Text of the BFER all weather display panels

1

HEALING WATERS

OUTDOOR SWIMMING

Swimming activities: have fun and learn about safety

Events to introduce adults, young people, families and children to enjoying swimming and playing in water safely help to tackle fears and arm them to assess risks for themselves and to stay safe. Coaching tips help people improve their swimming and take part in an open water swim event. We are also training young people in life saving and lifeguarding.

Rebuilding water confidence and knowledge

Many have memories of having fun in water as children. But decades of outdoor swimming being discouraged has meant generations have forgotten how to do it, and parents and authorities worry about the safety of young people who continue to swim and play in water. Training at the intro events and in life-saving will help families to swim together and young people to pass safety info on to their peers.

Access to water and working with landowners

More swim places are needed as popularity rises and local population grows, with stress on the few places people can go. We brought landowners together at the start of the project, and once we have mapped and assessed swim places and swim walks we will discuss with landowners signage with heritage and safety info. Better understanding of safe and environmentally friendly behaviours around water will help tackle concerns.

The Healing Waters (Outdoor Swimming) project is part of The Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership Scheme

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HEALING WATERS

OUTDOOR SWIMMING

Swim events during the project

Hundreds of people in nine events will have had a taste of outdoor swimming and received info on safety and on finding and assessing places to swim and others to swim with. Our coaching, event, and swim walks will help them take their swimming further. We will have introduced adults and young people, held specific events for those with additional needs and in youth groups, and got families and children into the water together.

Venues, organisation, evaluation

The project used four or five places in three rivers and a lake for organised events, and in formal testing the bathing water quality of all were 'Excellent'. Volunteers played a large part in organising and running the events, and they were lifeguarded. We did surveys to study the health and well-being impact of taking part and to prepare for and evaluate the events.

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HEALING WATERS

OUTDOOR SWIMMING

Volunteers gave and gained

Crucial to the events, around 150 volunteers gave hundreds of hours, using their swimming experience to support and encourage participants in and out of the water, design and deliver interactive safety discussions, set up and admin, promote events and the project, risk assess and take bathing water quality samples. Many found this gave them new skills, confidence and enjoyment, and several had participated in intro sessions and wanted to give something back.

Open Water Lifeguards trained and involved

The project provided Open Water Lifeguarding qualification training to a dozen local people and included several more in top up training, and this has been repaid by them volunteering and working on our events, and many have lifeguarded in the Brecks and beyond. Some were originally participants or volunteers. This has boosted confidence and given career options as well as supporting the project. Lifesaving training for children and young people The project and our lifeguard trainer and provider will run basic life- saving training sessions to spread the message of enjoying water safely more widely among children and young people.

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