

Case Study

Poetry for Wellbeing In Partnership with Hampshire Cultural Trust

Background

Poetry for Wellbeing is an existing programme, which forms part of Hampshire Cultural Trust's social impact work.

During the pandemic, opportunities arose to think differently about how the programme might be delivered, and what points of creative inspiration might be used to support the health and wellbeing of participants.

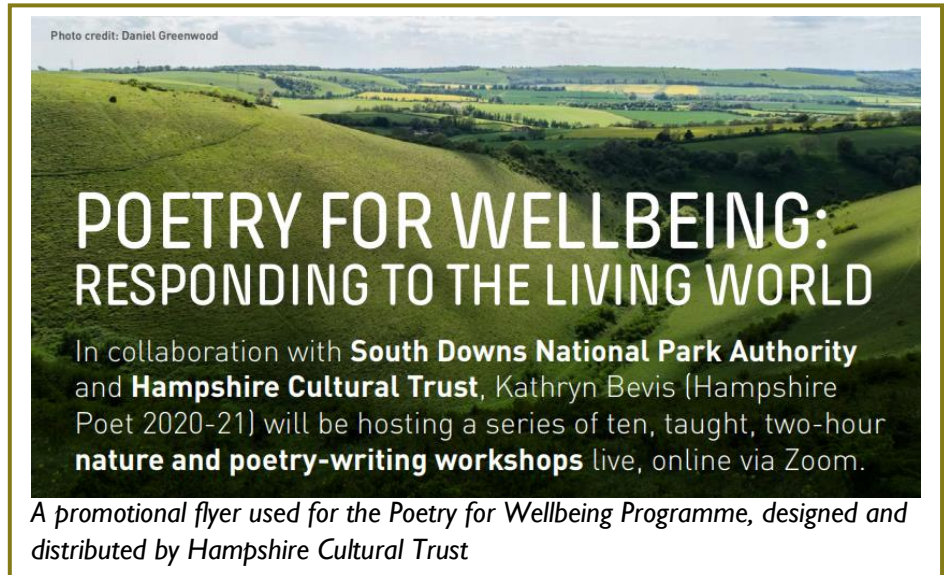
Thanks to this partnership with Hampshire Cultural Trust, *Poetry for Wellbeing* used the South Downs landscape to support creative writing activities, delivered in 2020 through a series of virtual workshops over 10 weeks.

The programme provided emotive and informative films from sites across the South Downs National Park to explore creativity and wellbeing, inspiring creative writing activities and encouraging participants to access nature for their wellbeing

“Now I write everywhere, whether that be on the phone, just in my head, or if I have pen and paper.”

Programme participant

The programme benefitted from development and delivery by Kathryn Bevis, Hampshire Poet Laureate for 2020-21, and filming by Winchester-based filmmaker Laurent Metrich.



The project

“Feel the warmth of the sun trip her fingers across your skin, dear one, and taste the tang of the waves as they splash their greeting, their welcome home...”

Child of the Ocean, by Amy, a participant in Poetry for Wellbeing (inspired by Seven Sisters Country Park).

Hampshire Cultural Trust have run 'Brighter Futures' since 2018. The programme works with adults facing a variety of challenges and delivers courses in different creative subjects to support mental health and wellbeing.

Hampshire Poet Laureate, Kathryn Bevis, has been delivering *Poetry for Wellbeing* courses as part of the Brighter Futures programme, working with participants who have been referred or signposted by health partners such as Recovery Colleges and Social Prescribers. Some participants also self-referred.

The partnership with South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) sought to bring the outdoors into the homes of participants, encouraging and inspiring people to utilise their local environment to support their wellbeing and to develop their writing and poetry skills.

Although by its nature, the workshops focus on working with a small number of participants, the content will be reused for future courses. Planned courses are proving popular, with the programme having to operate a reserves/waiting list.

The SDNPA awarded the project £2,600, with Hampshire Cultural Trust contributing £2,400.

“I cherish my Tuesday morning as it’s been a little bit of space where I can hear and connect with myself.”

Poetry for Wellbeing participant

The outcome

- A short film giving a flavor of the Poetry for Wellbeing programme acts as a legacy of the project.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x46JGpNzKUM>
- The project was a first time collaboration between Hampshire Cultural Trust and SDNPA, exploring our shared strategic priority around creativity, health and wellbeing. The partnership felt mutually supportive and successful.
- The project produced a series of films based at locations across the National Park, using the experience of landscape to support creative learning and development.
- 10 participants signed up to the programme, with 8 completing it. Although a small cohort, the quality of delivery was to an excellent standard, and satisfaction rates were high.
- As the resources produced for Poetry for Wellbeing are reuseable, they will benefit participants in future programmes, including one due to start in September 2021.
- The resources from the project were used by Kathryn Bevis to support poetry workshops at HMP Winchester, working with young men to support engagement in poetry and creative writing while in isolation.

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2020–25 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 4.2: Promote creativity and understanding of the landscape and traditions of the South Downs through contemporary arts and crafts.

Outcome 5.1: Encourage everyone to experience the National Park and widen participation for under-represented groups through targeted activities and promotion

Outcome 7.1: Develop initiatives which enable local communities and individuals to improve health and wellbeing.

southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/

The future

The Poetry for Wellbeing collaboration with Hampshire Cultural Trust and Kathryn Bevis presented an opportunity. Not only were SDNPA able to partner with a creative and cultural organisation recognised nationally for its social impact work, and from partnership with a talented writer and poet, but the project enabled SDNPA to continue to channel support to people experiencing increased vulnerabilities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participants represented a diverse group of people in terms of gender, nationality, age, and mental health, medical or welfare needs. Some were referred or signposted by health partners such as Recovery Colleges and Social Prescribers. Others were self-referred, experiencing the uncertainties of furlough and the isolating impacts of the pandemic.

Each participant produced poetry reflecting the beauty and connection between our wellbeing and nature.

For further information, please contact:

anooshka.rawden@southdowns.gov.uk

SDNPA Cultural Heritage Lead

September 2021