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ECOLOGY

Winchester Vision 2020–2030
handbook **part 2: Target recommendations,**
following the four week working group
period, September and October 2020.

“There is an awareness that the process ahead needs to include the space to catch emerging ideas. It cannot be fixed or rigid. It needs to flex with changing times, changing attitudes, and changing technologies. But at its heart it needs a strong set of principles”

Exploring landscape, buildings and roots.

Beginning in March 2020, the Winchester Vision project ran a series of listening initiatives, such as interviews, street audio recordings, social media interactions, digital walks. From this research, a series of five key targets emerged. These targets were described in Handbook Pt. 1 as starting points for working group activities.

This is Handbook Pt. 2 and is a record of the process of each working group. It explains how each group arrived at its key recommendations. These five working group reports will directly inform the final Winchester Vision 2020 - 2030

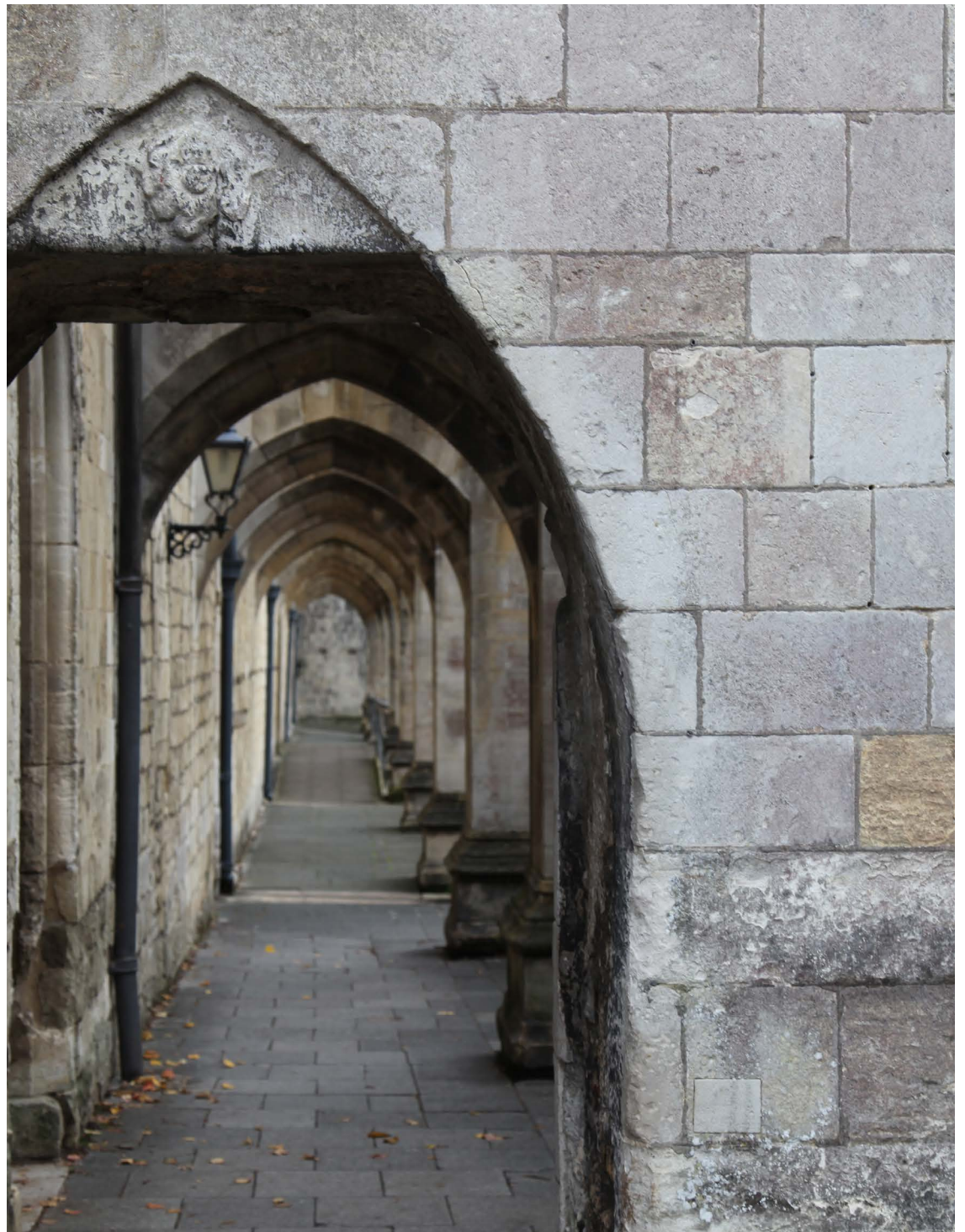
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What is Ecology?

“Landscape, buildings and roots.” But how did we come to define it as a group? Ecology is about richness and heritage – the many layers of us, the many stories of us, in our true context, the natural environment. But an outlook that is ultimately about empowering response to a collective imperative for our own generation – the climate crisis.



Methodology:

We identified four challenges to address in Winchester's Ecology. We believe need to:

Connect ecology assets

The city is full of them – green and historic spaces, obvious and hidden, but we could do with more organic routes linking them more obviously. There are disconnections everywhere, the single biggest being road use.



Signal ecology values

This is about more than physical spaces – it's about actions our stories trigger, but there are many more environmental and cultural testimonies to notice. Our richness and its potential is dissipated.



Share ecology spaces

There is common ground in natural health – everyone values Winchester's potential for wellbeing and walkability, but leisure spaces tend to look monocultural in their use. These could be safe spaces for sharing stories.



Invite ecology celebration

Events can bring down barriers – existing festivals demonstrate something of this, but there are many possible spaces to unlock for wider people in Winchester. Creativity and culture could empower connection.

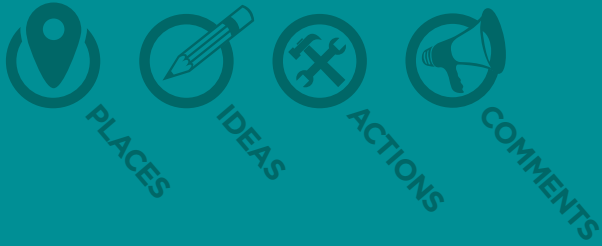
Group facilitator's summary.

The idea of Ecology seems a little philosophical, but its effect on a place weds people to where they live. Just as history is made of layers, so are people – and we tend to feel those layers somewhere deep within us. In a place like Winchester, evidence for this is obvious, all around us in landscape and some types of heritage – layers of story piling up. So could Ecology thinking help us make better practical sense of the challenges facing our generation living here? Most especially the truly generation-defining challenge: The Climate Crisis.

In assembling a team for this project, I knew we needed good sense-makers – people who naturally see connections. Because Ecology is about how everything around us ties together, into many nested ecosystems of culture, movement, lifetimes and sense of home. In a way, the Ecology working group's job was to understand the context of all the other groups. And find ways to tap into the energy of its emotional truth for Winchester residents.

What we identified together was a very twentieth century problem – disconnections. A richness of assets natural and human that have become stuck, almost in stasis, because of separation. Our role was to begin the process of doing more than auditing those assets but understanding the barriers between them, the flows around them... and the negative spaces – the gaps in our perception. The treasures missing from Winchester's shared sense of story as we tell it.

If Ecology is about richness, and how this is nature's own trick for creating resilience and opportunity, we knew we needed a diversity of perspectives on Winchester to unlock the story of it for generations to come. But thankfully, we live in an age of unlocking separations with sometimes uncomfortable but ultimately life-giving fuller stories of us.



Ecology recommendations

The biggest shared story of our generation is the climate crisis; the biggest barrier to coming together in Winchester is trust. We need to find mechanisms to listen much better – and ecology values and spaces could encourage a sense of safety and sharedness.



Target projects

1 Arrival

We identified that however you arrive in Winchester, you don't feel placed. Like you've arrived. We think there are some basic physical signage and other signals that could help this missing sense of theatre.

2 Wayfinding

A citywide development of wayfinding could help more residents and visitors alike feel placed in Winchester wherever they are. To feel regularly signalled to its healthy spaces but also to its human values. This should be mixed in approach, between physical and digital and other experiential, but could help people find businesses practicing sustainability as much as historic trails.

3 Co-creation

Fundamental must be the recognition and building into our conscious ecology the wider stories of us. And so to encourage new ones for our times. This requires ongoing listening projects of various kinds – pop up culture invitations in ecology safe spaces and invitations to the equivalent of citizens assemblies. One Great Win demonstrates the How. And the climate crisis could be a big campaign to use as a basis for hearing different perspectives. This is broad and needs identifying. But key to this is the belief that events can unlock this and creatives unlock events. “Let loose the artists!”

4 Representation

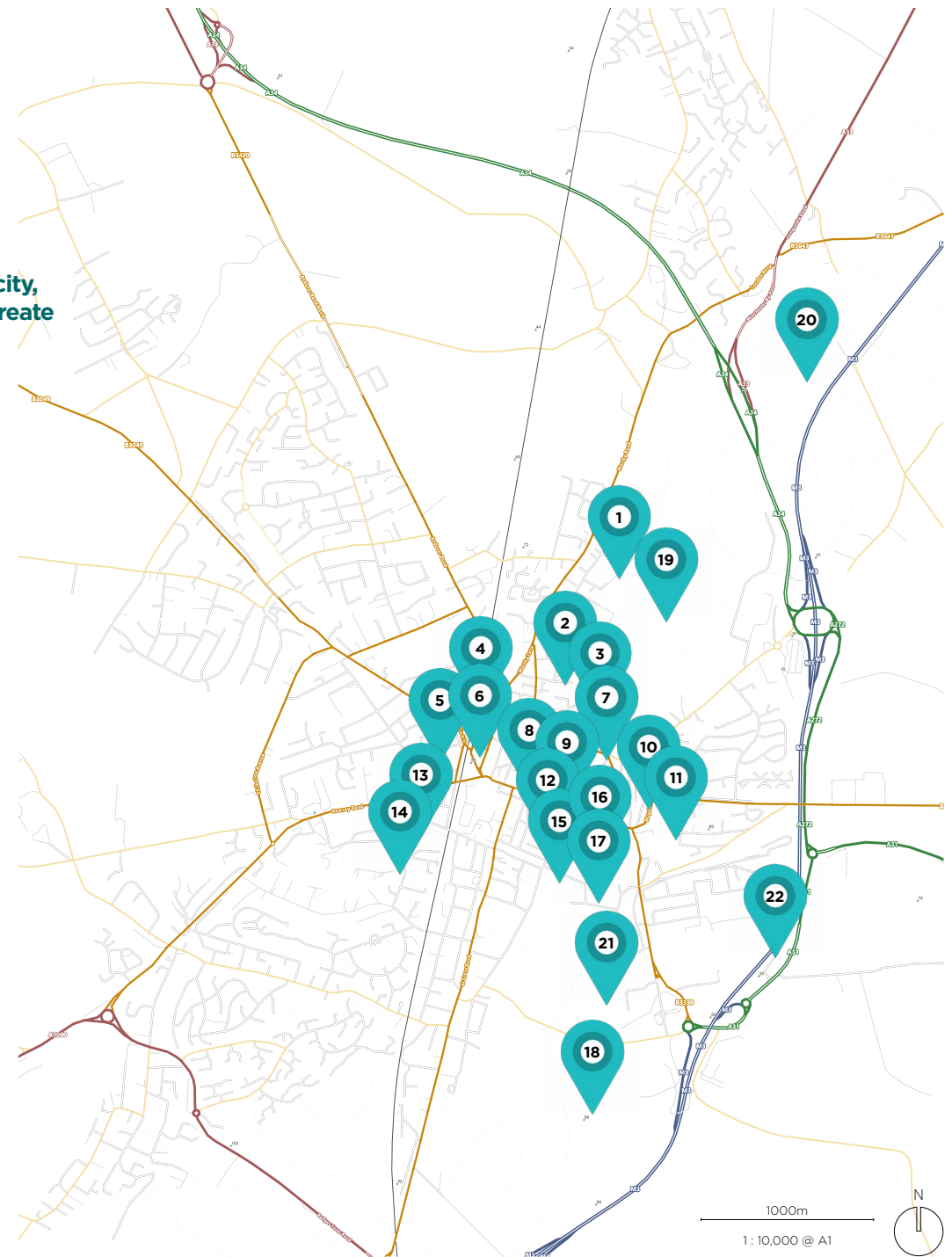
What historic trails, sustainable businesses and unsung stories of environment are out there already? And what new stories of us will we find truly make up Winchester today? How can projects like the Winchester Biodiversity Action Plan be applied, and what could we learn from connecting more strongly to the farming community? Auditing, researching, listening and putting them together will build recognition, trust and knowledge.



Ecology spaces across Winchester

Just some of the key natural and heritage areas of intervention around the city, obvious and not so obvious. At this scale they look close, but how can we create more organic routes connecting them?

1. Nuns Walk
2. Hyde Abbey Garden and area
3. River Park leisure centre
4. Railway Station
5. Oram's Arbour & Area "One of the nice things about WIN is it's in a bowl. This is one of those spaces to appreciate it."
6. Peninsular Barracks
7. The Castle
8. Buttercross Monument
9. The Pentice
10. Magdalen Hill
11. St Giles Hill "View of city centre and cathedral from viewing platform."
12. Winchester Cathedral & Cathedral Grounds
13. West Hill Cemetery
14. University of Winchester, King Alfred Campus
15. Cheyney Court
16. Wolvesey Castle (Old Bishop's Palace)
17. Wolvesey Castle "Nice walk from The Bishop On The Bridge."
18. St Catherine's Hill & area
19. River Park Area
20. A few nice walks
21. College Watermeadows area
22. M3 corridor - un-ecological element.



SECTION

1.

Arrival.

To orientate ourselves for an Ecology view of Winchester, in our first week's meeting we began by asking ourselves what that word means to each of us. It became clear from our different ideas that it's about how the "livingness" of a place is partly fuelled by the storytelling of each part that we carry around with us. The most iconic heritage building of the city may be the cathedral, yet: **"the cathedral is what it is in our minds because of the stories told about it."**

We took to a map of the city and began to mark what we considered to be its "Ecology assets". Green spaces, historic sites and buildings, natural characteristics all around it. But to work down the grain of them, beyond the large and obvious, like St Catherine's Hill, to the everyday nodes of richness, natural wellbeing or heritage that feed our experience of Winchester in regular local steps – to take more note of what these might include.

While the cathedral itself is both a historic building and a green social space, other locations emerged as ways to appreciate the setting of the city centre differently – Oram's Arbour or West Hill Cemetery on the west side, or the viewing area at St Giles Hill or up at Magdalen Hill to the east, help appreciate the natural "bowl" of ancient landscape that life in Winchester takes place in.

Our key finding was: **"We have natural and built assets at different scales all over the district, some obvious, some hidden, sometimes combined, but those assets are very disconnected. Physically and in the story of Winchester."** The single most divisive element identified was the car and how it's shaped road use and disconnections between natural spaces. But it was clear that a simple total ban of the car wouldn't be a natural and practical transition. Our idea of story around us might need to change first. And a good starting point is how we arrive in Winchester to begin with.

"The landscape shapes not just a city but our identities."

"Ecology is about how we co-exist – not just with fellow humans, but all fellow living creatures here. ”

"Our priority has to be stopping extinction. ”

"Making effective transitions starts with rebalancing priorities."



Arrival points re-design: “Get the theatre right.”

How do we arrive in Winchester? By car, by rail, by bus, by bike, on foot – but the sense of entering the city is lost at each of these points. For a city rich in assets worth investigating and spending time around, it's very hard to arrive well here, with little sense of what Winchester is. We need to boost the placing of people coming into the city centre at those key points, with just a little bit of conscious extra theatre. “You are here – and this is why you are here.” Implicit is an introduction to the story of Winchester, its brand, its spirit and the ways we want the city to be used, so this can be fed by **Culture, Movement, Lifetimes** and **Home** group findings.

HOW

The solution could be a number of adjustments: Clearer physical signage, moving of street furniture, re-prioritising of an arrival space. To plan this, commission a focussed arrival analysis team to consider the design of key arrival nodes and make basic practical recommendations.

WHERE

Key locations can be identified as part of the analysis team's opening work but they are likely to include the station, bus depot and main road routes into the city, such as from the south at Bar End of the north from M3 J9 – but it has implications for new arrival routes for bike and pedestrian.

WHO

WCC, Ecology group volunteers plus identified residents reps from the locations.



Week 1 Blog extract:



“Someone in our group suggested that the natural environment and buildings and “roots” are connected because: ““The landscape shapes not just a city but our identities.” And another person said: “Ecology is about how we co-exist – not just with fellow humans, but all fellow living creatures here.”

“..The first key finding of our group was this: “We have natural and built assets at different scales all over the district, some obvious, some hidden, sometimes combined, but those assets are very disconnected. Physically and in the story of Winchester.””

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“The M3 is a very symbolic dividing line all the way up Winchester’s landscape, but the roads and the rail line that disconnect many natural assets from each other are also why and how people come here.”

SECTION

2.

Wayfinding.

Think of one key barrier between assets that you care about that you would like to see removed. This was the challenge we left ourselves to bring back to the table for our second week.

We identified some physical disconnections, not least of which at our arrival points around the city, such as the station – people can feel drawn towards a less efficient and less walk-friendly way to the centre of town from there. From some green spaces just outside the city centre however, such as Magdalen Hill and the butterfly reserve, or the watermeadows, **we identified the need for more organic routes into town.**

It was noted that “some small interventions could make a big difference” – such as landscaping or signage. Could a wayfinding project join up many Ecology assets quite simply? But also, if Ecology is as much about the story we think we are in as green space, could wayfinding be used to do more than improve routes to key assets or even join up natural and heritage spaces better but also *signal Ecology values* appearing in other daily aspects of Winchester life, such as businesses?

“We should promote the city not just as a place with the big assets but as a centre of ecological thinking. Lots of shops are practicing sustainability and we should point people to them as part of this too.”



Wayfinding development

How do we find anything around us? Signs, maps and signals – stories we tell each other. A physical-digital wayfinding system could not only link the assets we have better but be invitations to see the city more fully, from different perspectives. And through it we could help more people feel seen and heard.

HOW

Draw together a task force to lay out Winchester's core ecological vision values – it's core brand guidelines for sustainability, where heritage, culture and biodiversity meet. Then identify existing digital, physical and community initiatives that have tried to map assets, routes and stories of Winchester – including the Arrival project. Design links between them in a first common mechanism. Do not waste previous work but use this project as a way to highlight existing ideas, develop and connect them. It is also a mechanism for listening to different experiences of the city and landscape – potentially combining historic trails with ecological tools for business with different community identifications.

WHERE

City wide, but beginning with core routes to connect Ecology spaces.

WHO

Independent mixed group from across city life, to include designers and placemaking specialists but regular community champions. With WCC consistent team.

“It’s about long-term impact. If you scare kids into avoiding the skate park, you are scaring them away from the swans, the natural spaces... from ALL walks of life down there. We can’t put fear into these spaces, it puts barriers to all the things connected to them.”

We also identified, however, that many of our disconnections in Winchester are cultural, not physical. **The story of the city as it’s usually told, mapped and directed is for particular ages, ethnicities and economic demographics.**

Partly this helps to underscore the need for any new wayfinding initiative to be much wider in its storytelling than signalling natural environment wellbeing or traditional heritage spaces – true sustainability is culturally holistic and requires multiple invitations to participate as well as interlocking platforms and different ways to experience it. **Wayfinding can be a multi-story system, helping people find each other and different ways to see and use place.**

The idea began to emerge that green spaces and histories can encourage cultural diversities – to crack open new testimonies, new conversations, new ideas. If human commonality is found around nature and wellbeing, and people of all ages and circumstances told us they value Winchester’s easy access to the outside, opening up more organic routes between those assets could also open up even richer uses of them. Somewhere like River Park has more potential natural diversity and could be a test case for bringing out Ecology values and a more holistic, human, whole-lifeweb story of where we live. But events in such spaces could be the catalysts.

“How we engage with things and celebrate things is not done particularly well” one of us said. “We don’t create mechanisms that allow people of all age groups to engage in a way suitable to them. We don’t find ways of bringing things to life that IS inclusive. Do we want to say that History is not for young people? Or should we find ways to diversify the way we talk about things?”

Week 2 Blog extract:



“By making connections with people and places we are able to create a much bigger sense of community and this is vital in pushing a city forward. We then talked about areas in where this already occurs and the River Park proximity was a common vocal point. With the green spaces, rivers, play park, school, sporting facilities and University blocks its almost its own mini cultural hub...”

“...A theme coming out both weeks is that of valuing how we co-exist with all living things here, animal and plant and microbial life. But this week we also felt the challenge of how our Ecology thinking might help us co-exist better with our fellow humans and their communities here.”

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“Ecology is a safe space. We need to help everyone find it.”

SECTION

3.

Co-creation.

In our third meeting as a group, we developed the discussion around the power and significance of storytelling. We shared experiences of how it unlocks our sense of connection to things, including belonging to a place. **Have we been telling the story of Winchester very richly over the years, and who feels connected to it? It's a fundamental Ecology question.**

We considered the classic understanding of Winchester as the old Anglo-Saxon capital, exploring the possibility that the city of then might hold truths that could inform our future here. As an international city in that context, its outlook was broad, forward-thinking and attracted lots of visitors and trade. A cultural mix, at odds with “the modern myth of the Anglo Saxon – a term that now sounds like it has a cultural agenda”.

“People come with their own identities, but history is a point of reference I can find meaning for myself within” said one of us. So what is the meaning we can find for our own point in history in Winchester? Finding it, it was suggested, will involve finding mechanisms to **“co-create the story of us.”**

Engaging storytelling needs layers. Emotional truth is found, like the resilience of bio-diversity, in richness – this is where life flourishes. What are the intersections of community around Winchester? Where “different things at different times happen together”? That is where we might make new things happen between people.

Here we began to develop strongly a basic flow of progress we think could help our sense of Ecology develop – connecting its assets, signalling its values, sharing its spaces and inviting celebrations of it.

“History provides a storytelling framework to look at issues”

“Winchester University was the only place doing anything in response to Black Lives Matter issues over the summer.”

“What stories do we want to tell of us now? Whose? And exploring what themes of our own times?”

Week 3 Blog extract:



“A city grows organically, responding to its ecological constraints and assets, but at a certain point, we start to overlay that form, adding layer upon layer of complexity.



“..800 years on from King Alfred and his people, we still suffer the same human ailments, have the same desires and needs, but the biggest difference between our community and his, is 800 years of human ‘progress’. It’s the countless layers of complexity in the form of technology, population growth and information overload which now pose a real threat to our basic human needs. There is no greater threat to this, than the most conspicuous legacy of that 800 years – the global climate crisis, and that is the one thing that unifies us all. So that must be, surely, the single point of focus for change in Winchester...”

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Co-creation – listening and celebrating events in crossover shared spaces.

As One Great Win has begun to illustrate, the process of collaboration and invitations to listen can empower community and change – giving the power of story to more people. If Ecology spaces, green or historic, can be safe shared spaces, events could be catalysts for connecting different cultures in those spaces. And the Climate Crisis could be our greatest shared campaign theme to get people talking.

HOW

Approach creative groups to commission artists to develop ideas for co-creation events – a podcast interview series linked to the wayfinding mechanism, or a pop-up creative show, a testimony night inviting different specific experiences of ancient Winchester’s landscape, climate action or “swap activities” days where groups from different sports teach each other skills.

WHERE and WHO

Identify cross-over spaces around Winchester, big or small, well known and super-local: Where is cultural mix already happening or most likely to happen with just a nudge? Cultural communities, artists and WCC wayfinding story team to plan.



“I guess maybe make it a bit more ecofriendly. There are not many cycle paths”

What would make you ride a bike more often around the city?

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Emma Levell

Family friendly (off road) cycling routes in and out of the city centre

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SECTION

4.

Recognition.

Is there a figure from history, anywhere in Winchester's timeline, whose story you would like to tell, because of how it illustrates a value or concern of yours today, looking forward? Of the few characters we discussed after setting this as part of our homework before our last session together, one stood out – Juliana, a washer woman of medieval times who took the city to court for common rights – and won.

If, in our concluding meeting, there was one sense of energy among us, it was that the principle of the working group process is the way to make a vision for the city. Collaborative, listening, empathetic. And symbolic of this hope is the spirit of: “returning the streets to the people – along with the natural environment.”

The process of building a more resilient future for anywhere will involve building a more inclusive one – bringing energies together more, and building trust, after all kinds of disconnections and separations. Trust is a key absence between groups in Winchester at the moment and it's perhaps the most significant reason so little moves on here – relationships aren't working well enough. Too many experiences, skills, realities are left out of the conversation and planning in the middle of life here. But in the collective challenge of bio-diversity loss, in the sheer scale of this problem linked to our human life habits, there may be clues and opportunities for doing things differently.

Just as nature needs us to listen to its ways of doing things more closely, such empathy is how we reach each other too. **As Quartz Magazine puts it: “Climate resilience will come from prioritizing humans — not what we've built.”** In that, the Ecology of Winchester is a rich resource all around us ready to inspire new stories of life here.



Group member personal notes

“Winchester City still looks at its purest form in terms of historical monuments and buildings and green spaces, which is the beauty of the city. **As Winchester is also a centre for the creative arts (having a good art community and art school), it would be great if we could involve these young artists and use their skills** (graffiti, painting posters...) for showcasing the message we wanted to spread about in public spaces and that could add value to the city to attract more youngsters and be an attraction for the social media users.”



Group member personal notes

“I'd like to live in a Winchester that puts the environment at the heart of every decision. A city that leads by example in embracing sustainable technologies, energy saving, pollution reduction and the promotion and creation of more wild spaces to promote biodiversity.

We need to look at creative ways to help do our bit to reduce the harm humanity is doing to the planet. It would be great to become an ‘Eco Hub’ for the South of England – even the UK. Why not aim to be Britain's greenest city? Net zero carbon etc.

To achieve all this, we need to foster conditions that allow for a more diverse culture; a more creative approach to problem solving; open-minded inclusive leadership/authorities; future-thinking leaders in the City / County Councils – people who aren't tied up in the ‘establishment’ and aren't scared to make bold decisions for the common good.

And last but definitely not least: A wind turbine on the top of King Alfred's Statue, a solar panel array on the roof of the Cathedral and a community-run organic allotment in Abbey Gardens please!”



Group member personal notes

“We need to ensure Winchester is returned to the people and that means ALL people. The city needs to show its dedication to recognising itself as a multi-cultural city that is welcoming of all. This takes transition but can be achieved, and one way is by hosting events at local green spaces. These promote inclusion and break down barriers between people. Sport, Music and Food for example all help to achieve this.

The City is small which means you are able to access its most iconic parts in a short period of time. Clear signage and better streets help people navigate the city and need to be improved, and entrances into the city need work. They fail to show a clear picture into what Winchester has, and fail to create an awareness of location or destination. But alongside these improvements it's also important to encourage the idea of “getting lost” due to the beautiful scenery and hidden gems that the city has to offer.

Creatives, Young people and young families need more. There isn't much for them to do in A city that they struggle to find a sense of purpose in already. Its rich history is appreciated but not a vocal point for them. “

“What struck me strongly as we started to wrap things up was not the strength, or otherwise, of our suggestions but more the power of the process.”

Week 4 Blog extract:



“What struck me strongly as we started to wrap things up was not the strength, or otherwise, of our suggestions but more the power of the process. A genuinely inclusive one, where all ideas and inputs were valued, assimilated, and iterated to move, step-by-step, towards some ideas that started to feel right for Winchester. The strength of the process, in getting to high quality and genuinely useful conversations, was in the skilled facilitation, and the cross-section of the community involved, plus their willingness to contribute in an open, non-entrenched way.”

“..My Winchester is a recognisably ‘green’, culturally diverse and historic city, with it's people at it's heart, and moving with the times...or at least I have faith it can be.”

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“Intersections are where we can meet, but if commitments to listening run out, trust is lost when people and projects move on.”

“Release the creative energy!”



Group member personal notes

“We need to return Winchester to the people – towns and cities developed because the roads were used to civic discourse, it's only very recent that they became monopolised by motor vehicles. Cars and roads are one of the biggest barriers to walking, giving people time to look about them, and appreciating the historic nature of the city.

We don't want another festival exactly, which consumes a lot of effort and money for little legacy. We could build on the Hat Fair – and the lack of by-laws against busking to **allocate an open space that people can use for all sorts of purposes, and this needs to be in the town centre and in an area that the Council wants to make more pedestrian-friendly, such as the Broadway.**



Ecology audit – making connections.

What work has already been done but not implemented?

Studies of walking routes and bio diversity need to be sourced and looked at with 2020 eyes, to see what could be folded into other development work here. The Bio Diversity Action Plan, for example, is a resource in line with WCC's firm aims to address the Climate Emergency but has been produced by a public body – what of it could yet be used and incorporated?

Another key question lies all around the city centre: What heritage and knowledge from the farming community is left disconnected from our current popular story of Winchester?

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