

Introducing our 2024-2025

HARDLY REACHED COMMUNITY REPORT



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Contents

Introduction	3
A glance at numbers	4
Our work so far	5
The Purposeful Adventure Fund	6
What's next?	7
Strategic Outcomes	8
Case Studies	9
Support new adventurers	12

Introduction

Protecting our wild places isn't a solo adventure; **it's a team effort**. As an organisation, Trash Free Trails cannot solve the single-use pollution (SUP) problem alone. Not only because of the sheer quantity in the environment, but also because **every trail location and community is different**.

We call this approach '**going smallnormous**'. Our small HQ team works alongside the **A-TEAM** and **Community Hubs** to bring trail cleans and nature connection to local areas in ways that work for the people who live there.

As an organisation we live by our values, and '**Everyone is Welcomed**' is one we hold close across all of our projects. Communities often labelled "hard to reach" are not difficult to engage – they are simply **Hardly Reached**. The term "hard to reach" places responsibility on communities rather than on the systems that have historically underfunded, ignored or excluded them.

Instead, we focus on **trust-building, local leadership and long-term engagement**, rather than one-off outreach approaches. Through our Community Hubs, TFT equips local leaders with resources to engage Hardly Reached Communities in ways that reflect local needs and lived experience. This locally led approach recognises that inclusion is context-specific and must be shaped by the **communities themselves**.

This report explores what we've achieved so far using this approach, highlights what we're learning through delivery, and looks ahead to how, through **The Purposeful Adventure Fund**, we can **bring trails to everyone**.



A glance at numbers

52

Trail Cleans
hosted

13,749

items of single-use
pollution removed

239km

of trails cleaned

549

individuals reached

Our work so far

2024 was a landmark year for Trash Free Trails and our Community Hubs. Funding from the European Outdoor Conservation Association x The North Face and the Hydro Flask Parks For All Foundation enabled us to establish mini TFT HQs across the country.

It was during this year our work with Hardly Reached Communities **became a core focus**. Working initially with ten hubs, we delivered a programme of trail cleans with their communities, with three locations continuing activity beyond the initial funding period.

Central to this work has been **co-creation** with community leaders. By working closely with organisations rooted in their communities, we've been able to understand what support is needed and adapt our approach to ensure activities are **relevant and accessible**.

We continue to embrace a **learning-by-doing** mindset. What works for one community doesn't always work for another. In some cases, introducing a Trash Count before a trail clean helped participants first **notice and understand** the issue of pollution in their local environment - turning **awareness into action**.

The next question to ask ourselves was **'How do we make this work sustainable?'** Enter, the **Purposeful Adventure Fund**.



The Purposeful Adventure Fund



The Purposeful Adventure Fund is open to receive donations from individuals, organisations and anyone who wishes to support **first-time adventurers** to visit trails and discover new places to love. Money goes directly to help provide **life-changing** Purposeful Adventures for individuals who may be experiencing disconnection from nature due to systemic social or financial barriers, or could be considered Hardly Reached by other similar offerings.

To retain our commitment to remove barriers to participation for **Hardly Reached Communities** there are no lengthy application processes or laborious reporting forms to fill in. Instead we **co-create** a programme of delivery, agree **simple tracking metrics** and collect case studies to track impact with all stakeholders in mind - **not just those that matter to Trash Free Trails.**

What's next?

Thanks to **Moondance Foundation** we're able to further this work **beyond Hardly Reached Communities** - we call these **Connection Cleans**. This will see multiple groups, communities and individuals come together for trail cleans centred on shared experience, building relationships and celebrating voluntary work together. We're bridging the gap between community groups to experience trails together. Learning from one another and integrating beyond ways they have done so before. These moments will help us to deliver on our EDI strategy coming later this year.

We're often reminded **we're not perfect**. Far from it. We know we need to do more to **increase representation** within our communications to invite and encourage **Hardly Reached Communities** and individuals to attend trail cleans outside of organised programmes more regularly. **We're committed to delivering on this.**

We realise we have an opportunity to integrate this work **beyond individual projects** and for it to become the fabric of our work entirely. Where every **project, every trail clean, every Citizen Science Expedition, every Trash Free Race** has representation from **Hardly Reached Communities**. There will be a time when these words fall from our vocabulary. There is no **Hardly Reached** because everyone is there, together. **Everyone has been welcomed and they stay for a while.**

It's through our **partner network** that we'll be able to make this a reality with **increased funds to break down barriers**. Transport, accommodation, equipment and local-qualified guides are just some of the ways we work to bring communities together for trail cleaning. It is the connections beyond TFT HQ, within the **A-TEAM and Community Hubs**, we are able to capitalise on the information, inspiration and tools we provide to bring **Hardly Reached Communities** into the spaces **we love and connect to so regularly.**



Strategic Outcomes

Our work with the **A-TEAM** and **Community Hubs** directly serve:

#1 Strategic Objective - 'Empower and enable community led, environmental stewardship of our trails and wild places'

This programme also moves us closer to **Theory of Change Outcomes**:

#1 Connected Communities – Building an independently active community that values and takes action to enhance trails.

#6 'Everyone is Welcomed – Ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, particularly among marginalized communities.'

'**Community led**' is the most important part of this objective. It isn't Trash Free Trails who are leading the charge; it's the **grassroots community**. It's only through collaboration and ensuring we **leave a legacy, together**, that we're able to move toward achieving our mission through this objective.

Case Studies

Adventure Tours UK

Adventure Tours UK are a specialist travel company who organise immersive and authentic active travel holidays within the UK. For founder Claire, it was a **no-brainer** to host trail cleans work alongside **Ethnic Minorities Youth Support Team (EYST)** to bring families and young people from **Wrexham to the trails in North Wales**.

This was **more than** just trail cleaning. For many of those from EYST it was the **first time** they'd set foot into the Welsh hills, despite being a stone's throw from their homes. Through this collaboration, powered by the Purposeful Adventure Fund, Adventure Tours UK have worked with nearly **100 people** across two years.

“Yes, we’re cleaning trails, improving the quality of our environment and contributing to TFT's data collection through the SoOT Research Programme. But we’re also nurturing personal growth and community connection in the next generation.”
- Claire Copeman



#6 ‘Everyone is Welcomed – providing opportunities, reducing barriers, improving representation



Pedal Progression

Pedal Progression is a mountain bike hire and skills company, situated on the outskirts of Bristol; they get people rolling 7 days a week. As **champions** of all things two wheels **their energy for being outside is incomparable.**

Ollie C has always been **passionate** about working with young people **disengaged from education.** When the time came it was only natural that he collaborated with us to bring trail cleaning to these groups of individuals.

During week one, he recalls nature connection activities being met by **bemusement** but as the weeks progressed participants began looking for the pause points and **stopping themselves**, taking photos of nature and **enjoying the chance to appreciate it.**

“What we were delivering and engaging these young people with was working. They were now being active stewards of our wild places, totally under their own steam.”
- Ollie Cain



#6 ‘Everyone is Welcomed –
providing opportunities, reducing
barriers, improving representation



Young Gloucestershire

Young Gloucestershire is a charity that works with young people who aren't in education, training or employment on the **King's Trust Programme**.

Kevin has been bringing trail cleaning to his team sessions to help young people feel a sense of **connection** to people and place during their programme. Taking part in physical activity and **environmental stewardship** has seen groups clean their local trails and also volunteer with TFT HQ at the **Malverns Classic**.

We noticed the difference in young people's **confidence and self esteem** within a matter of **hours**. They joined us as shy, reserved individuals and left with a sense of **achievement and willingness** to interact with members of the public.

“The Malverns was a massive opportunity for our young people to test themselves and grow as individuals.”
- Kev Mannion



#1 Connected Communities – bringing communities together, creating a culture of trail cleaning

Support new adventurers



There are a number of ways to support our work:

Donate to the Purposeful Adventure Fund

Your money goes directly to supporting people access the outdoors. £25.00 will enable one person to complete a 'Connection Clean' who has never done so before.

Pay your kit forward

By sending us your old, still usable, equipment means it will find it's way to those who need it most.

Find your local Community Hub

Head down to your local Community Hub to lend a hand.

Find your local A-TEAMer

A-TEAMers love to talk trash and are always up for a hand with hosting trail cleans.

Contact Leigh on leigh@trashfreetrails.org for further information.



“It might not connect now, and it might take until they’re 25, but they’ll look back on these sessions and remember the guy from Ashton Court that taught them about nature connection, the switch will flip, that’ll be it. Finally, they’ll get it. It’s about planting the seed and providing the opportunity for them to engage.”

Ollie Cain - Pedal Progression



DONATE HERE.

Everyone is Welcomed

As an organisation we live by our values. 'Everyone is Welcomed' is one we hold close, in all of our projects.

Communities often labelled “**hard to reach**” are not difficult to engage; it just doesn't **happen often**, as such they are **Hardly Reached**. 'Hard to reach' places responsibility on communities rather than on the systems that have historically underfunded, ignored or excluded them. This mirrors how responsibility for single-use pollution is often shifted onto individuals rather than producers. We **reject** this framing and recognise that meaningful engagement requires **trust, representation and sustained presence**.

We focus on **trust-building, local leadership and long-term engagement** rather than one-off or universal outreach approaches.

Rather than delivering a single moment, TFT equips **Community Hubs** with resources to engage **Hardly Reached Communities** in ways that reflect local needs and lived experience. This locally led approach recognises that inclusion is context-specific and must be shaped by the **communities themselves**.





SIMON LONG - HARCLIFFE BMX

Co-creation of delivery

Without working with community leaders within the heart of **Hardly Reached Communities** this project would not have been as successful, **nor would it continue**. Understanding what is needed, how best we can support and adjusting ways of working to facilitate success is how we've been able to bring so many people together through the act of **trail cleaning and outdoor physical activity**.

Learning by doing

What may work with one community group, doesn't always work with another. Recognising this and being prepared for it makes this work possible. We knew quickly that for some groups, going straight for a trail clean **wasn't the best approach** and so incorporating a **Trash Count** into the programme of delivery was important. This enabled groups to notice trash, feel something and then turn that **feeling into action**.

A shared responsibility



Shared Responsibility is something **we live and breathe** at Trash Free Trails. It's the same with **Hardly Reached Communities** - we all have a role to play and we mustn't **underestimate its importance**.

This has been the essence of going smallnormous from the outset, **Purposeful Adventure Friendly Places** was about going the extra mile to make people welcome, helping out within the community and on the trails. In many ways, **Community Hubs** are no different, they still embody the friendly nature and **welcoming smile** of Trash Free Trails.

Our partners and those who donate to the **Purposeful Adventure Fund** share responsibility in making this work possible, **Community Hubs** have the lion share of ensuring those from **Hardly Reached Communities** access these spaces. Our **institutions** along with **individuals** of all shapes and sizes **share responsibility** in this work being required in the first place. We all have a responsibility in doing the work so we no longer have to.

Now, we're not suggesting you **donate your life savings**, (though you can if you wish!) all we're asking is that you **pledge to share this responsibility**, do more to bring folks within your community who have reduced access to the places you love. **Share your knowledge, pay your old kit forward, pack an extra sandwich, together we can make Hardly Reached, Reached.**

