

# Funding application summary - Coalface to Wildspace: Yorkshire

## About the project

### Name of your organisation

The Froglife Trust

### Project Title

Coalface to Wildspace: Yorkshire

### Describe what your organisation would like to achieve through your project.

This project will achieve landscape scale habitat creation and restoration across seven cities in Yorkshire. In total working at 17 sites creating and restoring 60 ponds and improving 47 surrounding terrestrial habitats for the benefit of amphibians and reptiles and a wide range of other wildlife that rely on similar habitats. Working with under-served communities we will achieve a change in behaviour. To encourage widescale community engagement we will deliver an informative, educational, enjoyable, and inclusive programme of activities. Activities include creating a Wildspace Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor (providing connectivity to the habitat works), setting up Wildspace Guardianship Scheme; installing dipping platforms and delivering Wildspace Amphibian Hop sessions with school children; delivering Wildspace Gardening Workshops; creating a 3D film with film screenings at numerous venues; working with schools to take part in Wildspace Parades; delivering workshops to inform the creation and installation of Speaking Wildspace Statues and delivering Wildspace Festivals.

### Tell us what you will do during your project.

Provide a detailed overview of what you will do during your project.

For example, describe any:

- activities that you will be doing
- events that you will be hosting
- items or resources that you will be creating
- heritage items or buildings you will be restoring
- landscapes you will be improving

This helps us to understand what your project is all about.

During the development phase the Project Development Manager & Trainee will be supported by a Community Consultation Professional to consult with under-served communities, to inform the following activities:

- Creating and restoring 107 habitats at 17 sites located in areas of high deprivation in total creating 42 and restoring 18 ponds and 47 terrestrial habitat improvements. Working on sites in under-served areas of Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Barnsley, and Selby. These sites are all in need of habitat improvements and are close to communities that do not benefit from a high-quality natural environment. This work will provide under-served communities with much needed improved blue and green spaces within a 15-minute walk from where they live. The benefits of being able to access natural spaces on mental and physical well-being is well documented and covered in other sections of this application.
- Setting up a Wildspace Guardianship Scheme and providing training in species identification and habitat management, in total 570 guardians. These Guardians will be equipped and supported to continue to manage the habitats after the project has been completed and will be able to pass on their skill sets to new Guardians.
- Installing five dipping platforms and hosting Wildspace Amphibian Hops with school children to take part in pond dipping sessions. 15 sessions per city, 75 sessions in total directly benefiting 1875 children.
- Working with under-served communities to Create five Wildspace Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors (NWC) with 40 new/restored ponds and 255 other wildlife friendly interventions - 2,500 people helping to create the NWC. We have successfully to date created 28 NWC in other regions.
- Delivering Wildspace Wildlife Gardening Workshops (WGW) using lego to make wildlife garden props alongside outdoor wildlife gardening sessions – 100 workshops with 2,500 people. Our Yorkshire T.O.A.D project reported that 78% of those attending a WGW took direct action culminating in 242 new community ponds.
- Creating a Wildspace 3D film tracing how the geological changes over millennia has informed the evolution of amphibians and reptiles. 75 film screenings to take place at venues across the regions with 25,700 attendees. To date our Walsall film has been viewed by 26,026 people (46 screenings).
- Wildspace Parades working with school children hosting 180 sessions supported by artists to make props. 15 parades over 3 years with 2 grand finale parades, total of 17 parades through city centres, 45 schools taking part with 4,500 children parading.
- Wildspace Speaking Statue Workshops to inform the design and installation of the statues with QR codes. Workshops supported by artists to design statues with community groups – 75 workshops with 1,125 people contributing. Followed by unveiling ceremonies at 5 sites with 625 attendees.
- Wildspace Festivals at ten of the habitat sites, with 5,000 people visiting the festivals.

In total the project will deliver 468 sessions. It will engage directly with 52,975 people with direct/indirect engagement totally 124,188 people.

In addition to the digital elements that this project will create including 3D film, drone footage, eDNA species surveying and digital outputs to be used at events, the project will benefit from

Froglife's existing digital outputs including the Dragon Finder App, Virtual Reality Experience of being a toad using a wildlife tunnel to enter a nature reserve, Augmented Reality helping people to design a wildlife garden and our website that will host project pages and where all our digital outputs are freely available to download.

The project will benefit from our experience in creating a 3D film for Walsall and the trialling of our new approach in using lego for the Wildlife Gardening Workshops, we have found that the use of lego has greatly widened the appeal of the workshops to attract more diverse audiences. It will benefit from the trial we undertook in Walsall in delivering Amphibian Hops, which worked exclusively with under-served children/young people and exceeded the original audience target. The project will benefit from our evaluation from other projects that have worked with under-served communities at a similar scale.

"I told my sister frogs have a patch behind their eye, that's where their ears are."

"I found out a slow worm is a legless lizard."

"My favourite fact is that a lizard will drop its tail if attacked."

"I know all about habitats now, toad abodes and hibernaculum."

The project will create new publications/promotional resources to reflect the interests of the local communities in Yorkshire.

This placed based project, will create a sense of pride within under-served communities in Yorkshire of their natural heritage and highlight the importance of how their geological heritage has informed the natural places we access and enjoy today.

This project is a direct example of "*think global, act local*".

**For landscape projects, please provide an Ordnance Survey grid reference for your landscape.**

SK 44424 83862; SK45500 87500; SE45262 01803; SK43600 85900; SK49454 82336; SK 51349 85202; SE57948 07168; SE 52507 08001; SE 46333 05353; SE 40457 08956; SE 40844 08235; SE 37700 09800; SE 36200 06600; SE23157 11353; SE 22467 20799; SE35809 18044; SE66616 33807.

**Explain what need and opportunity your project will address**

Tell us about any problems and opportunities there are relating to how:

- your heritage is managed now and its condition
- people engage with the heritage now

Tell us how your project will address the above two problems and opportunities, and how your project fits with any local strategies or wider initiatives. Tell us about any feasibility and options appraisals that have been carried out and why your project is the best and most viable way

forward. If your project will improve an area of landscape or townscape, tell us about the current condition of the area.

### *How our heritage is managed and its condition*

Freshwater is crucial for all living organisms. Freshwater habitats, such as ponds are critical for the survival of amphibians and other wildlife including invertebrates, birds, reptiles, and small mammals. Terrestrial habitats (heathlands, grasslands & woodlands) provide foraging/over-wintering areas for a wide range of species. Whilst most natural heritage groups focus their attention on protected sites, Froglife recognises the importance of our urban natural heritage, which is often overlooked. This is evidenced in a report '*Correcting common misconceptions to inspire conservation action in urban environments*' (Kylie Soanes et.al) stating that '*despite repeated calls to action, proposals for urban conservation are often met with surprise or scepticism. There remains a pervasive narrative in policy, practice, and the public psyche that urban environments, although useful for engaging people with nature are of little conservation value.*' The research provides evidence that small urban spaces do support and sustain populations of native species. It specifically mentions the value of small urban ponds (Calhoun et al. 2014; Hill & Wood 2014). Arguing that in many cases, small urban habitats support comparable populations and species diversity to nonurban areas and are critical to the persistence of local populations. It cites research on 80 small ponds in Switzerland (Oertli et al. 2002), that found that the number of species in a set of small ponds was greater than a single large pond of comparable total area. Similarly, an assessment of a network of urban grasslands in Australia showed that small grasslands contained unique species not found in larger reserves.

#### ***Opportunities:***

This project provides an opportunity to address the lack of funding for freshwater habitats which has resulted in a scarcity of these habitats. The latest *Where the Green Grants Went* report, identified topics that were receiving much less funding and cites Freshwater. The large-scale habitat works alongside the creation of a NWC will vastly improve the provision of freshwater and associated terrestrial habitats in urban areas. The project delivers against several Yorkshire Green Space and Biodiversity Strategies, namely the Yorkshire & Humber Biodiversity Strategy, Theme C – Improving functional biodiversity networks and enhancing the wider environment; Theme F – Helping the regions biodiversity adapt to climate change; and the actions listed '*create new and restore existing wetlands*', with standing water listed in Annex 1 as a priority habitat action. It delivers against the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Strategy to invest in climate and nature solutions. It delivers against the Sheffield/Kirklees/Rotherham Local Area Plans, all of which have a vision to create a greener local environment.

### **How people engage with our heritage now**

The data on the National Biodiversity Network database for amphibians in Yorkshire shows 797 records (from 5 sources), and reptiles 88 records (8 sources). This compares

to 5691 (38 sources) for mammals and thousands of plant species (1330 sources). This highlights a lack of recording of amphibian and reptile species.

Our evaluations show that we are successful at raising the profile of these species, e.g., our one-year Yorkshire T.O.A.D. project aimed to train 252 volunteers but exceeded this by training 292. Participants tested before sessions showed a very low level of knowledge of the species at 3.04/10. This improved 9.06/10 after training. The project also created 5 Wildlife Corridors, with a total of 9,487 people directly involved. Communities taking part in these corridors undertook 2,040 actions. These figures clearly highlight a desire to conserve our species, but a lack of knowledge about what actions to take.

#### **Opportunity:**

This project provides an opportunity to build on our former work in Yorkshire and continue to improve under-served communities appreciation of our species.

Appreciation leads to knowledge; knowledge leads to action. It provides an opportunity to deliver against the Yorkshire & Humber Biodiversity Strategy – Theme E – Engaging people with the region’s biodiversity. Alongside a vision to “create high quality natural environments in urban areas...providing benefits for both people and the natural environment.” It fits with the West Yorkshire Big Climate Chat, with a vision to “create new green jobs so people can excel in the careers of the future”, and Sheffield Local Area Agreement for “quality recreational open space – meeting Green Flag Standard.”

This project delivers against the Levelling Up agenda, University of Staffordshire & University of Leeds research found that deprived areas in the region were also nature deprived, and furthermore had far higher levels of pollutants (Environmental Quality & Social Deprivation, Dr Walker et. al). This project will help to promote health equity and social capital.

#### **Why does your project need to happen now?**

tell us:

- if the risk to your heritage is critical
- about any partnership funding that is available to you now that won’t be in the future
- what will happen if you do not get a grant from us

The risk to the heritage that we represent, amphibians, reptiles, freshwater and terrestrial habitats is critical. Currently 59% of amphibians and 42% of reptiles in Europe are in population decline, with a further 40% of amphibians and 32% of reptiles in Europe threatened or near threatened with extinction (Temple & Cox 2009a, b). These declines are being witnessed in the UK, evidenced by Freshwater Habitat Trust research reporting a 50% decline in ponds, with 80% of those remaining, in ‘very poor’ condition. Froglife’s research on our 30-year Toads on Roads dataset evidenced the impact of this, concluding a 68% decline in Common Toad (Petrovan & Schmidt, 2016). RSPB’s Big Garden Birdwatch survey asked people to record sightings of common toad, with numbers of reports dropping from 25% to 17% over four-years. These declines are seen

in Yorkshire, with concerns also raised about declines in Great Crested Newts and Adders. Pond Net a partnership project funded by NLHF undertook Great Crested Newt (GCN) eDNA surveys in 2015, 2016 & 2017, surveying 141 ponds across Northern England. In 2015 the surveys identified 30 ponds with GCN (21%). In 2017 only 16 recorded GCN. This indicates a 53% decline in the population. As GCN require good water quality they are indicators of water quality. The Make the Adder Count project concluded large-scale declines in adder populations. With many sites based in Yorkshire 260 sites reported considerable declines.

The State of Nature Report 2023 reports the UK as being one of the most nature-depleted countries. It reports that invertebrates, a vital food source for amphibians and reptiles, are found on average in 13% fewer places now than in 1970, and a decline of 54% of flowering plants, these plants provide vital foraging/over-wintering habitats for our species. It reports that the abundance of terrestrial and freshwater species has on average fallen by 19% across the UK since 1970. The report does highlight nature conservation successes e.g. the success in conserving Natterjack Toads, where sites have been expanded and conservation management has been well-resourced, and targeted conservation actions for Dragonflies and Damselflies, both freshwater nutrient recycling species, has resulted in an increase of 64% in species' distribution. This provides evidence that conservation can be effective for individual species with targeted conservation actions. The report also highlights the inequality in access to nature and in supporting human health, with people in poorer socio-economic settings having less access to wildlife-rich natural spaces.

This project will build on our former projects in Yorkshire and maintain the momentum of engaging with under-served communities and improving urban environments in deprived neighbourhoods. In 2016 working with the Recovery College in Kirklees and other partners we delivered a project as part of the MENTal Wellbeing programme, working with men experiencing mental health problems, on outdoor nature focused activities at the newly establish Dewsbury Country Park. Following this we delivered three phases of the Sheffield Living Waters project, creating a wetland corridor South to North of the city. Our one-year Yorkshire T.O.A.D project worked in several cities delivering both habitat works and creating NWC's. Since 2016 we have developed a strong network of organisations/groups that are enthusiastic to continue to work with Froglife. We have honed our expertise in the geography and demographics of Yorkshire and know where and how we need to target our delivery. To continue to harness the benefits of our former work and to build on the momentum, optimising the internal expertise that we currently have, we need this project to go ahead now.

Not only are communities that are under-served by the nature conservation sector not benefiting from being able to access and enjoy high quality blue/green spaces close to where they live and reap the many physical and mental well-being benefits that nature provides, but research highlights that these communities are also more likely to be impacted by climate change more so than more affluent neighbourhoods. Research has shown that even a small, domestic pond, will capture more carbon than trees and many other habitats per m<sup>2</sup>. Small ponds (garden, allotment & community ponds) occupy scarcely 0.0006% of UK land, compared to grasslands at 35% and 2.3% for ancient woodland. Cérégino et al., (2014) suggested that a 500m<sup>2</sup> pond, can sequester 1000kg

of carbon per year, a rate of 20-30 times higher than woodlands, grasslands, and other habitat types. Under-served communities have the right to enjoy and benefit from freshwater and associated habitats, and the many benefits that these habitats provide. This project needs to go ahead to ensure that under-served communities in these Yorkshire towns are provided with equal access to nature and its benefits.

## About the Heritage

**Tell us about the heritage in your project and why it is important to your organisation and community.**

Provide a description of the heritage as it is today. If different types of heritage are involved, describe each of these.

Provide factual information about the heritage. For example:

- If your project is about heritage that is not physical (such as memories or cultural traditions), tell us about the subject and time period, if relevant.
- If your project is about physical heritage (such as a building, ship, historic object, collection or nature reserve), give us factual information about it, such as its size, when it dates from, the surviving features, its condition and why it is important to your local area.

Tell us:

- if there is any official recognition of this heritage, for example, it may be a listed building (if so, tell us its grade) or a Site of Special Scientific Interest
- what is important about the heritage, for example it may be a source of artistic, architecture or scientific interest
- who the heritage is important to, such as experts and/or the local community
- why the heritage is distinct or unique
- how the heritage relates to other heritage, for example in the local area or nationally

**Freshwater Heritage (Ponds):** Although freshwater is only 3% of the UK's land surface, it supports 10% of species. Ponds are a significant wildlife habitat, supporting populations of at least two-thirds of Britain's freshwater plant and animal species (Countryside Survey, 2007). Pond biodiversity is particularly significant at a regional level, where they support more plant and invertebrate species than other freshwater bodies (Williams et al., 2004). For many species ponds are their main refuge, and they are uncommon in other water bodies. Natural England

research found that ponds support twice as many Biodiversity Action Plan species as lakes, and about 15% more than rivers and streams (Webb 2008a, b).

Ponds also provide a range of ecosystem services such as flood attenuation, trapping pollutants, water storage and carbon sequestration. Ponds are a Biodiversity Action Plan priority and are covered by a national Biodiversity Action Plan.

**Urban Heritage: Ponds, People, Place & Purpose:** Ponds are closely connected to people, place, and purpose. They have historically been created by people for aesthetic and leisure purposes and were features of many public sites in urban environments. Many of these historic ponds have been lost, contributing to our detachment from the natural environment, which is particularly the case for people living in urban environments, where children will often not have encountered species living in ponds, particularly amphibians. Ponds help us to appreciate the connection between people and wildlife, whilst also providing us with open views, that naturally draw us to them.

Urban landscapes provide numerous purposes such as connecting us with wildlife. Blue/green spaces provide breathing spaces in developed areas and have been shown to have positive impacts on our well-being. Blue/green spaces provide venues for ecological and environmental education, and places for intrinsic enjoyment. Expanding and managing our urban blue/green spaces promotes species diversity, increases our quality of life, and attracts visitors providing an economical benefit.

**Species Heritage:** Research shows that there are a variety of species living in urban landscapes that have adapted to the unique habitats and ecological conditions of these areas. Different land uses, a high diversity and abundance of micro-habitats and the important influence of people, helps to create a landscape that allows biodiversity to flourish alongside humans. The species we find on our allotments, school grounds and backyards, such as amphibians, form a large part of our ecological and cultural heritage. Across the seven cities the most recorded number of species are common frogs at 2841 records, with a combined number of 1470 for all other amphibians. Records for reptiles are even lower with a combined number of 332. These records provide evidence that we need to act now if these species are to remain part of Yorkshire's heritage.

**Site Specific Heritage:** This project will be working at 17 sites, each with their own specific importance to our natural and built heritage. For example, Beighton Miners Welfare Recreation Ground in Sheffield was home to the Beighton Miners Football Club, which reached the first round of the FA Cup finals in 1953. Today it is a buzzing community centre offering venues for hire, dementia café, play groups, bar, and many other leisure activities. Behind the recreation



ground is a large wet woodland with a pond in need of restoration and lends itself perfectly for pond creations. Ulley reservoir was created in 1876, to provide drinking water to the communities of Rotherham. It was acquired by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and is now a popular country park. In 1890 at Walton Colliery Pit dwellings were built for the miners. These were called Ings Cottages. An “Ings” is a low-lying area of land prone to flooding. Walton Colliery is now a nature reserve and due to its wet nature, has two large lakes, used mainly for fishing, there are opportunities to restore the smaller water bodies on the site and to create new water bodies. Brookfields Park, Pigfields, Kiveton, Dinnington, Bentley Shaftholme, Brodsworth, Phoenix Park, Cudworth, New Park Springs, Carlton Marsh and Dearne Valley CP are all former collieries that been converted into natural blue/green spaces. All offer a mosaic of habitats, with opportunities for pond restorations and creations. Parkgate in Skelmanthorpe is a former coal washing site and links with Kirklees Light Railway. Kirklees Light Railway was originally built to transport coal from coal sites to Parkgate where the coal was washed and then shipped on to Manchester. The railway has since changed its name to Whistlestop Valley and is a popular tourist attraction. The station has a pond with a good population of great crested newts; the pond is in need of works; the restoration of the pond will form part of the Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors.

### **Will you be undertaking any capital work as part of your project?**

#### **Please provide details**

Capital works are defined as works that create or improve an asset. These can include physical works to landscapes, nature and buildings, repair, conservation, new build, digitisation, or work to stabilise the condition of objects.

Examples of capital work:

- conservation of a heathland
- repairs to a historic building
- digitisation of a photographic archive

Tell us if any capital works will be part of your project, even if this is a small part of your overall project. Give us an initial breakdown of the work you intend to carry out.

The habitat capital works will take place at 17 sites, creating 48 new ponds and restoring 18 dysfunctional ponds and enhancing 60 terrestrial sites, as detailed below.

Sheffield – Beighton Miners Welfare Recreation Ground – create 4 ponds & restore 1 pond.

Rotherham – Ulley Reservoir restore 1 pond.  
Brookfields Park create 10 ponds.  
Pigfields – create 3 ponds & restore 1 pond.  
Kiveton – create 2 ponds & restore 1 pond.  
Dinnington – create 2 ponds & restore 1 pond.

Doncaster - Bentley Shafteholme – create 2 ponds & restore 1 pond.  
Brodsworth – create 3 ponds & restore 1 pond.

Kirklees - Parkgate (Skelmanthorpe) - create 5 ponds.  
Lower Spen Nature Reserve – restore 1 pond.

Wakefield - Walton Colliery- create 2 ponds & restore 2 ponds.

Barnsley - Carlton Marsh – restore 1 pond.  
Dearne Valley Park - create 2 ponds & restore 1 pond.  
Phoenix Park – restore 2 ponds.  
Cudworth/Ferrymoor Flash – create 3 ponds.  
New Park Spring – create 3 ponds.

Selby - Cliffe Common Nature Reserve create 1 pond & restore 2 ponds.

Other Capital Items:

5x dipping platforms.

Fencing of 12 created ponds.

Digital outputs: Website W3C AA Compliant.  
3D Film including film equipment.

QR Code Plaques.  
Drone Footage.  
Sage Earth Software.  
GIS Mapping Software.  
EDI analysis software.

Equipment:                      Surveying Equipment.  
   eDNA Surveying Equipment.  
   Pond Liners x 15 ponds.

Professional Fees:    Digital Consultant.  
   Ecologist.  
   Metabarcoding of eDNA.

*"Dear Froglife,*

*This is just a quick message to say thank you for the brilliant work you did organising the dredging and refurbishment of Cow Pond on Leyton Flats near where I live in Leytonstone. I visit Leyton Flats or Hollow Ponds, as we locals refer to it, on a daily basis recording the nature I find photographically. My particular interest is in getting more people enjoying and supporting the nature we have here in East London, particularly Wanstead Flats, Wanstead Park, and Hollow Ponds. Last summer, following the refurbishment work, I noticed a huge increase in the diversity of wildlife around the pond. In fact, I made a video about the Emperor Dragonfly by the pondside."*

*"St Nicks first met with Froglife about the Yorkshire T.O.A.D project back in early 2020. Since that initial meeting it has been amazing to see the progress that has been made across York to improve habitat for amphibians thanks to the project. By working across a wider range of sites and with different community and conservation groups across the city, the project has had an indirect effect of bringing together these groups and sites together to work more closely, beyond the Froglife project. St Nicks received GRCF funding in 2021 for a project called Green Corridors York and we learnt lots from Froglife when both setting up, and running, this project."*

*The practical work to create new ponds and scrapes at our site Heworth Holme was really successful. Our very proud volunteers initially questioned whether it was something they could do them themselves by hand. But the sheer scale and complex design of the ponds quickly made them appreciate the works, completed with incredible skill within two days! The ponds quickly filled up with water and we already had frog spawn in one of them. It has been a great project to be involved in, and as an organisation we have learnt lots from the Froglife team".*

**Digital feedback:**

*"In Germany we have these wildlife tunnels, and they are very effective. This is the sole reason I came here today! People have been tweeting about the VR."*

*"Thought this was a wonderful way to encourage students to talk about science. The Conservation message is really strong."*

Feedback from our Midlands 3D film:

*'The film educated them (children) on the wildlife in Walsall'*

*'After the informative video and the good use of questioning and communicating from Elsbeth and Christina, the children know a lot more about amphibians'*

*'Loved the 3D video'*

*'TA found the film inspiring, furthermore by the pond dipping activity that followed- inspired to build a pond in their own garden'*

*'My daughter enjoyed the video and made the link between the activity and video - spotting the animals she made out of lego on the screen'*

*'I learnt something new about the history of Walsall'*

*'I think my child has seen/discovered animals/insects that he's never seen previously.'*