



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Outdoor Toddler group relaunches for autumn**

Popular outdoor play events are back in East Lancashire woodlands, thanks to the relaunch of Little Saplings.

Little Saplings is a free toddler group that encourages little ones, and their carers, to have fun in the woods.

Run in partnership with the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership, the events are fully funded by the educational charity The Ernest Cook Trust. The fortnightly sessions, are now back at Nelson's Victoria Park and Spring Wood in Whalley, after their summer break.

"It's a joy to watch young'uns pick up their first worm, support them in creating bird feeders or provide them with the skills to build a mini den," said Alison Cross, The Ernest Cook Trust's Outdoor Learning Officer.

"I managed to deliver eight Little Sapling sessions earlier in the year, with reduced capacity and limited kit, to keep everyone safe as we all emerged from the restrictions. It is wonderful to now relaunch the events for the autumn."

The sessions hope to inspire families to get outside and reconnect with nature, plus learn different activities that they can recreate with their family back at home. Since Little Saplings started in September 2018, Alison has worked with more than 300 children and their parents and carers.

The activities are suited to children from 18 months to five years old, but all ages are welcome.

At the heart of each session is wild play. Alison is a Forest School practitioner and has recently undertaken further training in therapeutic outdoor play. This means the sessions are delivered with the Forest School ethos, so all activities are child-led.

Volunteers and Alison are always on hand to demonstrate crafts and activities, but parents are encouraged to watch their children at a safe distance and interact when necessary, allowing children to discover their environment independently.

Alison added: "This allows toddlers to develop their self-esteem and confidence by learning through experience within a woodland setting. These sensory exploring sessions are vitally important to children's development. My motto is to always go at your child's pace as everyone is different and will interact in new environments in their own way."

The toddler events take place most second and fourth Wednesdays throughout the year. Booking is essential via the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership website <https://www.pendlehillproject.com/little-saplings>.

Each session has a different theme, ranging from birds, to hedgehogs, and even stories such as Superworm and We're Going On A Bear Hunt.

"It has been wonderful to see a return of my regular families and new families to the woods. At the sessions, we will continue to use this best practice and our Covid Risk Assessment. Families can have peace of mind that they are attending an event with Government and Public Health England guidance in place."

If you would like to find out more about Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership family events, then get in touch with the team at [www.pendlehillproject.com/whats-on](http://www.pendlehillproject.com/whats-on) or email [PendleHill@ernestcooktrust.org.uk](mailto:PendleHill@ernestcooktrust.org.uk).

The Ernest Cook Trust is a UK-wide educational charity, creating outdoor experiences for children and young people. A landowner in five counties, it runs education programmes on its own estates, as well as with partners' estates, and offers grants for land-based learning activities.

The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership project is supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund, as part of the four year Landscape Partnership, led by the Forest of Bowland AONB. The scheme is made up of a dozen projects which safeguard the area's wildlife and heritage and improve people's access to this popular countryside area. Little Saplings is one of many community projects that are being delivered by the team. During the project, the team hopes to inspire a new generation about heritage, while engaging with more people from a wider range of communities.



*Toddler hunts for bugs in the woods at Little Saplings*



*Making wildflower pots to take home*



*Toasting marshmallows over the fire*



*Making mud pies and leaf soup in the woods.*



*Making hedgehogs out of clay*



*Families build dens in the woods*

## EDITORS NOTES

- The Pendle Hill landscape partnership is led by the Forest of Bowland AONB.
- The partnership aims to:
  - I. restore, enhance and conserve the heritage and landscape of Pendle Hill
  - II. reconnect people with their past and their landscape
  - III. bring the two sides of the hill together
  - IV. create a sustainable future for the environment, heritage and for visitors' experience of Pendle Hill
- The scheme was awarded a National Lottery grant of £1.8million by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in January 2018. These funds will be delivered from 2018-2022 and will be matched with a further £1m raised locally.

- The scheme is made up of a dozen projects which safeguard the area's wildlife and heritage and improve people's access to this popular countryside area. We will do this by providing opportunities for training and volunteering; by supporting research and devising creative and digital interpretation to inspire a new generation about our heritage; by restoring important landscape features, and by working with communities to re-tell the stories of radical Pendle people. The scheme will increase pride in this special place and raise aspirations amongst communities, and it will bring in new investment to support the environment and the economy.
- The Pendle Hill landscape partnership is supported by National Lottery players through the Heritage Fund and by the Forest of Bowland AONB. Partners include representatives of parish councils, the landowning and farming community, Pendle and Ribble Valley Borough Councils, Lancashire County Council, statutory bodies, tourism businesses and volunteers.
- Projects will be delivered by the AONB team, plus local delivery partners including In –Situ Arts, the Dry Stone Walling Association, Mid Pennine Arts and Ribble Rivers Trust.
- The Pendle Hill LP covers 120 square kilometres, stretching from Gisburn down to Whalley, and from Clitheroe across to Nelson and Padiham.
- The Hill is well known as a beauty spot and is heavily visited by residents of the local towns: it is a perfect place for walking and cycling. The area's heritage is dominated by the story of the Pendle Witches, but there are lots more stories to tell including the founding of the Quaker movement, non- conformists and radicals, Roman and Bronze Age settlers, medieval farming systems and early industrial developments. The network of dry stone walls and hedgerows give the area a distinctive feel, and the landscape is also important for its wild moorland, rare birds and woodlands.
- For further information contact the LP Scheme Manager [cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.hopley@lancashire.gov.uk) on 07891 537835 / 01200 420420
- Visit the project website at [www.pendlehillproject.com](http://www.pendlehillproject.com) or visit our Facebook page 'Pendle Hill Project' for up to date news and views.

#### About the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk)

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