New report demonstrates power of rewilding for people and communities

Tuesday 4 August, 2026

The national nature charity Heal Rewilding has published its first-ever Social Impact Report, revealing how rewilding is delivering benefits not only for nature and climate but for people and communities.

The report covers the period from April 2025 to March 2026, during which nearly 1,000 young people engaged with Heal's programmes, more than 1,500 people attended events, there were an estimated 328 visitors and 265 volunteers contributed their time, while the vast majority of those who gave feedback reported improved wellbeing, stronger community connections and a greater understanding of nature. The findings add to the body of evidence that making nature accessible to everyone can help bridge inequalities, strengthen communities and inspire hope for a healthier future for both people and the natural world.

Alongside restoring ecosystems and addressing climate change, Heal works to expand access to nature and create opportunities for learning and connection. By enabling more people to engage with nature, Heal aims to contribute towards improved health and wellbeing and stronger and more resilient communities, which should ultimately reduce pressure on public services such as the NHS.

A powerful and consistent theme runs throughout the report and sits at the heart of Heal's work: hope. From young people discovering wildlife for the first time to volunteers building skills and confidence, the findings demonstrate how nature recovery can inspire positive change for individuals, communities and the environment.

The report focuses on five priority groups: underserved communities, young people, local communities, visitors and the national audience, and volunteers.

Over the reporting period, Heal delivered significant social impact across these groups. **295** people from underserved backgrounds spent time engaging with nature at Heal Somerset, **999** young people participated in different programmes, **1,539** people attended events and **265** volunteers contributed their time and skills. Of 240 respondents, **88 per cent** of people reported an improved understanding of the natural environment and rewilding. **92 percent** of 278 respondents reported an increased sense of wellbeing, connection and community and **89 per cent** of 163 respondents reported making positive behaviour changes.

Commenting on the report, Jan Stannard, CEO and co-founder of Heal said:

"This report demonstrates how important rewilding is to people. Everyone should be able to experience the benefits of a healthier natural world, regardless of their background or circumstances.

"Above all, this report reflects the hope that lies at the heart of our work and the power of collaboration in making change happen: these achievements would not have been possible without the support of Heal's volunteers, community partners, donors and wider networks. Their collective efforts have helped create opportunities for thousands of people to connect with nature while supporting the recovery of wildlife and habitats."

This is Heal's first Social Impact Report and the charity aims to publish future editions every two years, with the next one in January 2028.

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