



Finalist's case study



Student's Union at Bournemouth University

Community Category Down by the River



Profile:

- Student's Union serving 18,000 Higher Education students
- Two expanding urban campuses in a rural county

About the project

Summary

Bournemouth University students have been leading a project to develop an educational resource for local people to enjoy and learn about the nature on their doorstep. The Students have facilitated educational sessions at the barn for families and young people. The students have used their expertise and knowledge taught to them through their degrees and applied this to working with our local community. With help from the RSBP, this project has developed into a valuable asset to the local community and the environment with strong potential for future development which includes the possibility of using the Kingfisher Barn as a base for a social prescription based approach to helping students suffering from mental health and wellbeing issues. The project has been a fine example of how students can impact Bournemouth and local people and families in a really positive way.

Project partners

- RSPB
- Bournemouth Borough Council

The results

The problem

Student engagement with the local Bournemouth Community- Students often have a bad reputation within the local community for making a mess and lots of noise. Students can benefit from contact with the local community especially when it comes to knowledge sharing.

The approach

The Kingfisher Barn was developed as an educational resource for the local community to use. Lead by student volunteers and volunteers from the local Bournemouth community. The students were able to use the knowledge they have gained by the teaching on their courses to inspire and enthuse the local community about wildlife and nature.



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Our goals

- To connect the students to the local Bournemouth Community
- To connect the local community to the local wildlife and nature of Bournemouth
- To connect people with place and history
- To create a long lasting partnership with the RSPB
- To give the students practical and valuable experience they can take into their future workplace

Obstacles and solutions

Retention and engagement of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have been passionate and dedicated to the project- this is mainly because they were given freedom to grow and develop their skills with support from the RSPB. Students have felt empowered to help out at the barn and this led to them taking more of a lead in running and coordinating events.
Support from the RSPB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the dedication of the student volunteers the RSPB has been happy to help develop and create this project with them. Often charities can struggle to support students in their volunteering but the right contact and obvious benefits to the charity can really help with project creation and development.
Local Community support and attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the course of the project the area has gone from being used by dog walkers mainly to lots of the community coming to experience and enjoy the area and the activities and events the students have hosted there- once the community experience the events they often come back for other events hosted by the students.

Performance and results

Quote from Tom Clarke- Project Development Manager for the RSPB has said-

'Over the past 4 years I have had the pleasure of developing an excellent working relationship with a number of students from Bournemouth University.

We have worked together to develop high quality volunteering opportunities that allow students to shape their volunteering experience, actively conserving nature spaces or providing quality formal and informal education activities that inspire people about the magnificent natural environment of Bournemouth and Poole.

As a group and resources they have been fundamental in creating and delivering the Exploring the Stour Heritage Lottery Fund project. This has been a two year project to create a visitor hub for the River Stour in Muscliff, North Bournemouth. They were involved in creating the activity plan, and have delivered many of the events and activities at the newly created Kingfisher Barn. They have been



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keen to take responsibility - so much so that every Sunday events are delivered solely by BU students. This is exceptional.

It has been a pleasure working with so many motivated, talented, committed and imaginative individuals. This rubs off on the projects that we deliver - creating a youthful feel, which is very engaging to non-students.

We wouldn't have delivered what we have done so far in the local area, without their support. I really look forward to continuing the relationship in the coming years and delivering some exciting pioneering student led projects in the future.'

The future

Lessons learned

- Inspiring students and giving them their own space to develop a project leads to an increased retention and growth of student volunteers.
- Working with other charities and community partners is beneficial to the students, the community and the other local charities involved.
- Giving the students the opportunity to share their knowledge learnt from academics at BU with the local Bournemouth community has made the students grow in confidence and have a big impact on the wider community.

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

1. Partnership Working- links between the students and the RSPB have been really important throughout the project and have led to its overall success.
2. Student Engagement with the local Community- improving Student/Community Relations.
3. Empowerment of students- equipping students with the tools to do their own projects and be leaders.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Ebony Harding Vice President of Community for SUBU said- "It means so much for SUBU, Bournemouth University and all the students who have been involved in this project, to be listed as a finalist in the Green Gown awards. The project at the Kingfisher barn, relates to all of our Student Union values in different ways, but most specifically, being ethical and environmental in all activities. The students have been able to pass the knowledge and values they have learnt at BU on to the local community; this showing people that students do have a real benefit in creating and shaping the ideal community we want to live in for Bournemouth."

Further information

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