. Procedures for sickness absence could include reminders of the value of nature in healing. Occupational health and wellbeing support providers should be aware of nature connection and include it in their collection of resources for helping staff. If staff benefits are offered, consider offering free membership to local Wildlife Trusts or other nature-based organisations.

Your organisation may be able to establish a formal partnership with a local nature-based organisation, whether a Wildlife Trust, a community nature group, or nature charity. There are likely to be mutual benefits for such a partnership.



1. Physical and virtual green spaces

- Spaces for nature connection
- Provide for nature
- Online space for sharing



2. Nature champions

- People to promote nature connection
- Champions across organisational departments
- Recognise contributions of champions



3. Processes and practices

- Nature connection in wellbeing and sustainability
- Nature connection embedded in HR
- Nature-based staff benefits

Culture: Become a nature connected organisation, valuing nature and human-nature relationships, putting nature first, and committing to a nature-positive future.

1. Foster nature-connected leadership

A nature-connected organisation needs nature-connected leadership to help fertilise, grow, and harvest the opportunities and benefits of nature connectedness. Leaders that recognise the interconnectedness of humans with the rest of nature help inspire and shape actions that help nature, while supporting the wellbeing benefits of nature connection on staff. There are a number of nature-based sustainability leadership training programs and networks that emphasise nature connectedness. Leaders should ensure they engage in regular nature connection practices themselves. If appointing new staff into leadership positions, put connection with nature into your criteria.

2. Nurture a nature connection culture

By helping staff connect with nature and putting nature connecting structures into your organisation you will be helping to generate a culture that values nature and nurtures human-nature relationships. The more such activities are maintained and supported, the more nature will take a central role in the organisation's activities and in the day-to-day functioning of the organisation.

Normalise nature-based talk, practice, and actions. Foster a culture where meetings start with talk about nature, chatting about nature observations or experiences instead of the weather or politics; and where thought and actions are inspired and guided by nature, using metaphors or events from the natural world to develop ideas, structures, and processes. Tap into nature's calendar and celebrate natural events and transitions, or use seasonal changes to organise activity in your organisation. A nearby tree could be used to represent and embody the organisation's nature connection tree.

3. Pursue nature-centric organisational visions and goals

Does nature have a place in your vision and goals? Consider the purpose of your organisation and the contribution it can make to nature and human-nature relationships. This will be easier for some organisations than others, but all organisations can strive for a greater purpose and ambition that helps leave the world in a better place. You could declare a commitment to nature and consider including [nature connectedness as a KPI](#). Levels of nature connection amongst staff can be measured quickly and easily—have helping all staff develop their relationship with nature as a key organisational goal.

Adopt a principle of putting nature first in everything that the organisation does, and at the top of agendas, flowcharts, plans and objectives. Nature can be given a voice in your organisation and a seat on the board. Adopt a position of stewardship rather than ownership of any nature your organisation is responsible for.



NATURE ON THE BOARD

Your organisation could formally recognise the rights of nature and your responsibilities towards it. For instance, the company Faith in Nature [appointed 'nature' to its board of directors](#) to give it a voice and a vote in corporate decision making. You could also give personhood status to land or nature your organisation owns and cares for.

For more, [see page 29](#).



1. Leadership

- Nature connected leaders
- Nature-based leadership development
- Model practices for nature connection



2. Everyday nature

- Everyday nature talk
- Nature's calendar
- Natural wisdom



3. Visions and goals

- Bring nature into your vision
- Nature connection as a KPI
- Give nature a voice and vote

Community: connect with other nature-connected organisations and take nature connection beyond your organisation.

1. Join networks and initiatives for nature-positive organisations

Join business communities that value nature. There are a wide range of bodies and networks that offer [resources](#) and support for organisations taking a nature-positive approach. Consider joining the [B Corporation Community](#) and becoming a certified B Corp - verified for meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability. Extend your carbon reporting activities to report and act on nature-related risks. Business Declares is a coalition of business leaders who [declare a climate and ecological emergency](#), and [raise awareness](#) across the business sector of the imperative to accelerate action to address climate change, biodiversity loss and social injustice. NGOs, charities and public services can connect with other sector specific nature-positive communities for support and collective actions.

Bring nature connection into discussions within these networks, highlighting the importance of a focus on

the human-nature relationship in sustainable business and organisational practice.

2. Put nature first and bring nature connection and nature positivity into your partnerships and supply chains.

When identifying and making decisions about partnerships or managing supply chains, consider whether other parties work in nature positive ways or nurture nature connection. Some organisations may be in a position to make this a criterion for any arrangements that are made, and decisions can reflect an embedded nature connected culture.

Explore opportunities to discuss and promote nature connection and positivity with the organisations you are working with. This could involve simply ensuring that the actions you are taking yourself are visible to external parties, so others are aware of what you are doing and why. Realise your potential to influence others and actively encourage others to explore growing nature connection within their own organisation, or to make more nature positive choices.

3. Help your clients/customers/students/patients/audience and other interested parties connect with nature.

If your organisation nurtures nature connection, make sure that those who make use of your services and/or goods are aware of this. Discussion about the importance of a closer human-nature relationship helps raise awareness of the nature emergency, while highlighting the value of changing how we think about, feel towards, and relate to the more-than-human world. By embodying a shift towards nature connectedness, your organisation can help lead the way for wider social and cultural change.

You may produce or deliver services or goods that help connect people with nature. Those in the conservation/environment, tourism, education, and health and wellbeing sectors can bring the pathways to nature connection into the design and delivery of initiatives and activities. Other industries may have opportunities to create products, spaces, or materials that foster nature connection. Across sectors, there is opportunity to bring the human-nature relationship to the fore in communication and marketing practices.

Those who are looking to invest or engage in philanthropic activity could sponsor activities that help people connect with nature. This could involve support for green social prescribing and nature connection initiatives, community gardens and farms, rewilding and regenerative land projects, research projects, arts projects that support nature connection, and nature-positive product development.



1. Networks

- Join nature-positive communities
- Declare a nature and climate emergency
- Start nature-based reporting



2. Supply chains and partners

- Consider supply chain impacts on nature
- Choose partners who value nature
- Promote nature-positivity in others



3. Interested parties

- Encourage nature connection
- Communicate your nature connectedness
- Support nature connecting initiatives

How to begin connecting your organisation with nature

HOW TO BEGIN CONNECTING YOUR ORGANISATION WITH NATURE



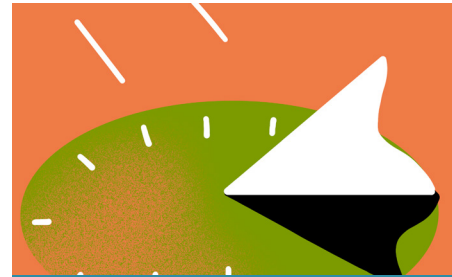
Audit current practice

What do you do at the moment?



Identify opportunities

What could be done easily?
What are the key priorities?



Review resources

What is available to you
in terms of people, skills,
money, space, time?



Start a nature connection team

Which people in your
organisation could help
develop initiatives?



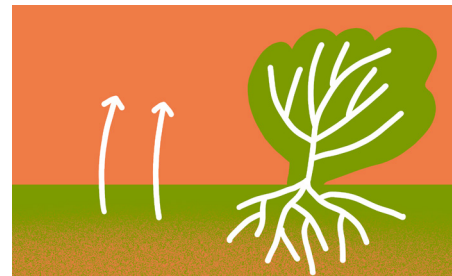
Evaluate

Will you evaluate the
impact of the scheme on
people and nature in your
organisation (and beyond)?



Action

Implement your plan,
start connecting your
organisation with nature,
and grow your tree.



Plan

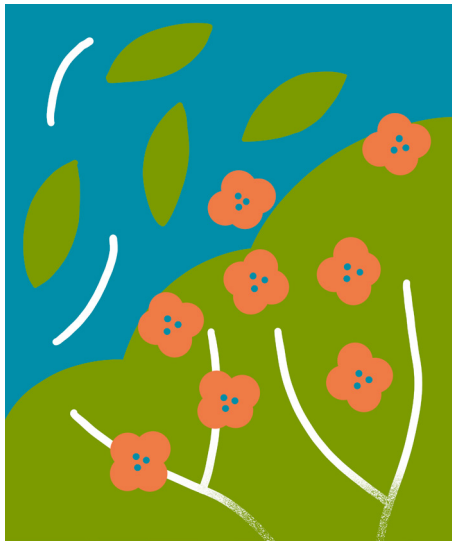
Design your organisation's
nature connection tree,
mapping actions against
crown, trunk, roots and soil
to develop a plan.



Seek support

Is there a need for any
training, development,
guidance and consultancy
from those outside your
organisation?

Audit: Review current practice and identify opportunities



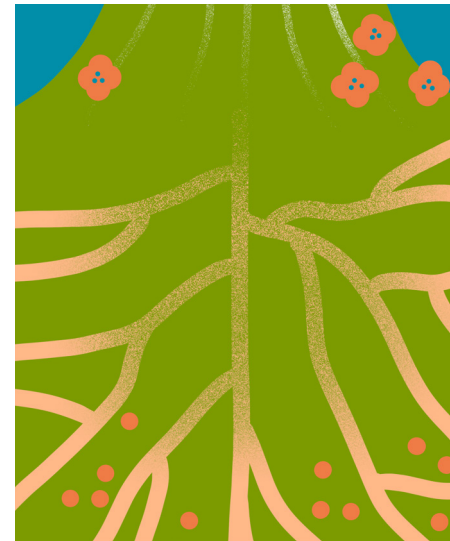
Crown

Do you offer and promote opportunities for staff to grow their nature connectedness? Are any meetings held outside? Are there any nature-based away days or staff development programmes? Does the organisation run any challenges or activities that encourage people to notice and appreciate nature? Are staff likely to be aware of the value of nature connectedness?



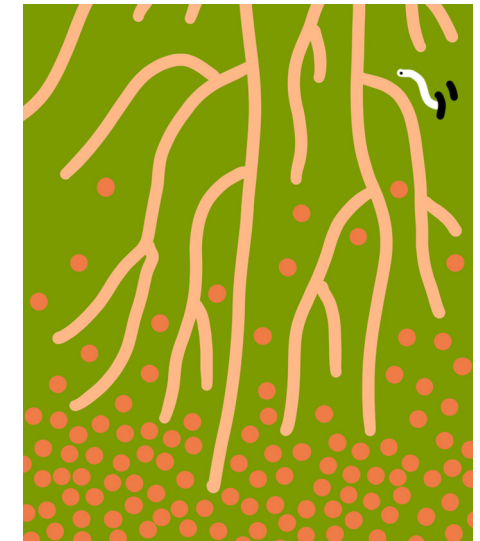
Trunk

Are there wild spaces in the workspace? Opportunities for people to watch and enjoy nature at work? Are there people in your organisation who do—or could—support nature connection? Does nature feature in schemes to support staff wellbeing?



Roots

Does your leadership team have a strong relationship with nature? Is nature ever talked about in meetings and informal conversation at work? Does nature have a voice in your organisation? Is nature connection a KPI?



Soil

Are you linked up in nature-positive networks? Do you have nature-friendly supply chains and partners? Do you help those outside your organisation connect with nature? Do people know your organisation cares about nature?

Integrating the five pathways into the tree framework

Pathways to nature connectedness can be used to promote engagement through the senses, beauty, emotions, meaning and compassion.



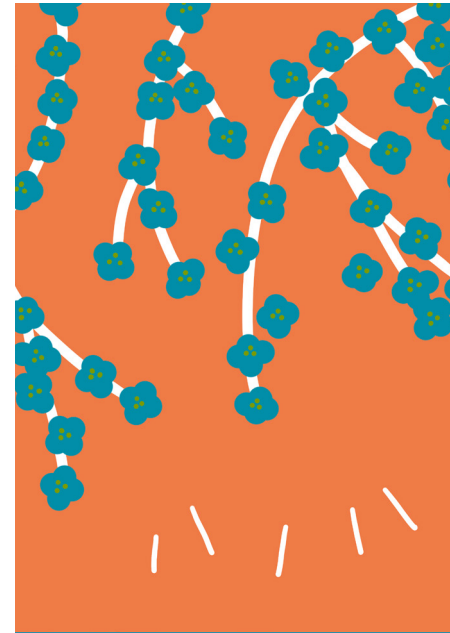
Staff

Use the pathways to design activities for encouraging staff to notice and appreciate nature through senses, beauty, emotions, meaning and compassion. E.g., run a photography challenge to capture nature's beauty, or gift plants for staff to care for.



Structures

Create physical, social or virtual spaces and processes that facilitate and promote activation of the pathways. E.g., spaces for wildlife on-site that staff help manage, and which offer opportunities for sensory experiences and for noticing and appreciating nature.



Culture

The pathways can be used to identify opportunities to bring nature into the heart of an organisation. E.g., Bring celebrations of nature into organisational calendar and events, or recognise the rights of nature in organisational decision making.



Community

Make use of the pathways in your outward facing actions. E.g., highlight the importance of compassion for nature in forming partnerships and alliances; celebrate the meanings and beauty of nature in your communications.

Nature connected organisations in practice

Examples of nature connection in organisations

A growing number of organisations are taking actions that help connect their people, structures, culture, and communities with nature. Here are some examples of initiatives that support the growth of nature connectedness within organisations, with benefits for both people and planet.



1. Faith In Nature

In August 2022, Faith In Nature appointed nature to its board of directors to give it a voice and a vote in corporate decision making.

“We realised that every decision we make has an impact upon the natural world, but the one voice never present when making those decisions was nature’s own. So there was an obvious injustice that needed remedying and the emerging Rights of Nature movement offered us a way in. If the natural world can be granted legal personhood, why can’t nature also help companies make nature positive decisions? We wanted to go beyond well-meaning dialogue and create deep structural change that would not only reimagine our business, but offer a template for business as a whole to reimagine its relationship with the natural world.”

Simeon Rose, Creative Director,
Faith In Nature.

The move was made possible by working with Lawyers For Nature and Earth Law Center, with the legal framework drawn up by Brontie Maria Ansell and Paul Powlesland, both directors of Lawyers For Nature.

“This really exciting, and legally binding intervention makes it possible to integrate the Rights of Nature into corporate governance and corporate decision making for the first time. We believe that this has the power to demonstrate respect for, and recognition of, Nature as a stakeholder. This is in stark contrast to how the vast majority of human created entities currently behave - where they see Nature as a resource to be drawn on without recompense, repair or even reward. Nature on the Board is a system that works, is legally binding and nudges us towards a better economic system. In this next phase of Capitalism, a company’s actions must work not only for shareholders, but for Nature and our planet as a living, connected system.”

Brontie Maria Ansell, Director,
Lawyers For Nature.

If you’re interested in joining the growing number of organisations making nature a director or other creative earth law solutions you can contact Brontie and Paul and the team at [Hello@lawyersfornature.com](mailto>Hello@lawyersfornature.com)

More can be read about Faith In Nature’s model at faithinnature.co.uk/avotefornature

Should you wish to speak to them about their experience of working alongside nature, you can write to them at natureontheboard@faithinnature.co.uk

2. Nature at Work: A joint project between the RSPB and Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board

The RSPB developed their [Nature Prescriptions](#) work, which directly connects people to nature to benefit their wellbeing and encourages people to go on to take action to protect and nurture nature, in Shetland in 2017.

Following a [successful pilot in Edinburgh in 2020](#) the RSPB brought Nature Prescriptions to England, with the project [launching in the High Peak of Derbyshire](#) in January 2023.

A variation of the Nature Prescriptions project, called Nature at Work, has been developed through discussions with the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), and is designed to specifically support the physical, mental and digital health and wellbeing of NHS staff, many of whom now work at home, through a strengthened personal connection to nature.

A trial began in January 2023 using the Nature Prescriptions calendar featuring suggestions for ICB staff to strengthen their connection to nature. Over 60 members of staff have signed up to take part in the trial, and a project team of volunteers from across the ICB, Nature at Work champions, meet every two weeks to tailor the calendar and plan ways for encouraging its use by staff. Project team members are adding suggestions for bringing nature into the working day such as taking walking meetings in nature or taking a walk to see the beauty in blossom in lunchbreaks.

The suggestions are released digitally to staff at the beginning of each month. In addition to the calendar, the team are encouraging staff to get involved in

nature-based activities through:

- Organised team litter picks
- Seed sharing libraries in each main office
- Nature book libraries in each main office

Ongoing and future plans include lunch and learn sessions, and an on-line hub for staff to share the ways they are connecting to nature.

This initiative is supported by Senior Executives and there is interest in extending the Nature at Work project to other staff groups, including front line staff, which will be considered following feedback from the trial.

“I always enjoyed nature but it was not until joining the group that I realised how important it actually was, the role it plays in everyone’s wellbeing and health. I think we forget how lucky we are to be able to observe the wonders of nature”; “I like to simply gaze through the window to see what I can see in nature, giving myself a break from the screen and on a rainy day to open the window and smell the wet grass” and “This is a great reminder to stop and pause. I love to walk but often I end up marching to get somewhere and not paying attention, I’ll definitely be more aware of my senses and connectiveness with nature!”

Staff member involved in Nature at Work

3. Connecting Wye Valley NHS Trust with Nature

Wye Valley NHS Trust worked with the University of Derby’s Nature Connectedness Research Group to develop a pilot scheme for connecting staff with nature. The aim was to explore options for increasing staff member’s awareness of and engagement with everyday nature, to encourage development of nature connection practices, and inspire longer-term organisational changes for nature connection in the trust.

Staff were invited to take part in daily practices designed to help them feel closer with nature - noticing three good things in nature every day, enjoying a sit spot, taking an awe walk, exploring nature in arts and culture, and connecting with imagined or virtual nature. A padlet was set up to host resources and offered a space for staff to share their nature photos and experiences. Nature Connection was the theme for the trust’s Health and Wellbeing week, and two webinars on the science of nature connection were given by Professor Miles Richardson.

Going forward, Wye Valley plan to include nature connectedness in staff induction and wellbeing processes, and roll-out the nature connection practices every Spring/Summer. Staff in the wellbeing group will act as nature connection champions and generate new ideas and actions for improving nature connectedness amongst staff. Links have been made with NHS Forest, Natural England, and RSPB who— along with the University of Derby - will support the Trust in developing staff relationships with nature, as part of an ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of staff and nature.

“Working with the University, we have been able to raise staff awareness about the benefits of connecting with nature for general wellbeing. We are starting to see a reduction in absence due to mental health and feedback from staff on the nature connectedness programme is excellent.”

Geoffrey Etule, Chief People Officer,
Wye Valley NHS Trust.

4. Connecting National Trust staff with nature

The National Trust have incorporated nature connection within their organisation, helping both staff and visitors connect with nature. Training and education increased staff awareness and understanding about the science of nature connection and how to nurture closer relationships with nature. These understandings have been widely applied within the National Trust, shaping the approach taken for the annual spring celebration of “blossom”, being drawn on by property teams, influencing the delivery of visitor experiences and engagement, and shaping marketing and communication strategies. These initiatives all enrich the wider community by nurturing nature connection.

5. Practicing nature connection at Glimpse

Creative agency Glimpse took part in the University of Derby pilot scheme to help connect staff with nature. Glimpse already had a nature-connected culture, with a desire to connect people with nature part of their mission and enacted in their activities and services as an organisation. They were keen to take part in the pilot scheme to increase activity in the ‘crown’ of their nature connection tree, through structured nature connection practices for staff. At their annual nature-based staff retreat, Glimpse launched a six-week programme of nature connection practices. The programme began with an end-of-winter/beginning-of-spring ritual in which staff created and then destroyed a papier mache figure/structure/representation of things they wanted to let go of in order to let new things in—a “metaphorical spring cleaning”. Each week a new nature connection practice was released on a dedicated Slack channel, with an invitation for staff to spend around ten minutes a day in an activity that encouraged noticing and appreciating nature. Once a week the team met on Zoom to share their experiences and reflections on the weekly practice.

Engaging in the practices helped people tune into the natural world, and appreciate the value of moments over minutes with nature. Some enjoyed taking awe walks, while others particularly enjoyed taking photos or listening to guided meditations. There were reports of lasting shifts in attention towards nature, for instance with new appreciation for patterns and textures in nature, and more moments of awe in nature.

Glimpse shared a number of recommendations for organisations wishing to implement similar initiatives for their staff. Doing the programme as a team was

particularly valuable, with opportunities to share and learn from others and to discuss experiences. While explicit permission from leadership to bring nature into the working day is important, this can be extended by putting time in the diary for people to do this, having a 10-minute meeting at the beginning of each week to introduce the new practice, and having brief online meetings through the week to check in and share. Nature connection practices can be offered as an employee benefit or gift for self-care, rather than an activity or challenge. Simple practices are most accessible to all, and additional prompts or examples can make things easier for people to develop.

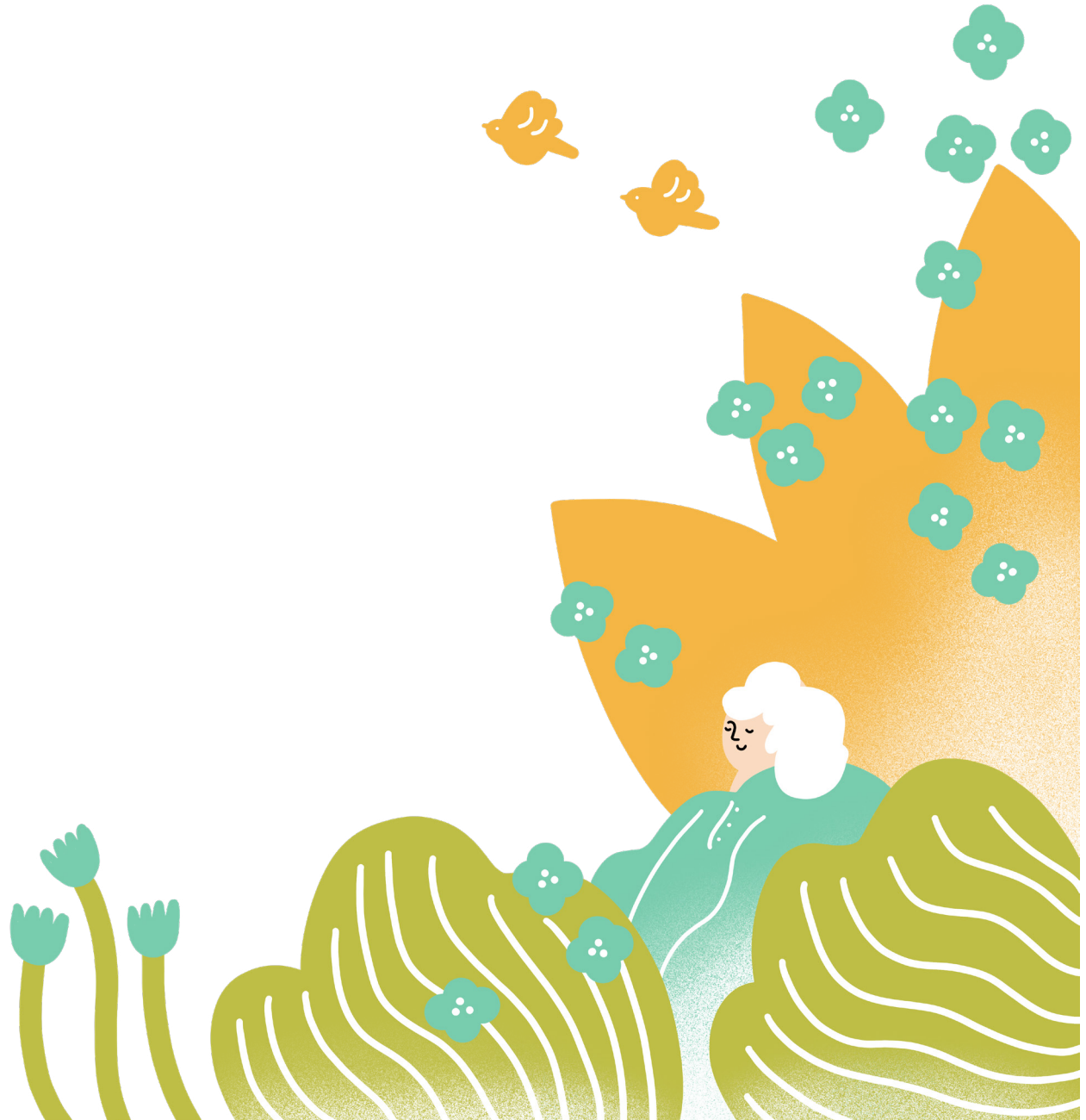
Glimpse will be taking nature connection beyond their organisation by developing resources and practices for creatives in the wider community—contributing to the soil around them and helping others connect with nature.

6. Ella's Kitchen: Championing nature

Ella's Kitchen are putting care for nature and future generations into the heart of their organisation.

"At Ella's, we're in business with a vision to help every little one grow up happy, healthy and never hungry—but to achieve this, we need to help lead the charge in protecting the planet for little one's now and future generations to come. To do this, we need to rebuild our connection with nature and what it means for our people, our partners and our impact in the wider community. We'll be partnering with environmental NGO's and experts to explore how we can champion nature in everything we do."

Chris Jenkins, Head of Impact,
Ella's Kitchen.



Nature

Resources

Connection

Nature Connection Resources:

- The Nature Connection Handbook: [Bit.ly/NatureConnectionHandbook](https://www.natureconnection.org.uk/)
 - Free online Nature Connectedness course from University of Derby: <https://www.derby.ac.uk/short-courses-cpd/online/free-courses/nature-connectedness-relationship-with-nature>
 - Professor Miles Richardson’s blog: <https://findingnature.org.uk>
 - Book: *Reconnection—Fixing our broken relationship with nature* by Miles Richardson: <https://pelagicpublishing.com/products/reconnection-relationship-nature-miles-richardson>
- ### Support, training, and consultancy for nature-connected leadership and becoming a nature-connected organisation:
- Nature Connectedness Research Group at the University of Derby—consultancy, training, resources, research ncrg@derby.ac.uk
 - Realise Earth: Leadership for sustainability—practical help and advice on accelerating your organisation’s sustainability journey: <https://realise.earth>
 - Human Nature Partnership—consultancy, design and installation of nature-connecting spaces in workplaces, and training/events: <https://humannaturepartnership.com>
 - Earthwatch—nature-connection grounded sustainability learning and engagement for business: <https://learning.earthwatch.org.uk>

→ AimHiEarth—climate and sustainability training for teams: <https://www.aimhi.earth>

→ Eden Project creative leadership programmes: <https://www.edenproject.com/learn/creative-leadership-programmes>

Partnerships for nature:

Many environmental and conservation NGOs offer partnership opportunities, for example:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering-fundraising/corporate-partnerships>

→ <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/partnerships/working-businesses>

→ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/services/innovation-and-partnership-team>

Nature Connection as a KPI

A deeply nature-connected organisation has a stronger relationship with nature at the heart of its organisational vision and mission. It makes sense, then, that nature connectedness is considered a KPI—if staff have higher levels of nature connection, then this is good for employees, for the organisation, for society and for nature. There are a number of quick and simple questions that could be incorporated into staff surveys as a measure of nature connection. The visual ‘Inclusion of Nature in Self’ scale¹² is a single-item measure that is used in many research articles and invites people to indicate how much a part of nature they feel. The original scale can be seen [here](#).

An illustrated version of the scale has been developed, with the open access paper available [here](#). It includes a higher-resolution version of the original scale.¹³

Another relatively simple scale is the short-form Nature Relatedness Scale¹⁴ which has six items that focus on people’s emotional and experiential relationship with nature. People rate the extent to which they agree with each statement below (with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree):

- My ideal vacation spot would be a remote, wilderness area.
- I always think about how my actions affect the environment.
- My connection to nature and the environment is part of my spirituality.
- I take notice of wildlife wherever I am.
- My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am.
- I feel very connected to all living things and the earth. You could always develop your own bespoke single-item question that captures an aspect of nature connectedness.

A detailed summary of a range of evaluation tools for nature connectedness can be found here: <https://eepro.naaee.org/resource/practitioner-guide-assessing-connection-nature>

How the nature crisis impacts business:

→ Together with Silverback Films, WWF, the RSPB and the National Trust have created four new films designed to raise awareness of the nature crisis and what this means for business. The films shine a light on the devastating impact that business-as-usual is having on our natural world.

In the films, experts and business leaders such as Deborah Meaden (business entrepreneur and investor), Dame Sharon White (Chairman John Lewis Partnership), Alison Rose DBE (CEO NatWest Group), Dr Tony Juniper CBE (Chair, Natural England), and Dr Bryce Stewart (Marine Ecologist, University of York) share why the nature crisis is bad for business, and how businesses can help turn the tide for nature: <https://www.saveourwildisles.org.uk/business>

→ Report from World Economic Forum on why the nature crisis matters for business and the economy: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/nature-risk-rising-why-the-crisis-engulfing-nature-matters-for-business-and-the-economy>

Networks and initiatives that support and encourage nature-positive business:

→ Business for Nature: <https://www.businessfornature.org>

→ Nature Positive: <https://www.naturepositive.org>

→ UK Business and Biodiversity Forum: <https://www.business-biodiversity.co.uk>

→ Business Declares: <https://businessdeclares.com>

→ The European Business Network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility: <https://www.csreurope.org>

→ World Business Council for Sustainable Development: <https://www.wbcsd.org>

→ B Corporation: <https://bcorporation.uk>

Information and guidance on nature reporting:

→ Science Based Targets Network <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/about-us/sbtn>

→ Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures <https://tnfd.global>

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ABOUT

The Nature Connectedness Research Group was formed at the University of Derby in 2013 to understand and improve human-nature relationships. It pioneered the first interventions for sustained increases in nature connectedness, bringing about improved wellbeing and pro-nature behaviours. Our research activity includes two large scale £1+ million consortium programmes—Improving Wellbeing through Urban Nature (2016 to 2019) and Connected Treescapes, part of the UK Future Treescapes programme (2021 to present). Our work has been widely adopted by organisations in the UK and around the world to help connect people with nature.

We have worked with a range of partners, including Natural England, National Trust, and the Wildlife Trusts and other environmental NGOs and organisations of all shapes and sizes across public, charitable, and private sectors. Our research and knowledge exchange work is broad in scope, contributing to the visitor experience and engagement at nature reserves, activities within green social prescribing and mental wellness programmes, policy briefings, design of buildings and landscapes, artworks, leadership development, and educational programmes.

The group won two Green Gown Research with Impact awards in 2021 and were named by Universities UK as one of the UK's 100 best breakthroughs for its impact. Research group lead Prof. Miles Richardson is a lead author on the global transformative change assessment being conducted by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

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Design:
Minute Works

Illustration:
Catherine Chialton

Citation:
Butler, C.W., & Richardson, M. (2023). Nature Connected Organisations: A guide for connecting organizations with nature for sustainable futures and workplace wellbeing. United Kingdom

Acknowledgements:
This handbook was produced with the support of the University of Derby Knowledge Exchange Impact Accelerator and the Higher Education Innovation Fund.

Thanks to support and inspiration from University of Derby, Kate Wood, Natural England, Nigel King, Osbert Lancaster, Georgie Morgan, Chris Jenkins, Ralph Underhill, Batseba Tesfaye, James Turner, Geoffrey Etule, John Burnett, and Daniela Locke.

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