

Youth Environmental Service

**Draft concept
overview**

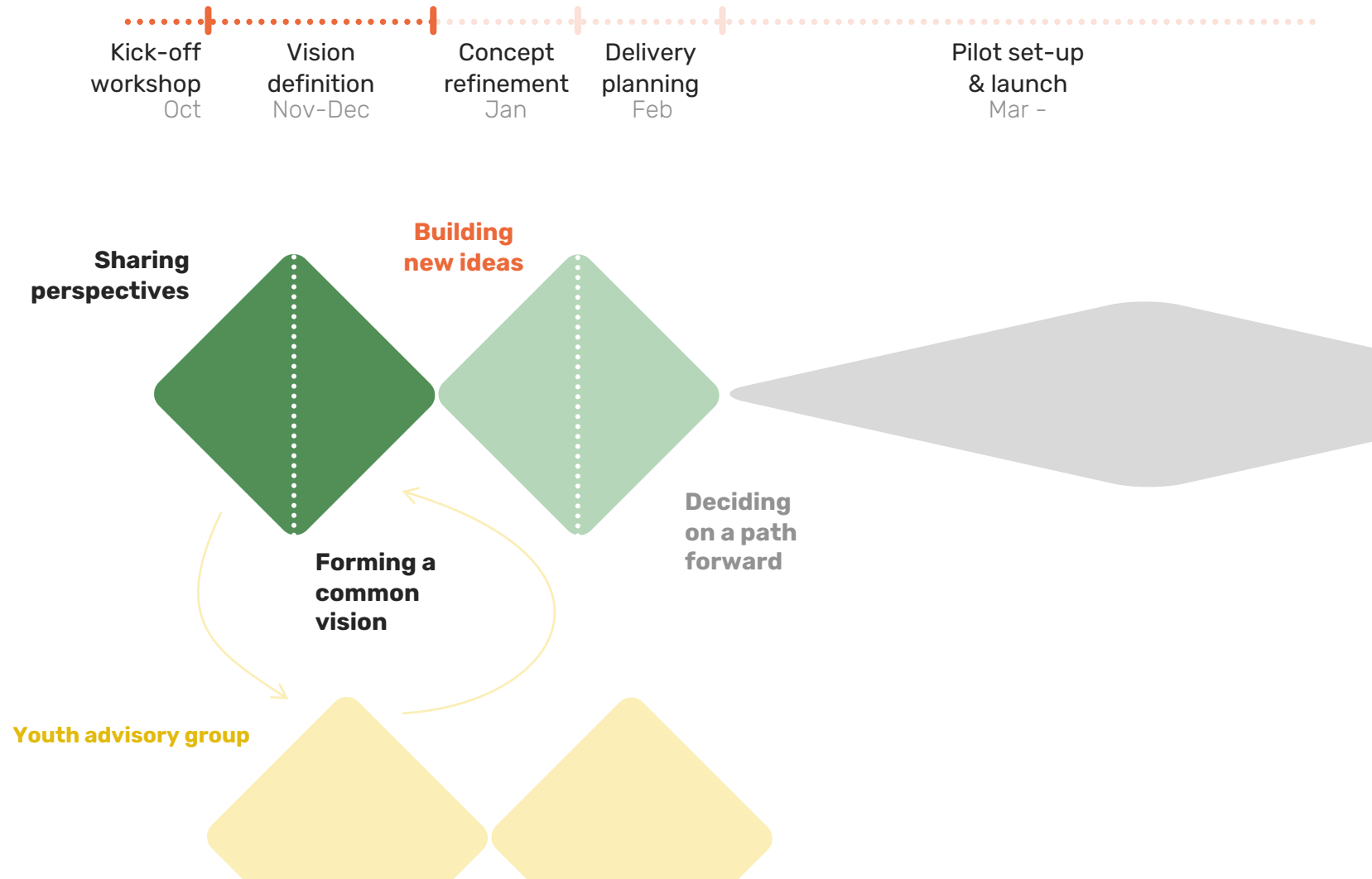
WHERE WE ARE IN THE PROCESS

We've now progressed through the first 'diamond' in the co-design process, and are moving into the second diamond.

We've collectively agreed on what problem YES should be solving, the values we want to prioritise, a mission, and now have developed a single vision for what the programme could look like.

From here we'll be expanding our horizons back out, exploring what could be included within that vision and how it might be delivered, refining the idea until we have scoped something that combines desirability, feasibility and viability across all stages in the experience.

The following slides detail the decisions we've made so far, and lay out the next steps for building out our vision and deciding on the path to implementing it.



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite overwhelming calls for more action on the ground, the UK still lacks the funding, skills, and capacity needed to deliver on its ambitious green agenda.

For young people, our collective failure to act now leaves them facing an environmental catastrophe that will dominate the rest of their lives.

They want to be part of the solution, but opportunities are scarce, and they remain sceptical of their ability to affect real change at any scale.

The next generation need hands on work opportunities where they can build the knowledge, practical skills, and confidence to become effective green leaders.

CONTEXT FOR THE PROBLEM

KEY USERS

School & university leavers, 18-25, with an interest in the environment.

In particular we would be looking to help:

- Those from under-represented backgrounds (socioeconomic or ethnic) who feel like they don't belong in the environmental movement
- Those who are actively struggling with eco-anxiety, but have been unable to access opportunities to work on nature-based solutions

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Environmental organisations
- Farmers and landowners
- Energy businesses
- Homebuilders
- Local authorities
- Healthcare providers
- Community groups

WHAT DO THEY NEED

- Inclusive & accessible routes into meaningful environmental work
- Hands-on training to equip them with a diverse set of skills and knowledge across the environmental system
- Projects where they can have an immediate and tangible impact working in natural spaces
- Greater agency over their immediate and longer-term futures

BARRIERS

- Funding still constrained, focused on immediate environmental impacts
- Stretched organisations unable to properly facilitate knowledge transfer
- Siloed activity at risk of working against, not within, the *whole* system

EXISTING SOLUTIONS

- Locally-driven trainee schemes to engage and equip target groups
[BBC WT - Natural Prospects](#)
- Centrally funded youth employment schemes
[Kickstart](#) + [Race for Nature](#)
- Nationally coordinated environmental apprenticeships
[Countryside Worker apprenticeship](#)

ORGANISATION VALUES

Youth led

Both in its design and implementation, the Youth Environmental Service needs to be fundamentally youth led. This means ensuring young people have a seat at the table in all design discussions, and YES empowers them to drive the kinds of change they want to see in the world.

Collaborative & network-led

As an organisation we cannot function without leaning into the wider environmental network. Collaboration should be at the heart of how we operate and YES needs to embrace a networked model that utilises expertise from a range of public, private, and charitable organisations.

Inclusive, diverse and accessible

YES should be an actively open and inclusive organisation from the beginning - it needs to welcome and reflect the diversity in the UK that makes us stronger, embracing the benefits of different voices and different perspectives.

Empowering tomorrow's leaders

We need to make sure that the experience creates a new generation of confident, capable and passionate environmentalists. Participants should be empowered to go on and create positive change in their personal lives, their communities, and across wider society.

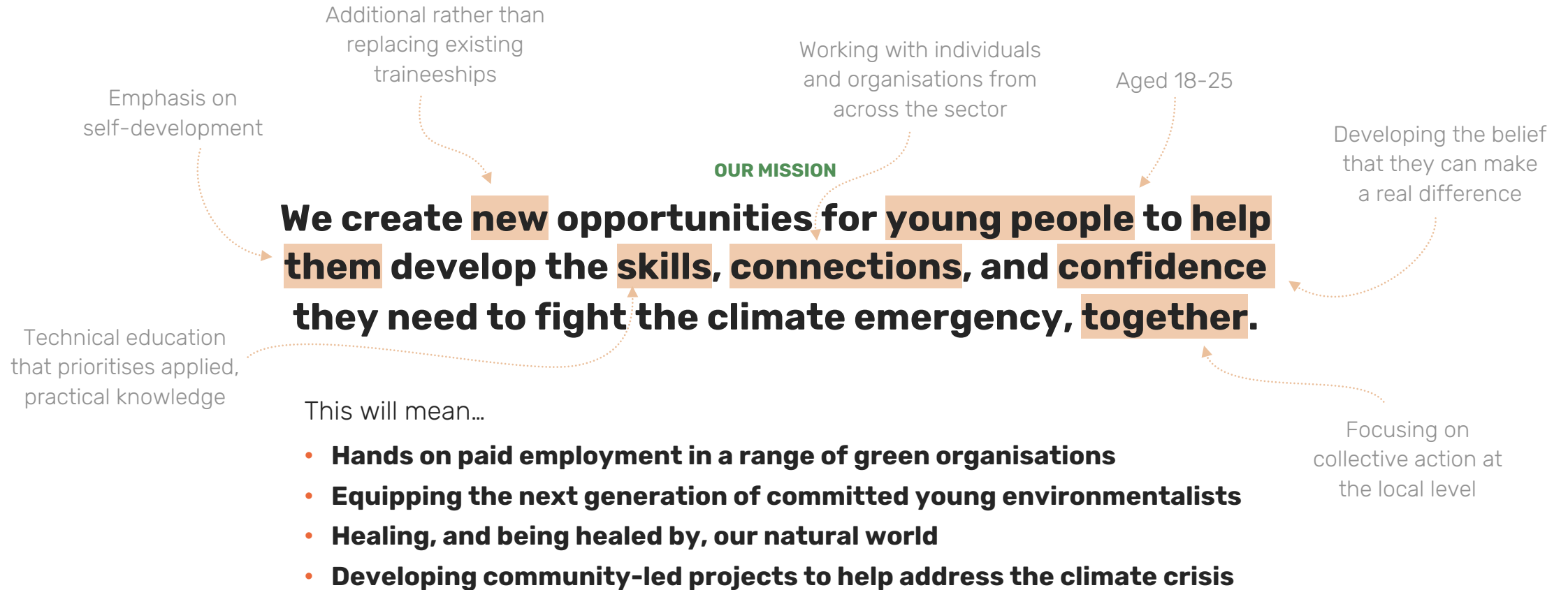
Grounded in science

All YES projects need to be environmentally driven and scientifically informed. They should be focused on using the right tools and the right times to address both the environmental and biodiversity crises facing our country.

Inspirational

YES should offer a powerful new positive story of collective action in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity.

In the same way that 'blitz spirit' is talked about today, YES should offer current and future generations a clear example of the power of collective action to make an impact.



OUR VISION

The Youth Environmental Service will be a paid one-year work opportunity for young people at different nature-focused environmental organisations in the Midlands.

They will be able to combine practical hands-on work experience across different roles at their host organisation with technical outdoor training.

And they will be able to connect and learn from one another, through work experience swaps and group projects focused on creating new community-led initiatives.

KEY FEATURES

- **Primary work placement** hosted by an organisation in the nature-based environmental sector, with the opportunity to work in at least two roles over the year.
- Application process centred around **personality match and enthusiasm over experience** – video submissions + taster days instead of CV + interview.
- **Tailored training and coaching** programme based on individual priorities and needs.
- **Work experience swaps**, where participants can host one another for up to a week to share knowledge and connections across different organisations.
- **Optional environmental innovation pathway**, where participants can spend up to three months working on a team to drive new green projects for their local community.
- An **alumni network** with ongoing events and engagement to allow programme graduates to stay connected and continue to support one another.

WHO IT WOULD BE FOR

- School leavers, university graduates or early career switchers looking for a first foot in the door in the sector.
- Members of disadvantaged and under-represented communities in the region (for the Midlands this would primarily be working class white & South Asian communities)

TARGET OUTCOMES

- Technical expertise that would support access to entry-level jobs in the environmental sector
- Connections to employers and organisations across the region
- Understanding of the wider system to support holistic interventions
- Ability to manage themselves effectively in a working environment
- Confidence in engaging with others, specifically volunteers, to support and/or lead positive environmental action

USER EXPERIENCE
Entice

What triggers participants to want to sign up for the Youth Environmental Service?


Enter

What are the initial entry steps before participants can start work?


**Key step
(+ owner)**
1. Initial contact (YES)

The prospective participant initially hears about a YES programme in their area via online adverts

2. Application (YES)

They can apply online, by submitting a personal statement of interest, either written or pre-recorded video

3. Assessment day (Host organisations)

A taster day allows for both sides to evaluate whether the individual could be a good fit for the programme - focus is on attitudes and energy rather than skills

**Additional
possible steps**

- Personal research into the programme
- Informed or directed to YES by a youth worker or local community leader
- Hear about the programme through a host organisation

- Briefing calls are available for interested individuals
- Application support/coaching is available in specific circumstances
- Applicants are matched to hosts based on preference and location

- Successful applicants are informed and issued YES-branded equipment
- Arrangements for accommodation are made, and contracts issued

**Key
considerations**

- Using accessible language
- Authentic and representative marketing material
- Identifying the right local partners for recruitment
- Managing the funnel efficiently

- Ensuring a consistent and accessible application experience
- Creating fair criteria for finding the right applicants
- Being transparent and communicative throughout the experience

- Ensuring the right fit between hosts and individuals
- Making sure that the participant is willing and capable of doing a physically demanding role

**Critical
questions for
breakout
groups**

- What positioning would be most appealing to young people?
- How is the role marketed between YES & host organisations?
- What do we need to do to make the language accessible?

- Who is responsible for reviewing applications?
- What are we looking for in prospective applicants? (personality, background, education, etc)
- How and where should they submit their applications?

- Who would host the assessment day? What would be involved?
- Where will participants be accommodated?
- What equipment would be provided as standard (vs role specific)?

USER EXPERIENCE

Engage

What triggers participants to want to sign up for the Youth Environmental Service?

Key step (+ owner)

4. Kick-off residential (YES)

A residential event gives participants an opportunity to come together, connect and develop basic fundamental skills that will be useful across their experience

5. Work placements (Host organisations)

Participants daily activities are set by the host organisation, working on specific projects and ongoing maintenance in line with the goals and needs of their organisation

6. Technical training (Education partners)

Within the constraints of a fixed budget, participants can select specific qualifications or training they want to undertake to prepare them for a future career

Additional possible steps

- Participants are matched with an external mentor/coach
- They develop a personal training plan, prioritising the types of experiences and learning they want from the year

- Placement exchanges within the cohort, sharing exp and learning across sectors
- Document their experiences and create engaging and informative online content around the programme

- Ongoing mentoring and coaching to help identify and develop key soft skills
- Employability support to help encourage participants to plan for their future careers

Key considerations

- Building a core set of universal basic skills & attitudes across the group
- Creating lasting and meaningful connections across the group
- Setting the right direction and intent for the participants

- Ensuring the work being done is engaging and environmentally impactful
- Giving participants responsibility and autonomy (e.g. with placement exchanges)
- Supporting wider engagement with the community

- Allowing participants to control their education experience
- Balancing between universal skills and project specific knowledge
- Creating connections into the wider ecosystem of environmental organisations

Critical questions for the next stage of the co-design

- Where would the residential be held? How do we ensure participants are able to get there?
- How long would it be for, and what activities/education would be available?
- Who would be responsible for overseeing the experience?

- Who pays their salaries, and how much for?
- How many people per host organisation?
- Who is responsible for managing admin?
- How do we ensure organisations are able to properly manage/support participants?
- What travel arrangements need to be made?
- How do we organise placement exchanges?

- What courses should be available?
- How do participants develop a plan that is tailored to them?
- Do they receive a qualification at the end?
- How is the mentor relationship structured?
- What types of employability support should be available, and when?

USER EXPERIENCE



Engage

What triggers participants to want to sign up for the Youth Environmental Service?

Exit

What triggers participants to want to sign up for the Youth Environmental Service?

Key step (+ owner)

7. Placement rotations (Host organisations)

After c. 6 months in their primary role, the participants are expected to rotate to a second position within the organisation to broaden their knowledge and skillset

8. Community project (optional) (YES)

For the final three months participants may be selected to run an environmentally focused innovation project, developing community-led solutions to local environmental issues.

9. Graduation event (YES)

A celebration of the year, and the progress that participants have made, with additional support and coaching to plan for the future, both professionally and personally

Additional possible steps

- Direct volunteer engagement, working with other participants to support local community projects
- Reverse mentoring with leaders at the organisations to offer different perspectives on where it could prioritise

- Innovation training to support the project development process
- Participatory research that engages with community members to develop a solution
- Non-participants can still contribute as part of an advisory board

- Careers coaching and support identifying further employment/education pathways
- Seed funding to support the delivery of successful community projects

Key considerations

- Creating opportunities to engage with the wider community
- Mix of different experiences, not just slight shifts

- Bringing the community into the design process as active participants
- Offering the right level of guidance vs self-directed learning
- Positioning the opportunity across the year
- Keeping the wider participant group involved and engaged

- Shifting focus to what's next
- Building a lasting positive attachment to YES and creating advocates for the programme

Critical questions for the next stage of the co-design

- When does the rotation happen? Is it optional?
- Do the participants get any say in their second role?
- How long is the overall placement? What would participants want?

- What is the application process for choosing this pathway?
- What issues should be tackled?
- How should we involve host organisations?
- What training/support is available?
- How is the research conducted?

- Would there be any residential/coaching component to the event?
- Who would be invited? (Family? Community? Businesses?)

USER EXPERIENCE

Extend

What triggers participants to want to sign up for the Youth Environmental Service?

Key step (+ owner)

10. Alumni network (YES)

Participants would be invited to join an alumni network, with annual events to convene YES graduates to build connections and share future opportunities

Additional possible steps

- Graduates could support subsequent cohorts as mentors or coaches

Key considerations

- Offering an open channel through which all alumni can stay connected and engaged
- Creating opportunities to share experiences and knowledge with the next generation

Critical questions for the next stage of the co-design

- What platform would alumni interact on?
- How do we keep graduates engaged and participating in the network?
- How much would YES be involved vs

PLACEMENTS

The Youth Environmental Service is focused on creating green job opportunities that will have a meaningful positive environmental impact across one or more of:

- Reducing carbon emissions
- Capturing existing carbon
- Building climate resilience
- Restoring biodiversity

For the pilot we will focus specifically on organisations in the nature sector, prioritising roles that protect and harness nature to create a positive environmental impact in the Midlands.

In the future there may be scope to expand the types of placement to include nature-based solutions in wider regions, as well as other green sectors e.g. retrofitting and urban greening.

Technical roles and large private industry organisations are out of scope for YES.

POTENTIAL WORK AREAS

Natural resources

- **Conservation and restoration**
 - **Woodland/grassland conservation**
 - Peatland restoration
 - Seagrass planting
 - Coastal habitat protection
 - **Ecology**
 - **Species conservation**
- **Agriculture**
 - **Rewilding**
 - **Regenerative agriculture**
 - **Conservation farming**
- **Forestry**
 - **Nursery**
 - Planting
 - X Harvest/manufacture

KEY: **Pilot**
Full roll-out
Not in scope

Climate adaptation

- **Resilience building**
 - **Natural flood management**
 - Sustainable drainage solutions
- Clean air
 - Urban greening
 - Monitoring & impact assessments
- Climate change adaptation
 - Built environment
 - X Business & industry
 - X Infrastructure

Public engagement

- **Volunteer coordination**
- **Community engagement**
 - **Community projects**
 - **Enhancing physical access**
- **Communications**
- Education
- X Nature-based healthcare

Enabling decarbonisation

- Circular economy
 - Repair & reuse
 - X Recycling
- X Science and innovation

Homes and buildings

- Retrofitting
- X Heat networks
- X Heat pumps

Transport

- X Public
- X Private
- X Freight

Business and industry

- X Steel production
- X Commercial carbon capture and storage

Power and utilities

- X Low-carbon generation
- X Smart grid systems

NEXT STEPS

Members of the co-design will now be splitting into smaller, topic-focused sub-groups. The aim will be to strengthen, refine and plan for different aspects across both user experience and operating model so we can be confident of the feasibility of our YES vision.

We will be scheduling meetings over January and February to discuss the specific questions and develop clear answers. This is likely to look like 1-3 short meetings per group, spread over a couple of weeks, with space to explore the practical elements offline.

Once we're clear on the answers to those we'll have the opportunity to regroup as a collective, coordinating a plan to launch the programme later in the year.

Alongside this, I will be engaging with potential funders, sharing the work done so far to build financial support to launching the pilot sometime next year.

CO-DESIGN SUB-GROUPS

Positioning/ recruitment	Collective events	Work placements	Education and support	Innovation project	Network building
How do we attract, recruit and onboard the right people?	How do we organise and host the cohort-wide events?	What will the work placement involve, and for what benefit?	What education options are available to participants?	How will we manage and support the optional project?	How do we keep the participants connected to the programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth representatives Diversity & inclusion leads Community organisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential centres Outdoor educators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature-based environmental organisations Youth employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education bodies Mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical experts Business leads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community organisers Youth Representatives

OTHER QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

YES Operating Model	Funding	Evaluation
What central operations and oversight do we need to support both participants and host organisations effectively?	What level of funding will be required and how are we going to secure it?	What impacts do we want to measure, and how do we plan to evaluate them?

SUGGESTED SUB-GROUPS

Positioning/ recruitment

Catriona Corfield
Claire Carroll
Gabriel Lester
Ellie Taylor
Andre Ferguson

Network building

Collective events

Roberta Antonaci
David Reeve
Ian Baker
Andrew Taylor

Work placements

Andrew Harrison
Beth Lacey
Alison Rickett
John Preston
Joanna Welch
Amanda Evans
Joanne Elward
Mel Dyer
Beth Brook

Education and support

Elaine Skates
Marcus Potter
Chris Crean
Roberta Antonaci

Innovation project

Tracy Rees
[tbd – this will likely come
later down the line, once
other topics are finalised]