

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Utilising Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve as a stimulus, Designing Nature focused on developing designs for an outdoor educational structure in partnership with potential future users both with and without special educational needs. It aimed to raise awareness of the importance of biological diversity and the wider landscape and enhance young disabled and non-disabled people's understanding of environment and conservation issues. Designing Nature engaged local young people in visits to Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve and introduced them to the wildlife important to the site and the wider Darent Valley landscape. It examined the ways in which Kent Wildlife Trust is enhancing the biological diversity of the reserve and undertaking habitat management to reintroduce certain species and enhance population of others.



Kent Wildlife Trust worked with architect practice, Studio McLeod, Mary Blackwell (conservationist and education specialist) and the project participants in a series of ecological and architectural workshops to create a range of designs for an outdoor education structure. The essence of the brief was to encourage participants to create design concepts whereby visitors to the nature reserve are in a better position to observe and connect with nature. Designing Nature had creativity at its core and participants were encouraged to seek inspiration from the natural world and the built environment; participants' ideas included structures suspended over the lakes at the

reserve and even structures that were partly subterranean. Participants learnt about the importance of the environment and the experience enhanced their knowledge of the natural landscape. Working alongside experienced architects, participants became creative investigators and learnt about how to develop initial design concepts through creative processes.

The process encouraged participants to explore the built environment through elements like sound, movement and emotion. An important part of the design brief was that the designs should be accessible for both disabled and non disabled people. Many of the designs considered sensory aspects and used natural materials to encourage touch and further exploration. Designs also explored, small and discreet structures for one person at a time to enjoy quiet and solitude and to enable viewers to get up close and personal to the natural world.