

THE CREATIVE BIO- SPHERE PROJECT



Five schools,
five artists,
five institutions,
one year's work.



WESTERN YAR, YARMOUTH



Creative Biosphere

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The Project

As the school bell rings, a group of students pack away chisels and protective gear to mark the end of a session sculpting a 4-ton block of metamorphic rock in the winter sun. Anyone can see this is not your usual lesson. The stone has been set on a patch of courtyard inside the school gates of Carisbrooke College, ready to be carved, marked and moulded into a legacy artwork by artist-in-residence Trudie Wilson.

An interdisciplinary fine artist inspired by palaeontology & Island geology, Trudie has been working with students of the Isle of Wight Education Federation for the past year to explore and expand awareness surrounding the Isle of Wight's recent designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This final piece, a stone carved and sculpted by herself and a select group

of students, is the lasting physical outcome of a year's worth of creative work. But this is not the only example.

As the largest offshore Island in England, the Isle of Wight joined only six other locations in the UK with Biosphere status, given as a way to acknowledge the internationally important natural and cultural environments that exist in each given location.

This designation from the United Nations since 2019 recognises the Island's unique ecological species and habitats, marks the historic & growing momentum of the community to live sustainably within their local ecosystems whilst providing an active template of sustainable development goals to help navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.

“Each UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is an open sky laboratory for sustainable development, for concrete and lasting solutions, for innovation and good practices. They seal a new alliance between the world of science and youth, between humans and the environment.”

— UNESCO Director General, Audrey Azoulay



The presence of an artist within the school gates is part of an ambitious Island-wide project which brings together five exceptional local artists with the Island's secondary schools & colleges and partnered cultural institutions. Dubbed the 'Creative Biosphere' project, and much like the Biosphere Reserve itself, it aims *“to build a vibrant ecosystem, where different sectors are integrated, working together to build a healthy, vibrant, creative community.”*

Over the course of 2021-22, these artists sought to increase and develop awareness of the unique landscape of the Isle of Wight - celebrating people,

place and the Island's potential – within the context of the Biosphere by connecting some of the Island's young people (key stage three-five) to an artistic & cultural industry often deemed inaccessible.

The five artists - Teresa Grimaldi, Bruce Webb, Jenna Sabine, Trudie Wilson and Liz Cooke - represented hugely diverse artistic practices from flag design to film-making. Supported by the Island's Cultural Education Partnership & Area of Natural Beauty partnership (generously funded by Arts Council England) these artists acted as a bridge between secondary school students and their associate Island

institutions Ventnor Exchange, Brading Roman Villa, New Carnival Company, Independent Arts & Quay Arts.

What resulted was an imaginative celebration of place and how this can engage and inspire the youth of today. Charlie, a student from The Bay CE School said *“I learned so much about biodiversity, wildlife and the local landscape, it has been a really interesting project.”*

The Biosphere Reserve provides a unique perspective to shape the Isle of Wight's future; recognising the rich heritage of our natural habitats and past generations to ensure those of

the future can thrive.

This book offers a snapshot of a year's worth of learning and creativity between these fifteen participants from exhibitions, filming days, window painting and other artistic activities to their final projects. It is a celebration of our landscape, young people and the Island's home-grown creative talent. It also acts as visual inspiration for future projects to innovate and build upon; a lasting record of what happens when collaboration, creativity and community come together.



"Coming out of the shadow of the COVID pandemic, the involvement of artists and students in a collaborative project with the support of other organisations under the Biosphere umbrella was a positive experience for all and the culmination of this hard work and positivity was highlighted in the exhibition at Quay Arts in Newport."

— Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Lead Officer, Richard Grogan

There are currently only 7 designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the whole of the British Isles: Brighton & Lewes South Downs, North Devon, Dyfi Valley in Wales, Galloway & Southern Ayrshire, Wester Ross & the Isle of Wight.

Participants



- Cowes Enterprise College
- Liz Cooke
- Quay Arts
- The Island Free School
- Teresa Grimaldi
- Ventnor Exchange
- The Bay CE School
- Bruce Webb
- Brading Roman Villa
- IWEF - Isle of Wight Education Federation
- Trudie Wilson
- Independent Arts
- Ryde Academy
- Jenna Sabine
- The New Carnival Company

Cultural organisations

A whopping 75% of the Island's land is classed as 'protected', covering areas from Sandown to Freshwater. The AONB alone covers half of the Island, making it the largest component of the terrestrial Biosphere.

New Carnival Company is a Community Interest Company (CIC) not-for-profit-organisation nurturing and promoting the nationally acclaimed carnival arts engagement and learning programmes emanating from the Isle of Wight.

Quay Arts is the Island's leading live arts venue, cafe, theatre and gallery space at the heart of Newport, Isle of Wight.

Ventnor Exchange is a creative hub on the south coast of the Island, combining a theatre, record store, craft beer and cocktail bar and home to organisers of multi-award-winning Ventnor Fringe festival.

Overlooking Sandown Bay, **Brading Roman Villa** is one of the finest heritage sites in the UK displaying Roman mosaics, archaeological finds and a unique infrastructure sympathetic to the surrounding landscape.

Independent Arts is a Newport-based charity and creative hub, workshop, gallery & events space established by artists to enable the most vulnerable to connect socially through various arts-based activities.





Bruce Webb

PROJECT PROFILE Nº1

with The Bay CE School & Brading Roman Villa

Award-winning filmmaker, director and lecturer Bruce Webb worked alongside a select group of students at The Bay CE School to produce a series of videos exploring and promoting the sustainable developments at Brading Roman Villa. Bruce explains that *“although trying to teach and shoot during the Covid pandemic had its multiple challenges, the year long project produced some great work, increased confidence in a majority of students, and led, I believe to many of them realising the creative industries are within their grasp.”* The student-headed project saw participants gain skills in camera

operating, directing, script-writing, editing & sound alongside confidence & team building skills culminating in two short films showcased to parents & the public as part of their Student Takeover day at the Villa in November '22. On presenting their work Lesley Walters, Assistant Headteacher (DL) at The Bay, commented *“the students were amazing; so confident, resourceful and professional taking it all in their stride. The final outcome represents a colossal amount of research, learning, teamwork and resilience: we are in awe of their informative and accomplished films.”*





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— Lesley Walters, Assistant Headteacher at The Bay CE School



NEWTOWN CREEK

The Biosphere status covers all of the Isle of Wight's land surface as well as The Solent, The Channel & inshore waters.



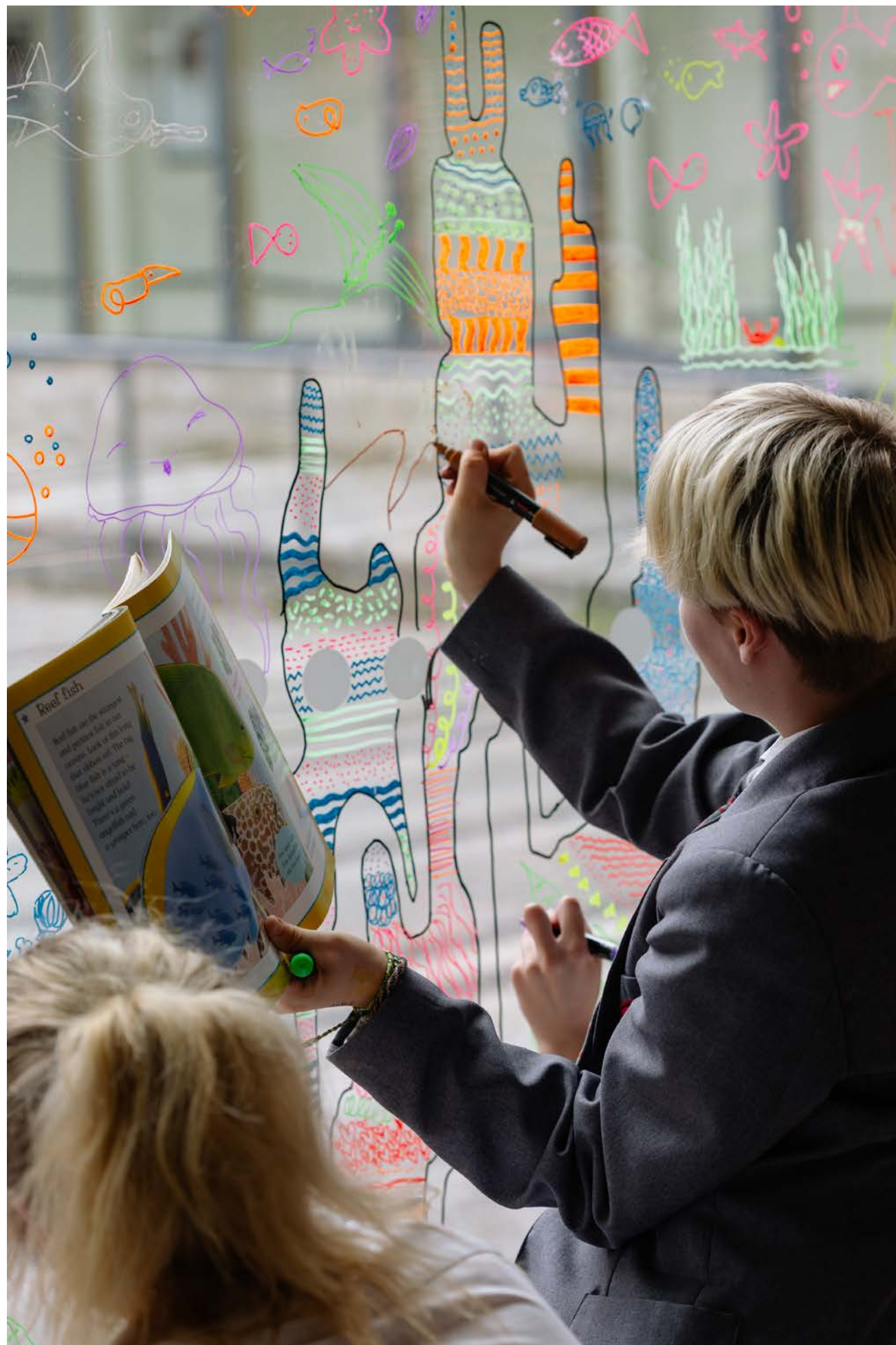
Liz Cooke

PROJECT PROFILE N°2

with Cowes Enterprise College & Quay Arts

Liz Cooke is an artist specialising in creating hand-made, arena sized festival flags out of her off-grid home studio for clients such as Greenpeace and the Isle of Wight Festival. During her residency at Cowes Enterprise College students learnt multi-disciplined techniques of collage, printmaking and painting focusing on both nautical and wildlife imagery relating to local landscape and the surrounding Solent waters. Alongside exploring these themes and techniques during art classes, the students' work formed the base designs for nine full sized silk flags hand-made by Liz as a mobile installation to be displayed in school grounds. In the school corridors these flags joined colourful window

displays made from shapes inspired by coastal fauna and the maritime heritage of Cowes. Ann Wright, Head of Art & Design at the college described the project as a fantastic learning experience for all. *"We involved a huge number of students (over 150) in KS3 and it was so valuable for them to meet Liz and see how an artist works,"* she explained. *"Throughout the project both Liz and the students responded to each other's work, creating an exciting exchange of ideas as the project progressed. Liz has made a striking set of flag and window designs and gone to great lengths to keeping the students' artwork central to the outcomes. The whole experience of working with Liz has been fantastic."*



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—Ann Wright, Head of Art & Design at Cowes Enterprise College



Biosphere Reserves integrate three main “functions”:

- Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity
- Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable
- Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training





Teresa Grimaldi

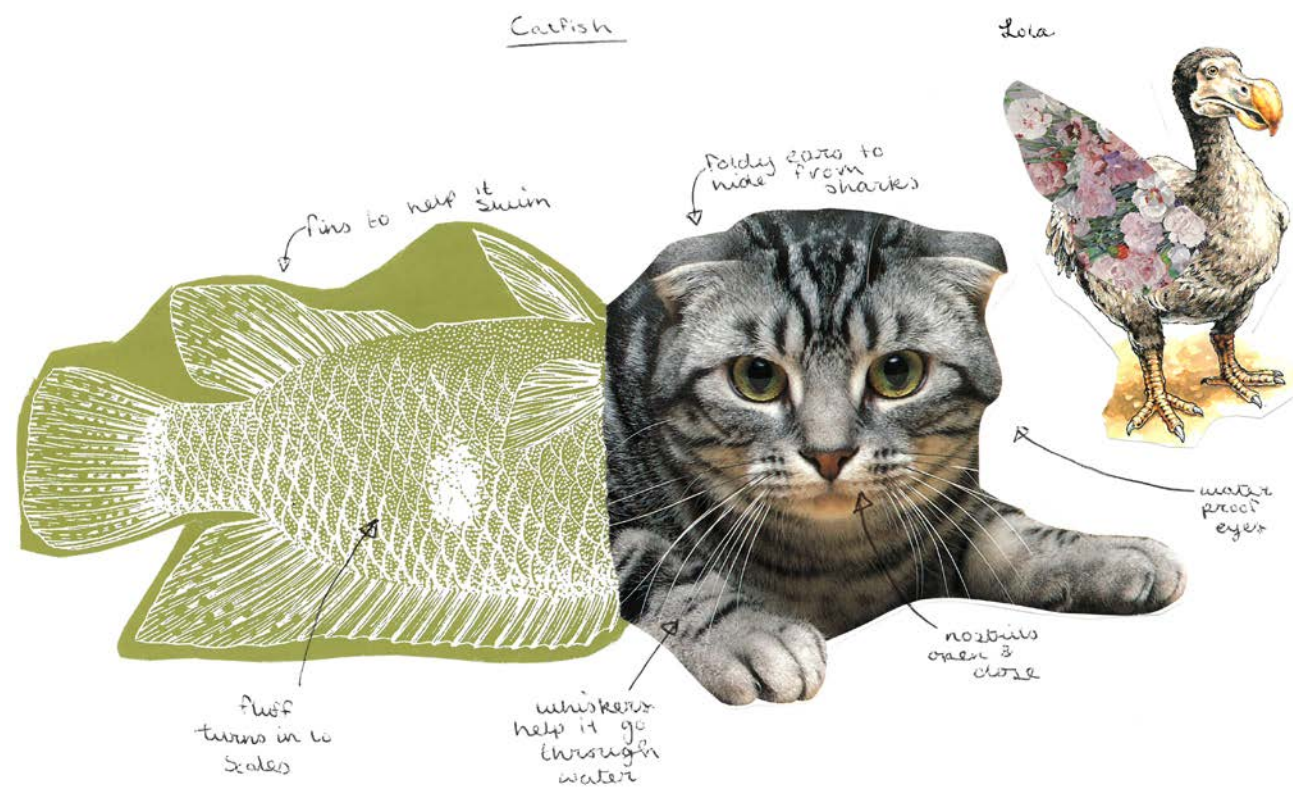
PROJECT PROFILE Nº 3

with The Island Free School & Ventnor Exchange

Teresa Grimaldi is a highly-acclaimed artist, educator and puppet-maker whose work crosses forms of material, animation and multi-layered installation. Her blended practise explores themes of fantasy and heritage woven together with a strong sense of storytelling and performance garnered from her degree in Theatre Design & MA in Visual Performance at Dartington College of Arts. Working across the year groups at The Free School, supported by Ventnor Exchange, students pursued the concept of 'Biosphere Beasties' blurring the lines of mythical creatures and wildlife found on the Island.

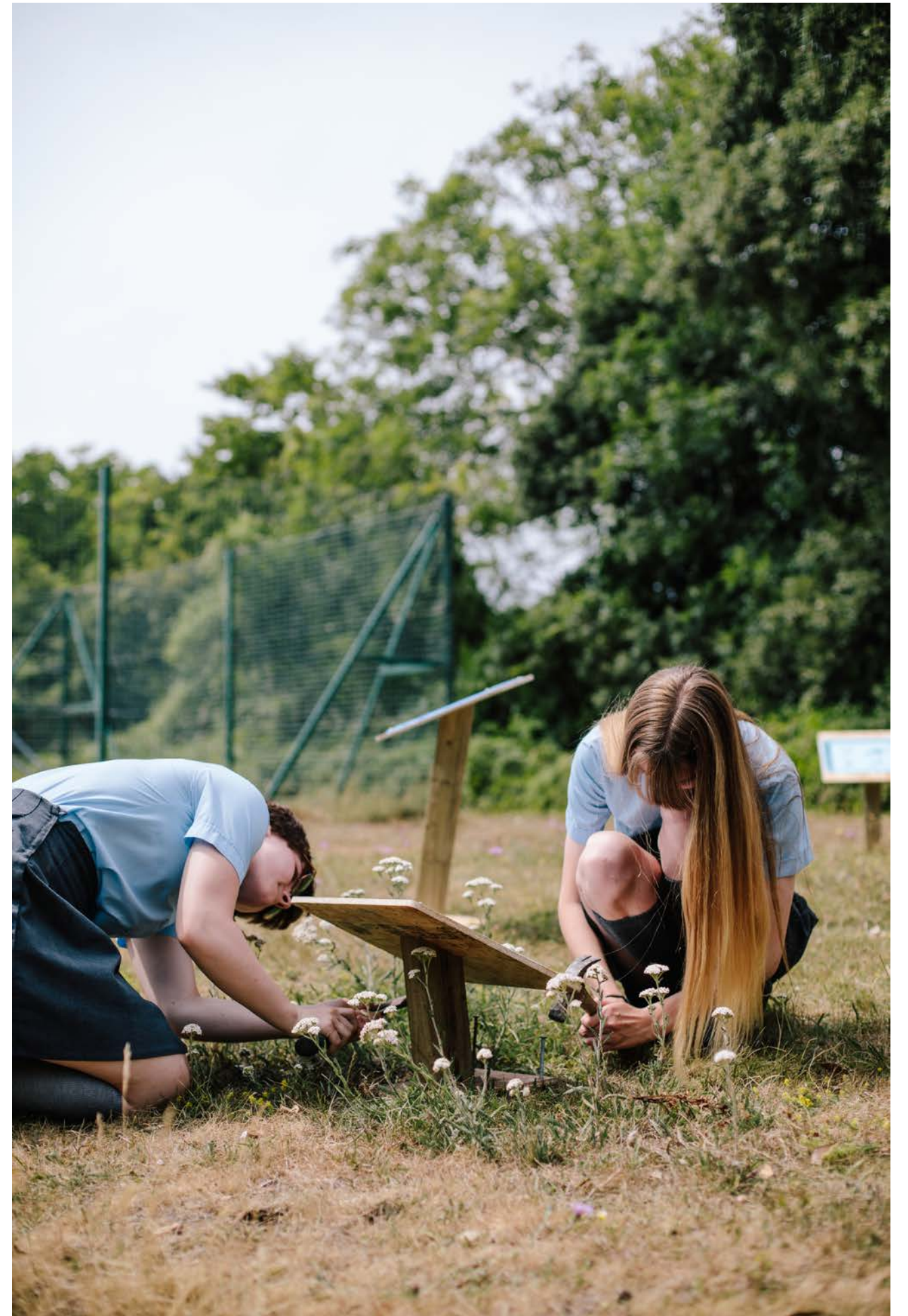
Teresa said "We shaped the brief based on creatures that exist and are unique in the Ventnor Undercliff area. I, along with Jack and Megan of Ventnor Exchange, were very keen that the students explored creative ways of responding to the biosphere; taking inspiration from Phlegm's Ventnor Giant mural and fellow Island artist Rachael Berry's project about 'Undiscovered Creatures' and their habitats." Students' work documented these

beasts evolving from cellular beings - evidenced through micro concertina books in matchboxes cataloguing the evolution of their creature cells into life forms - imaginative collages, shadow drawings and eventually into physical puppets as part of a show at Ventnor Fringe Festival. These 'beasties' also formed a pop-up trail across Ventnor Park during the Fringe linking these fantastical beasts with the living natural habitats of the Biosphere along the public route. *"I really enjoyed getting to know the students and their individual ways of working. Bringing different stimulus in each week - weird things in jars, puppet characters that I have made and books that I am inspired by - provoked questions about what it is like to be an artist, which was really great to discuss,"* Teresa explained. *"Our Creative Biosphere project helps to share and learn what it all means to be humans in partnership with the natural world around us. For students especially, it helped develop a real appreciation of the local landscape and their part of living alongside the wonderful nature we have here."*



"For students especially, it helped develop a real appreciation of the local landscape and their part of living alongside the wonderful nature we have here."

—Teresa Grimaldi



The Isle of Wight is one of the most biodiverse areas in south-East England, only topped by the New Forest and the Thames Basin Heaths.





Trudie Wilson

PROJECT PROFILE Nº 4

with IWEF & Independent Arts

Supported by the team at Independent Arts, Trudie Wilson was embedded in the IWEF schools throughout the year to produce an explosion of artwork with students. Alongside the rock sculpture on display at Carisbrooke College, over the course of the school year art pupils at IWEF were able to experiment with techniques used in her interdisciplinary practice. *“The creative biosphere allowed me to showcase the wonder found on our island, from prehistoric shores to the modern day,” Trudie explains. “The young people were so great to work with; whether they become creative or simply engage more with the biosphere, it was a wonderful opportunity to open their eyes to this exceptional local landscape and all it entails.”* Select

students got the opportunity for a field trip to The Dinosaur Museum and the cliffs at Yaverland seafront, others used natural materials sourced from Brading Marshes for print-making and more. Trudie’s lessons opened up possibilities for using everyday natural objects to make artwork that was anything but. Second in Faculty for Creative Arts at IWEF, Hattie Buckett said this way of working really brought out the best in students: *“It was a real joy to see so many students engaging with Trudie’s workshops exploring the ways in which our Biosphere can inspire us. We were all so impressed to see how students worked collaboratively and stepped out of their comfort zone to allow them to respond in a more abstract manner than they are used to.”*





"The young people were so great to work with; whether they become creative or simply engage more with the biosphere, it was a wonderful opportunity to open their eyes to this exceptional local landscape and all it entails."

—Trudie Wilson

Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenge.





Jenna Sabine

PROJECT PROFILE Nº 5

with Ryde Academy & The New Carnival Company

As artist & founder of Monkton Arts - a community gallery space in Ryde - Jenna Sabine worked together with Hannah Ray of New Carnival Company and Ryde Academy on a series of projects across the year; from nature spaces in school, public installations in the local high street and biosphere banners to be displayed along the seafront.

For their main legacy project, students looked at the bird life typical to Ryde Sands & traditional flower floats as inspiration for Mardi Gras costumes to participate in the summer time carnival event. Hannah Ray explained: "New Carnival were fortunate to have St Martins Fashion student Joel Lines working with them on a placement over the summer, helping to develop the costumes for Mardi Gras and specifically with the Creative Biosphere

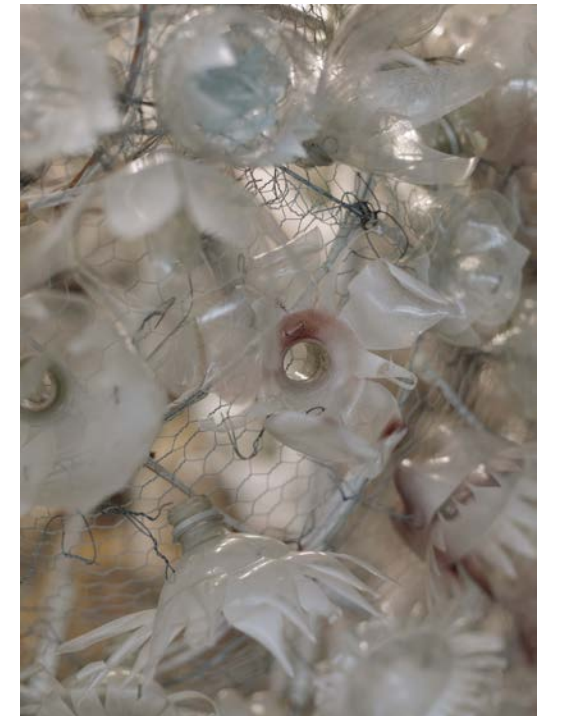
group at Ryde Academy. The students came up with initial designs which Joel then worked from to produce the prototype costumes."

Weaving through the narrative of resolving human impact on the natural world, 90 students from years 8, 9 & 10 formed flower structures out of recycled plastic bottles to go alongside other materials to help construct a large sanderling bird sculpture to compliment their wagtail costumes. In July, the group had the opportunity to wear their carnival entries in the Mardi Gras parade with the pieces then displayed in the window of the 'Department' for Ryde Carnival week. "This collaboration resulted in some really stunning work which we were so happy to see enhance the Mardi Gras parade and the students were proud to wear and model," Hannah said.



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— Hannah Ray, New Carnival Company



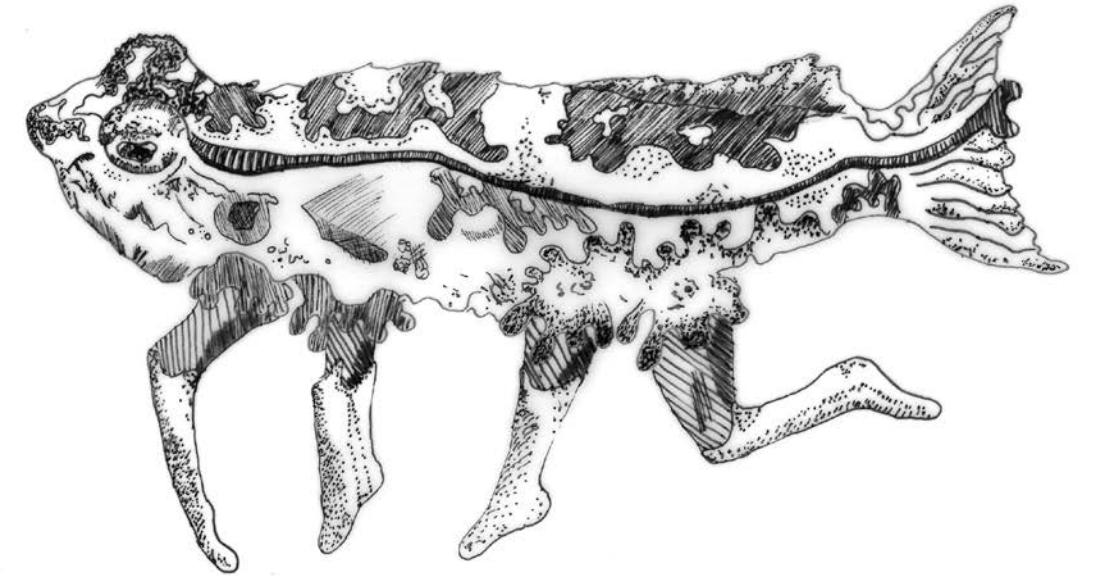
There are 700+ Biosphere Reserves
across 130 countries and 6 continents.
The Isle of Wight is now part of this
worldwide network of recognised natural
ecologies and innovative communities.







Nº 3



Showcase



Collograph Plate made from natural objects & found materials by students of IWEF to be used in printmaking with Trudie Wilson.

Photos from across the five projects showcasing student work, exhibitions, events and workshops.

Nº 1

Fabric Collages made using offcuts from up cycled spinnaker & paraglider base fabric by students of CEC with Liz Cooke.

Nº 2

"Rainbow Trout" mixed media collage, post pen on top of gelli print as part of CEC's work with Liz Cooke.

Nº 3

"Swamp Trotter" artwork by student from The Island Free School as part of their work with Teresa Grimaldi.

Nº 4

Biosphere Beastie made by Island Free School student Nicolle.



Nº 4

Nº 5
Biosphere Beasties puppet
displayed at the 'Creative
Biosphere Exhibition' at Quay Arts



Nº 6
The Island Free School students
'drawing to music' workshop as
part of Student Takeover Day at
Ventnor Exchange.

Nº 7
Mark-making work displayed at
Independent Arts as part of their
work in progress exhibition with
Trudie Wilson & students from IWEF.



Nº 8
Sanderling sculpture exhibited in
the window display at Department,
Ryde.





ISLAND FREE SCHOOL TAKEOVER
Teresa Grimaldi and students

Nº10



Nº9



Nº11

Nº9
The Creative Biosphere Final
Exhibition at Quay Arts

Nº10
Pebble stack collaborative lino
printing by students at IWEF.

Nº11
Soap sculpture made at
Independent Arts Public
Engagement Day with IWEF and
Trudie Wilson.



Fabric flags and artwork from CEC displayed at the Creative Biosphere Exhibition at Quay Arts.

Nº12
Cowes Enterprise College student's painting of local fish found in the Biosphere waters.

Nº13
Students filming with Bruce Webb.

Nº14
Students work on a collaborative sculpture with Trudie Wilson.

Nº15
Students installing the 'Biosphere Beasties' trail with Teresa at Ventnor Fringe festival.



Nº12



Nº13



Nº14



Nº15

The Creative Biosphere is a project initiated by the IW Cultural Education Partnership with the Island's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, supported with funding from Arts Council England, Newport & Ryde Heritage Action Zones and Ventnor Exchange's #IWILL project.

Thanks to

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Credits

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