

West Cumbria Rivers Trust Youth Panel

[West Cumbria Rivers Trust](#) West Cumbria Rivers Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to protecting, restoring and improving the rivers and lakes of West Cumbria for the benefit of wildlife and the people living and working around them.

Their Youth Panel is a group of young people interested in the environment and in protecting and understanding our river catchments. Working with artist Anne Waggot Knott, they meet up to chat around the campfire, explore the woodland and the River Keekle, and make creative projects which deepen our understanding of the river catchment and its inhabitants.

It's great that the Rivers Trust is in a position to offer this unique opportunity for our young people to build sustained relationships with the natural environment, and also with artists and ecologists.

Over the past 18 months the Youth Panel have created a brilliant body of artwork – their finished pieces and processes can be seen here:

<https://express.adobe.com/page/oQ8zhOGRUSc6f>

This is our Back Yard: a film by West Cumbria Rivers Trust Youth Panel and Apprentices

The Youth Panel was approached by ACT Cumbria to respond to the Lake District National Park's five themes contained within their Management Plan. They decided to make a short film, which was quite a journey in more ways than one!

Our young people are based in Keswick, Egremont, and everywhere in between. They're at a stage where they have competing priorities, particularly exams and p-t jobs.

Over a period of six months Anne held three workshops where the Panel discussed the themes. We had a lot of debate and learned a lot in the process. By examining and revisiting the issues over time we able to go into quite a lot of depth, which was incredibly valuable.

One of the takeaways is that our young people should not be treated as homogenous group. They bring a huge diversity of ideas and perspectives. We need to meet them on their terms and really listen.

As the project unfolded, some group members decided they didn't want to appear or speak in the video either. Many were also busy with exams, work, and other commitments. But they still wanted their voices to be heard.

So Anne met the group on their own terms... they filmed remotely, in wobbly 20 second snippets, and collated the content via WhatsApp. The group went out into

their own back yards, some inside the park and some outside it, and spent time there, filming themselves walking in the landscape.

From the hours of conversation Anne distilled a script summarising the main points of the discussions, which is true to the language the young people used and has been superbly narrated by two of our Apprentices.

It's not a seamless, highly curated film, but the rough edges are important to reflect the co-created approach, and the challenges involved.

So... This is Our Back Yard. Listen carefully - the strength is in what the young people have to say.

Anne Waggot Knott

Anne is an artist, geographer and creative consultant. My work is about identifying points where we're disconnected from the environment, or each other, and reconnecting us through creative activities.

Much of this comes under the umbrella of Creative Placemaking - helping people to take ownership of their places using creativity to break down barriers.

Anne works a lot with organisations outside the arts sector, where creativity can disrupt things a bit, bringing diversity of thought and new perspectives.