



Young people in South Derbyshire encouraged to reconnect with nature during pandemic in new project funded by a National Forest Arts Grant

Young people from Melbourne and the surrounding area are invited to share their experiences of nature during lockdown as part of a new poetry project organised by Arts Melbourne.

Launching this February, the project 'Whispers From The Woods', made possible through support from the National Forest Company as part of the new Arts Grant initiative, will see the creation of a new poetry woodland art trail through Melbourne and surrounding woodlands, comprising of lines of text written by young people, summing up their experiences of interacting with nature in the National Forest during the Coronavirus lockdowns of 2020 and 2021.

A survey commissioned by youngminds.org.uk in summer 2020, found that 80% of children and young adults asked agreed the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse, with an increase in anxiety and feelings of isolation. Regular interaction with nature and the arts can help support positive mental health and wellbeing. 'Whispers from The Woods' aims to facilitate opportunities for young people to share their experiences of lockdown in a safe and supportive way while exploring the benefits of interacting with the natural world.

Lines submitted to the project will form the base of a poem, which will run the length of the trail, curated by Dan Webber, an award-winning LGBTQ+ poet and producer based in Derby, whose previous works include commissions for Coventry Pride, SHOUT Festival, Birmingham and Derby Feste.

When asked about the project, Arts Melbourne & Melbourne Festival Director Sharon Brown said: "Young people have had their lives turned upside down for most of the last year, regular trips to local cities have been replaced with walks in the National Forest, slowing down and rediscovering the joys of being outdoors in constantly changing countryside. We want to encourage young people to share their experiences with us, and for members of the public who frequently walk through the woodlands, and those who don't, to rediscover and reconnect with nature on their doorstep."

Submissions to the project are open to young people aged 25 and under based in South Derbyshire, all submissions must be sent via email to info@melbournefestival.co.uk before 5pm on Friday 30th April 2021.

For more information on the project please visit the Melbourne Festival website www.melbournefestival.co.uk or email info@melbournefestival.co.uk

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