

Wild Gathering

People struggling with their physical and mental health are enjoying the benefits of spending time in nature, thanks to funding from Worthing Borough Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Neighbourhood Fund.

Community interest company Wild Gathering, which was started in the pandemic by Kate Drake and Siân Jones, was awarded £7,548 to run a year-long programme of nature-based activities across Worthing for people with mental and physical health conditions, those struggling with loneliness and isolation or who just want to get outdoors and meet new people.

Last month (February 2024) saw the latest walk take place at Honeysuckle Lane Green Space (also known as The Sanctuary) at High Salvington. Participants were encouraged to slowly and mindfully walk through the woodland, taking notice of the flora and fauna and sights, sounds and smells.

The walks generally attract up to 10 people and at the end of each one, Kate and Siân ask everyone to come up with some words or phrases to summarise the walk, which they quickly turn into an on-the-spot poem.



Co-founder Kate said: “Being outside gives people the chance to slow down and take time out from their busy lives and tune into all five senses. We ask how people are feeling at the start and end of each walk, and there is always a positive shift.

“One of the really positive outcomes of this project so far has been that it has given people the opportunity to build friendships and carry on meeting each other for walks as well as get to know us and feel comfortable enough to take part in some of our other workshops and programmes.”

Wild Gathering works with West Sussex Mind, carers and social prescribers in Worthing to deliver its programme of workshops and events, but people can also contract them directly to take part.

They will also be hosting a series of seasonal workshops from a yurt at Maybridge Keystone Centre in Goring and are set to publish a book of the poems created at the end of each walk later this year.

Cllr Rosey Whorlow, Worthing’s cabinet member for community wellbeing, said: “We are extremely lucky to be surrounded by so many beautiful green spaces in and around Worthing, but accessing them can sometimes be a challenge for people with physical and mental health conditions. That’s why groups like Wild Gathering are so important and why we’re glad to help them support more people to enjoy the outdoors this year.”

Visit <https://www.wildgathering.co.uk/> or email wildgathering@yahoo.com to find out more. The group aims to make all of its activities accessible and is able to meet with people on a one-to-one basis if they are feeling anxious about joining a group setting straight away.