

Recovery through Nature

John Deeney – Recovery through Nature Scotland



Back to Nature...

- RtN takes service users/peer mentors/mentees out into nature rich settings to engage them in practical conservation work as part of a therapeutic team
- Away from our usual treatment settings and into a natural, outdoor environment
- Groups go out 1 day a week, and engage for about 12 weeks.
- Available to both residential and community groups
- Participation is voluntary
- Recovery through Nature is about engaging with the earth physically, as well as spiritually.



“Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees... while cares drop off like autumn leaves” John Muir, 1900.

- ❑ Very pure therapeutic intervention
- ❑ It takes the Therapeutic Community outside
- ❑ Genuine conservation work is done
- ❑ The wilder the place, the better...

Beautiful yet often alien places

- ❑ Everyone benefits- Service Users, our partners, the local community and Phoenix Futures



Back to Nature...

- Academically underpinned-
 - 'Back to our roots' (Wilson, 1984) - *'Humans have an innate affiliation with nature'*
 - Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984) - *'Interacting with nature is good for us and has healing qualities'*
 - Ulrich, 1984; Kaplan, 1995; Clinebell, 1996; MIND, 2007; NHS, 2013 - ***natural therapeutic environments facilitate restoration and recovery***

...Nature is known to have healing and restorative qualities

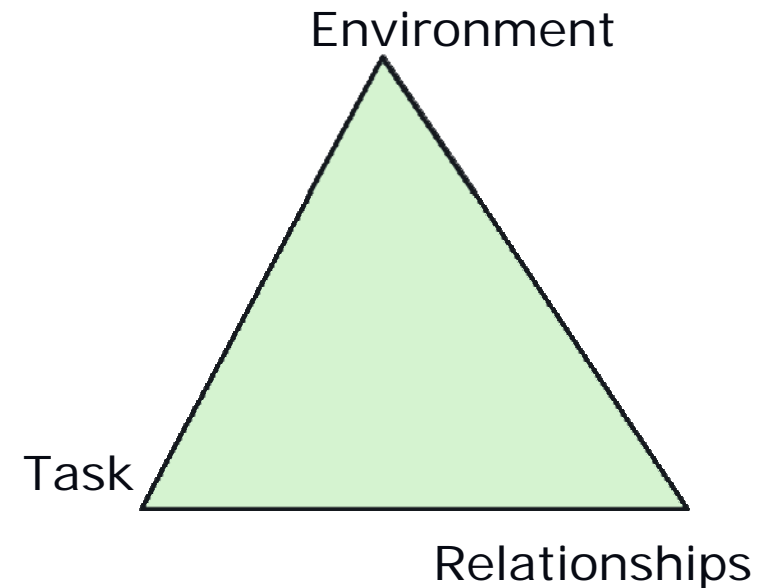


“...between every two pines is a doorway to a new world...” John Muir, 1911.

Theoretical Model

Hall, 2003

- **Task** – producing something positive, visible and permanent
- **Environment** – working in nature rich settings
- **Relationships** – team working away from traditional settings
- Service users place themselves within this model. One factor may be more influential for a person than another
- It is powerful in the way it works to increase both self esteem and confidence. It enhances people’s belief in their ability to change





Partnership Working

- Partnerships are fundamental to the success of RtN
- We work with **national conservation agencies** and **many local ones...**
- *John Muir Trust, RSPB, Forestry Commission Scotland, North Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Council*
- We **shape ourselves** around our partners and work in-line with their management plans. We want to be of benefit to our partners, not a hindrance.



Gerry McAuley - Area Reserves Manager, Strathclyde & Ayrshire Reserves

“RSPB’s on going partnership with Phoenix Futures is a perfect fit with our social inclusion policy which promotes opportunities to connect with nature in a way that is accessible to as wide an audience as possible. At participating reserves an incredible amount of work has been undertaken by Phoenix Futures service users making a huge contribution to biodiversity and a healthy environment rich in wildlife. Their commitment to assisting us with work on our reserves has been both invaluable and rewarding in equal measure”.

- It underpins the fact that we are making a genuine difference to the environment.



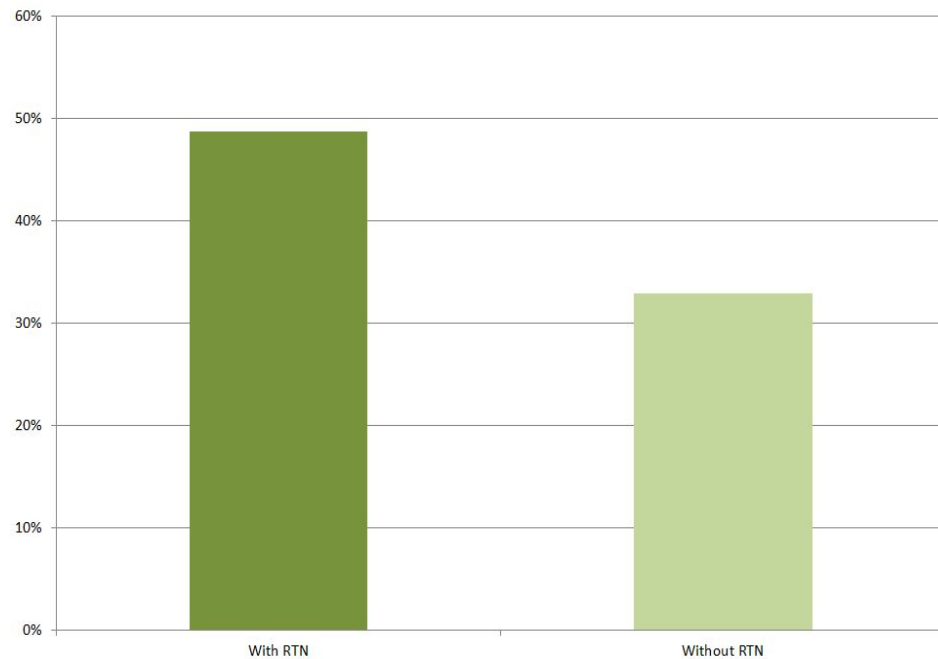
Outcomes...

2011-2012- 385 participated

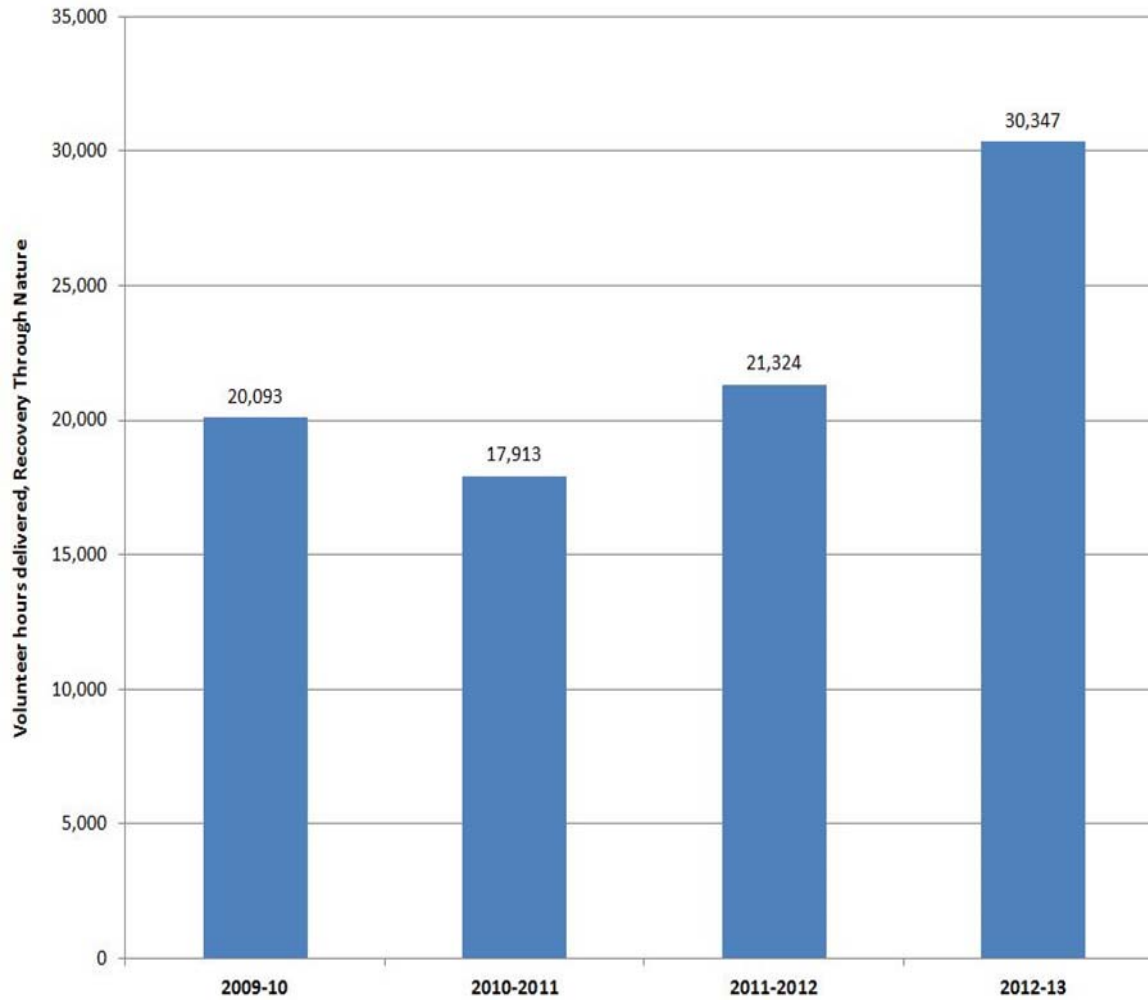
2012- 2013- 467 participated

2012-2013 – 48% increase in completions

Average **56% improvement in retention** for the last 4 years for RTN clients, compared to those who didn't do RTN



Outcomes...



**30,000
volunteer
hours were
delivered to
our local
communities.**



Outcomes ...

John- "its **therapy by stealth**"

Paul - "RtN helps you **reconnect** with something that is **healthy** and **natural**"



The natural step forward....

RtN is a lot of work and needs the right partnerships:

On a practical level it's about carrying out work that wouldn't normally get done. Managing natural habitats, working on paths, recording what's out there, etc. But it goes beyond the practical. Way beyond. Being outdoors begins to work on the service users. They relax, they feel more comfortable and things happen. Laughter, discovery, fitness, learning and a sense of pride, identity and ownership all emerge. Attitudes change, service users become more aware of the importance of the environment. The public we meet, and also work alongside, gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding addiction. It really is a win-win situation.

Mike Brady – South Lanarkshire Council



Thank you

