



Regenerus “Our Beautiful Grotspots” Evaluation report



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Courtesy of © Stephanie Wynne and Rebecca Crook
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FOREWORD

“Our Beautiful Grotspots” is an urban environmental improvements project firmly based on community co-design and co-production. We were delighted to work with the GroundsWell team to complete the project evaluation and the timing of this 18 month project fitted perfectly. As their approach is rooted in the same principles, participants were involved in shaping the evaluation research framework from the beginning. This partnership resulted in the co-production of a robust in-depth evaluation which fully captured the essence of the impact and outcomes of the activities. The community took the project to heart with enthusiasm and it has been an absolute joy to deliver, as we all worked together to add more beauty, colour, and biodiversity in the neighbourhood. The results speak for themselves.

RUTH LIVESEY
REGENERUS



“Regenerus joined GroundsWell as a project partner five years ago. Ruth and the team are valued members of the wider Consortium, driving forward grassroots projects that connect communities and improve local environments.

This report showcases the project led by Regenerus in Bootle. Their “Our Beautiful Grotspots” project engaged local residents to creatively transform neglected urban spaces into thriving pockets of nature and heritage. Over the course of the project, participants connected with their neighbourhood’s history, strengthened community ties, and enhanced local green spaces. This report highlights the health, wellbeing, and social benefits of this community-led approach and its role in inspiring local pride and connection to nature.



SARAH RODGERS
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

REGENERUS

Regenerus was created in 2004 as South Sefton Development Trust to continue the work of the Government-funded South Sefton Partnership regeneration initiative in the area.

Regenerus provides a wide range of services to social enterprises and community projects. Promoting social innovation and collaborative economies, they create and facilitate networks of change makers, linking creative thinkers and practitioners to improve health and wellbeing within their local communities.



Learn more about Regenerus, click [here](#)

GROUNDSWELL

The GroundsWell Consortium is a team of researchers, local communities, implementers and policymakers who aim to better understand and evidence the role of **green and blue spaces** within wider **social, economic, environmental, cultural and health systems**.

GroundsWell's research activity is based in Edinburgh, Belfast and Liverpool, where it is being led by researchers at the University of Liverpool.

A key aim of GroundsWell is to encourage, enable, and collaborate on community-engagement and community-led research. GroundsWell partnered with Regenerus to co-design and evaluate the impact of the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' project.



Learn more about GroundsWell, click [here](#)



OUR BEAUTIFUL GROTSPOTS

Regenerus were awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' project in the Poets Streets area of Bootle (Oct'23 – April'25).

'Our Beautiful Grotspots' is a pilot project that delivered a variety of activities combining local history research with the built environment and natural heritage, leading to the co-creation of nature-based heritage installations in the Poets Streets area.

The project aimed to engage a wider range of people with nature to promote the importance of greening built-up areas and rebuilding a sense of community through enhanced heritage understanding and creative activities.

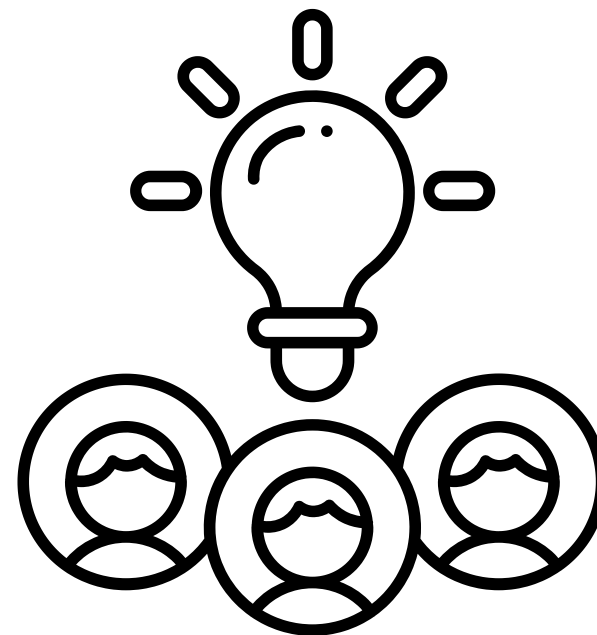
EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

CO-DESIGNING THE EVALUATION WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

To inform the approach to evaluation GroundsWell researchers conducted an evaluability assessment (a way of collaboratively planning and designing an evaluation) with project partners and community stakeholders. This process had the following objectives:

- 1 To consider the potential impact and outcomes of the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' pilot project from the community's perspective.
- 2 To use the evaluability assessment method to inform decision-making and to co-design an evaluation of the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' pilot project.

To do this we organised three interactive workshops with 12 community stakeholders (project partners and local residents) to identify the potential individual and community outcomes from 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' pilot project. The group then considered how these might be measured (i.e., what research methods would be most suitable?), and how the community could meaningfully take part in the evaluation.



EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

Data generated during these workshops, including field notes and participants' written responses (see Figure 1), were sorted into immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes. We worked with community partners to prioritise which outcomes to measure and agreed methods for collecting evaluation data. Using these data we collaboratively developed a logic model to illustrate the theory of change for the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' pilot project.

The model (see Figure 2) includes contextual factors that could impact, or be impacted by, the project; required resources and activities; tangible outputs; immediate and intermediate outcomes; and long-term impact. We co-designed a mixed-method evaluation with community partners to measure some expected outcomes. Short, postcard-sized questionnaires were preferred, with no more than three questions, along with participatory methods. Residents also suggested that data collection should take place during community events, to promote engagement and participation.

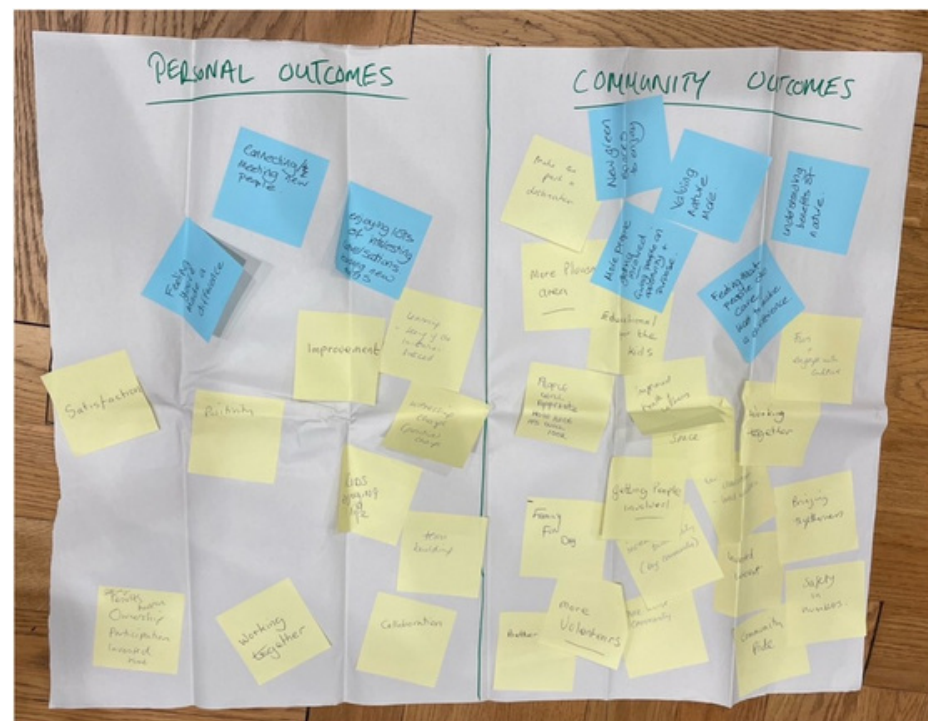


Figure 1. Sticky notes were used in workshops with members of the community to understand what 'personal' (individual) and 'community' outcomes they hoped to experience after participating in the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' project

EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

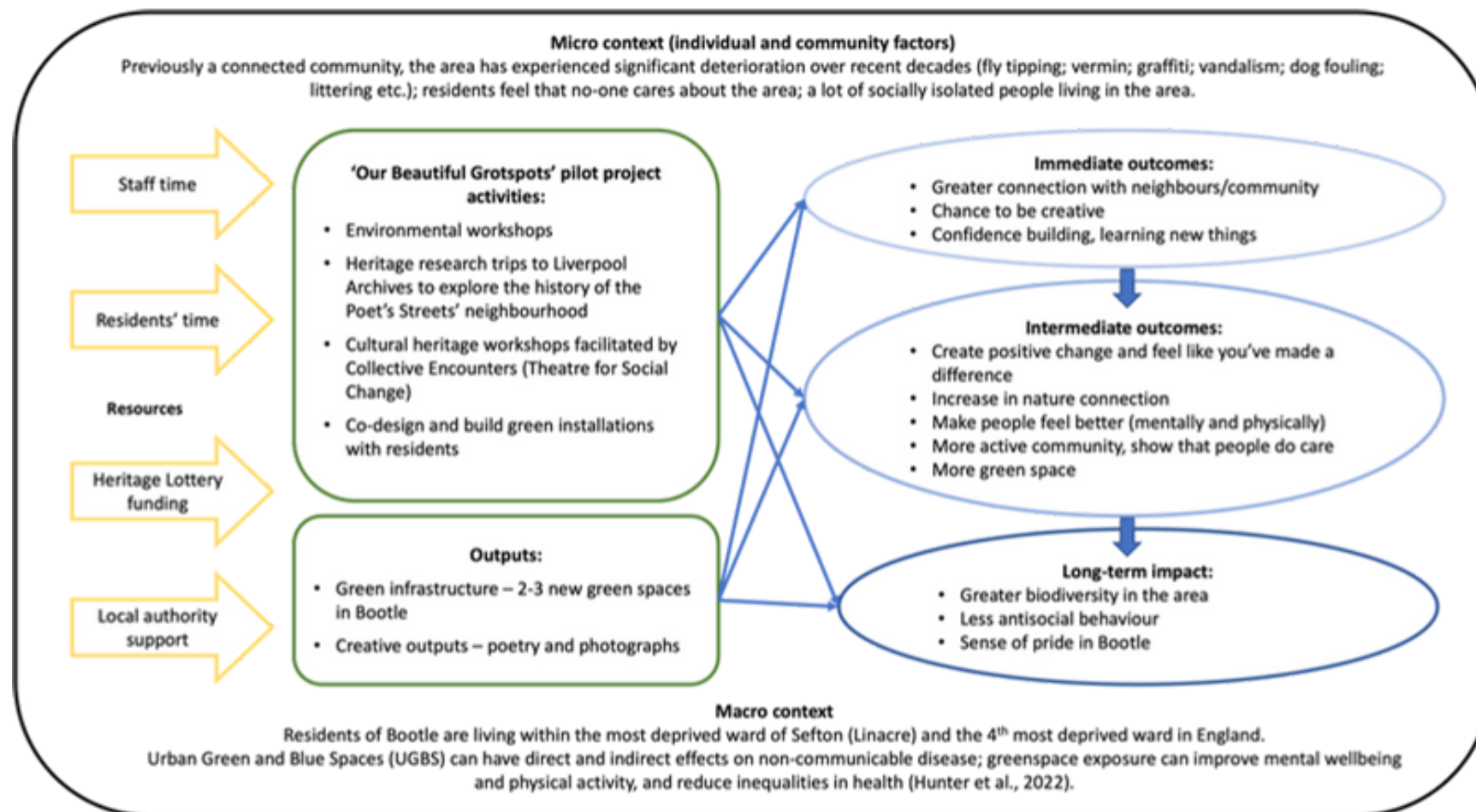


Figure 2. Logic model (theory of change) of the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' pilot project

THE EVALUATION PROCESS



EVALUATION AIM

Based on the co-designed evaluation plan and theory of change, the project partners agreed on one overarching aim: to evaluate the impact of 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' on residents' experiences of local green spaces.

METHODS

Informed by the evaluability assessment, the evaluation was conducted using mixed methods.

Postcard-sized questionnaires included one prompt question, “**What is most important to you about your local green spaces?**” for participants and members of the community to complete at project events. Longer, validated measures were not used as project partners and members of the community felt that this would dissuade people from wanting to complete any self-report instruments; hence, a short prompt to understand residents' relationship with green spaces was preferred.

The timing of project activities, and unpredictability of participation and opportunities for data collection, also meant that it was not feasible to conduct any pre/post analyses for project activities.

Interviews, informed by the 'photo voice' participatory method were also conducted with project participants.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

Participants were purposefully recruited from the Poets Streets neighbourhood. The postcard questionnaires were distributed to local residents during project events (e.g., family planting days). Participants (N = 79) either completed the questionnaire themselves, or a researcher asked the question and recorded their responses on the postcard.

In addition, four individuals who were directly involved in other 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' project activities (archival research, poetry, or greening activities) were purposefully recruited to take part in interviews informed by the 'photo voice' method. For this interview method, participants were encouraged to take photographs of their experiences responding to prompts provided by the researcher. Participants then shared their photographs with the researcher ahead of the interview, and then these photographs were used during individual interviews where the participant talked about when, where and why they took each photograph, and how the photographs made them feel.



Impact

on...



Biodiversity



Air quality



Wellbeing



Health



Social
connections



Neighbourhood
pride



Connection to
nature



Personal
pride

IMPACT ON...

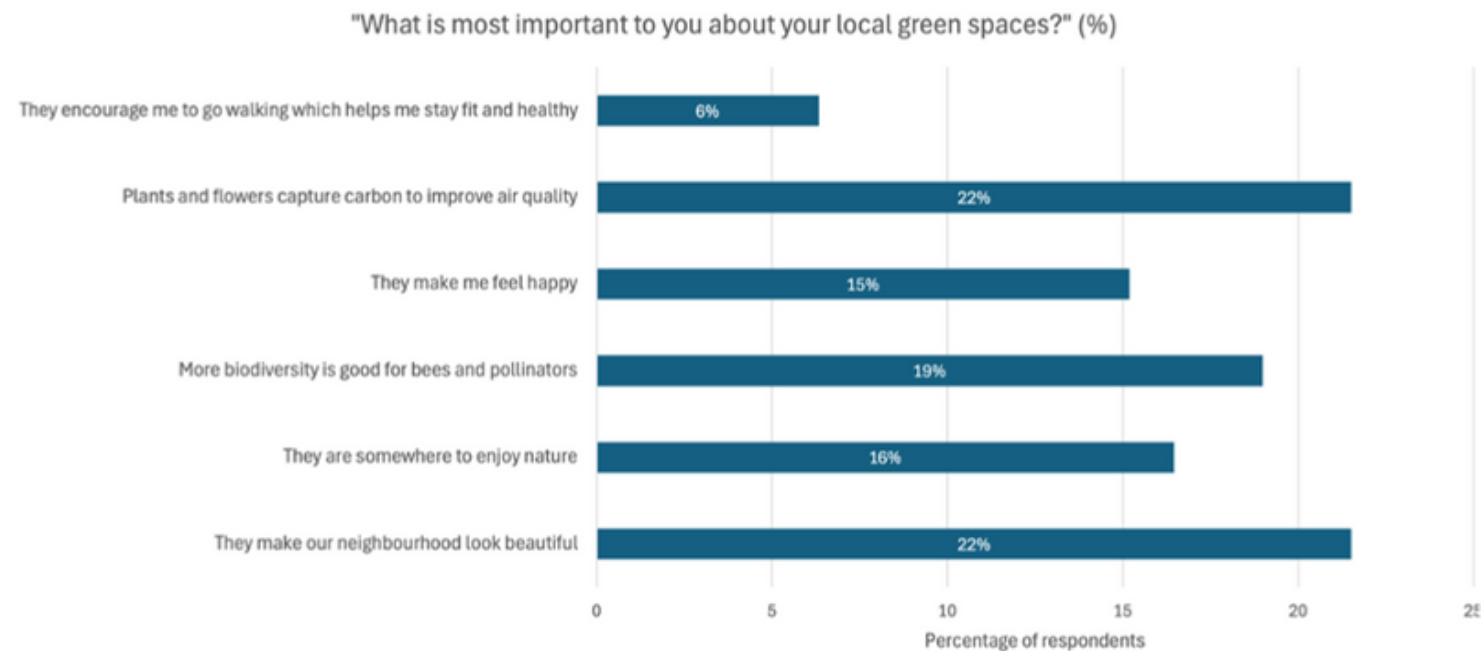


AIR QUALITY



NEIGHBOURHOOD PRIDE

Questionnaire responses indicated that, after taking part in the project, the most important features of local green spaces for the Poets Streets residents were that “plants and flowers capture carbon to improve air quality”, and that green spaces “make the neighbourhood look beautiful”. These findings suggest improved air quality and a sense of neighbourhood pride were important to participants after taking part in the project activities.



IMPACT ON...



PERSONAL PRIDE

“ So, for me, it's kind of personal 'cos I'm helping to tidy up my own back garden [referring to Poets Park], if that makes sense, and I enjoy – and although I've got a disability, it doesn't prevent me, and it gives me a sense of purpose and belonging, because you're involved.

... Yeah, because it was beautiful. It's the only word I can describe it, it was beautiful. And the feeling that I had – because I never thought I'd do it, have the confidence to do it, it was overwhelming in a way. ”



WELLBEING

“ It brings – for your mental health for me. I know I keep mentioning mental health and wellbeing, because for me it's very important. But yeah, it does – I like – yeah, I don't mind – I love getting my hands dirty. I love being in contact with soil and the earth. ”

— Photo voice participant 1



IMPACT ON...



BIODIVERSITY

“

“... the amount of like butterflies and bees and just beneficial bugs that just turns up, they all just arrived, and they are good for the environment, they are good for the area as well. The more bees and things like that that we do have, the more pollination we get, the more plants we get and it just looks a lot prettier, it just looks so pretty.

”

— Photo voice participant 4



NEIGHBOURHOOD PRIDE

“

I think because the work's been done, people are starting to respect it a little bit more, if that makes sense... I'm just really made up with [Poets Park], no more couches, no more broken glass. It's been treated – you know, it's being looked after better than it used to be, and it is down to this [the project].

”

— Photo voice participant 1



IMPACT ON...



CONNECTION TO NATURE

“

It is, it's beautiful. And first thing of a morning it is, it's quiet. And you just – I'm just waiting for a few little Robins to come over to be honest. And then this little bit where all the flowers are, you go to the doctors and you're walking past and you smile because it looks lovely.”

”

— Photo voice participant 3



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

“

What I've taken away – quite a lot, to be honest. Meeting new people, interesting people... And that sense of belonging, that's what I've taken away, and being part of something... I've met new people... and I'm grateful that I've been given the opportunity to be able to contribute to my community and get involved, and meet new people from different walks of life.

”

— Photo voice participant 1



CONCLUSION

This pilot project and concurrent evaluation offers insights into the experiences of taking part in the 'Our Beautiful Grotspots' activities and the impact on the community.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that people living in the Poets Streets appreciate their local green spaces, in particular the ecological impact of local green spaces (flowers and plants on air quality and benefits of pollination), and how looked-after public green spaces make the neighbourhood look beautiful.

Qualitative findings offer further insights into wider impacts of the project.

For more information on the project, including the full Social Impact report, [click here](#).



LEARN MORE



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GroundsWell
Transforming our cities from the ground up



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