

June 15th 2018

Thinking outside the box

How nature-based teaching can benefit staff and students

Caitriona Carlin, Gesche Kindermann,
Easkey Britton



Centre for Health from
Environment
Ionad Sláinte ó Chomhshaoil



Ryan
Institute



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



Whitaker
Institute



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Overview – how does the environment support learning?

Context

**Our environment,
Our health**



Healthy Places



Nature benefits health and wellbeing



NEAR Health

Stakeholders

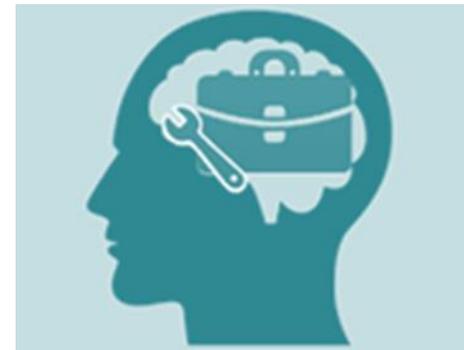
Values, Barriers, Bridges



NUIG Learning Spaces



Acquiring Skills

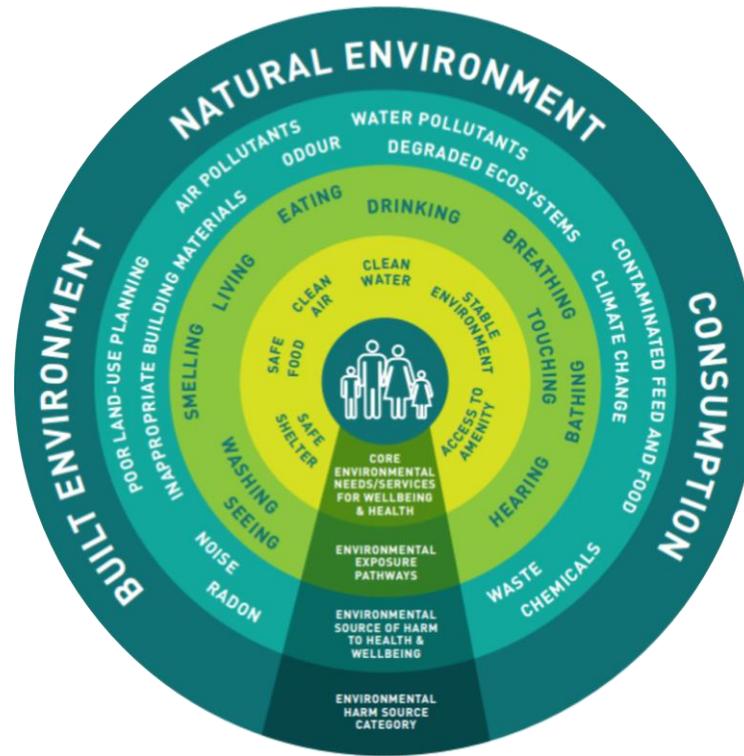
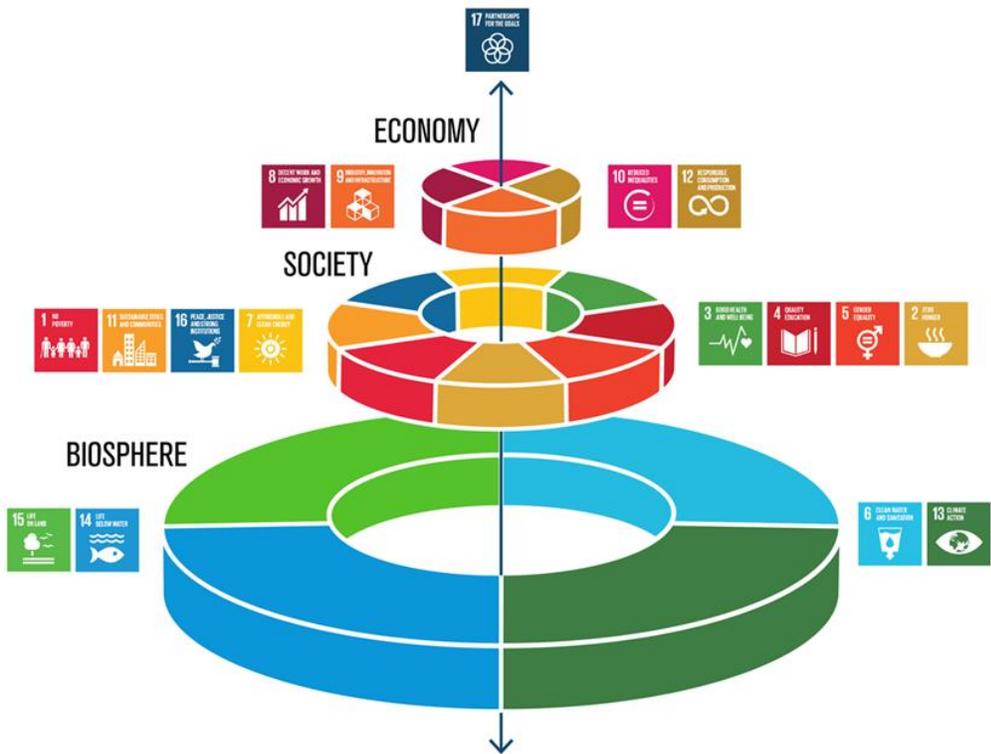


Next steps



Education for Planet Earth

Why should we care about the Environment?



What is Health?



**Complete
state of
physical, mental
& social
wellbeing**

**DEFINED BY:
WORLD HEALTH
ORGANISATION**



What are Health Enabling (Green) Places?



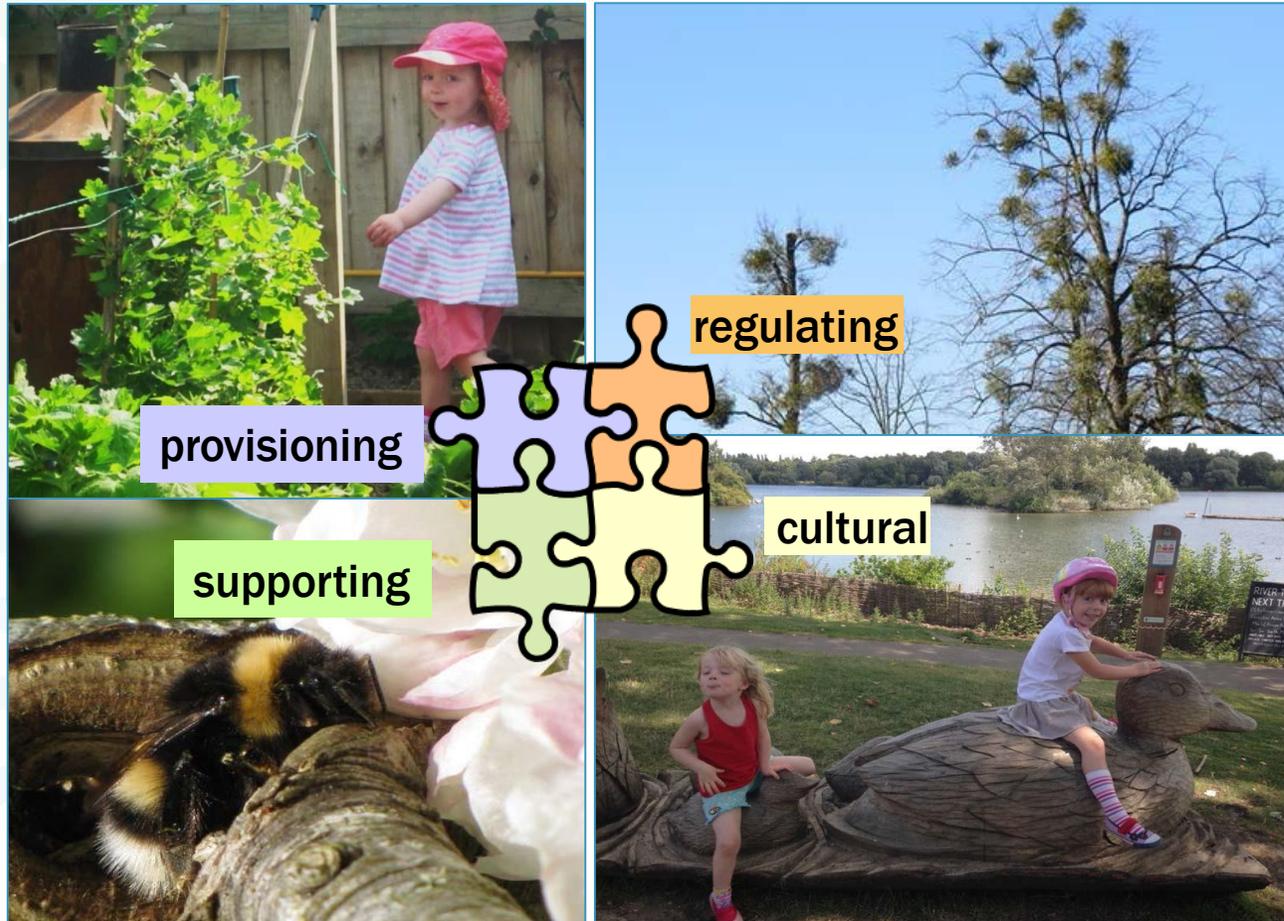


What are Health Enabling (Blue) Places?

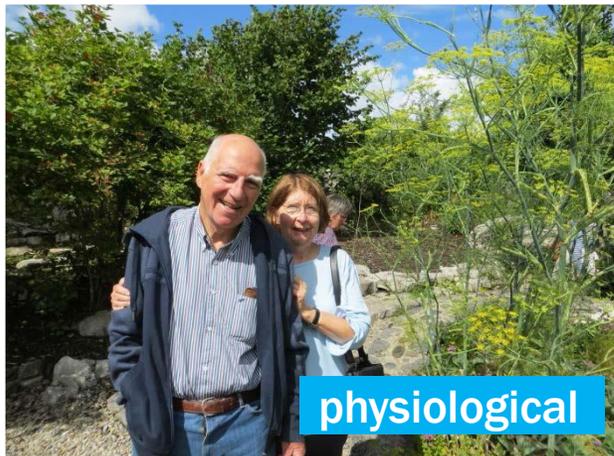




What does Nature do for us?



Convention
for
Biological
Diversity



What
benefits do
people get
when they
interact with
Nature?



How do we know nature benefits physical health?

Influential factors: duration and frequency of visits to natural spaces



Reduced levels of obesity in Spanish children



Healthier heart rates in Scotland, EU, US, Canada, Australia



Lower blood pressure
Improved immune system (Japan)
Less type2 diabetes (UK, Australia)

Experimental studies demonstrate benefits of nature for physical health



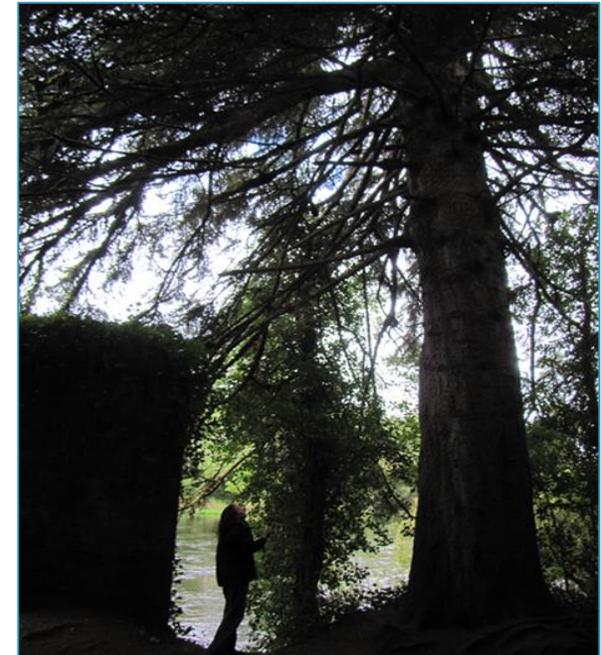
How do we know nature benefits mental health?



Lower risk of poor mental health.
People feel better.
Improved stress management.



Gardening buffered people
from impacts of stress

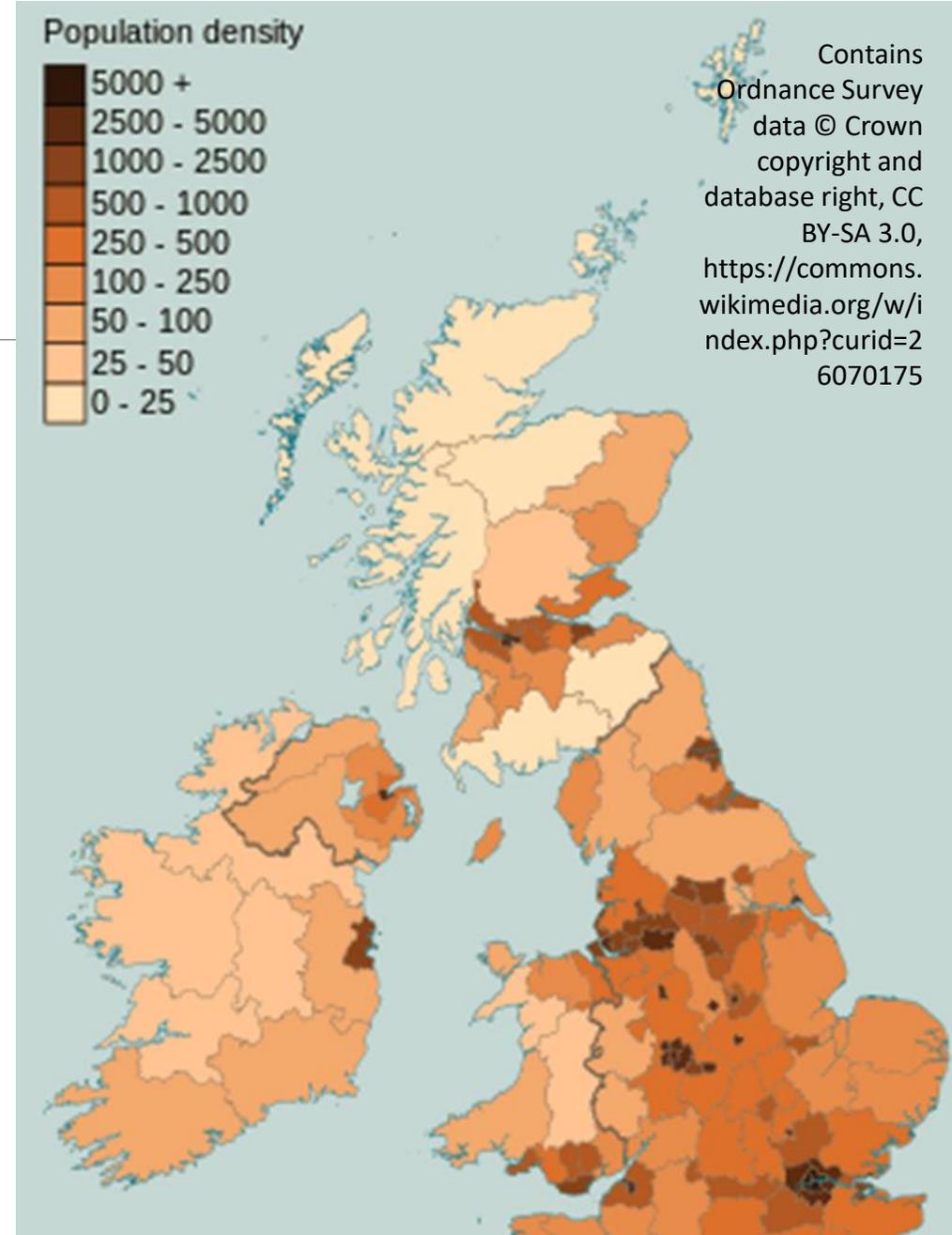


Lower rates of depression,
better psychosocial
wellbeing (Austria)

Experimental studies demonstrate benefits of natural over more developed spaces for mental health

Irish pressures?

- Living longer but not always healthier lives
 - Sedentary lifestyles
 - Increased risks of physical and mental health problems
- 60% population live within 10km of coast
- 13% Healthy Ireland survey respondents highlighted lack of open public space 2016
- 2012 MyWorld national youth survey: levels of self harm, excessive drinking
- NUIG Student Health and Wellbeing surveys?





Values & Motivations?



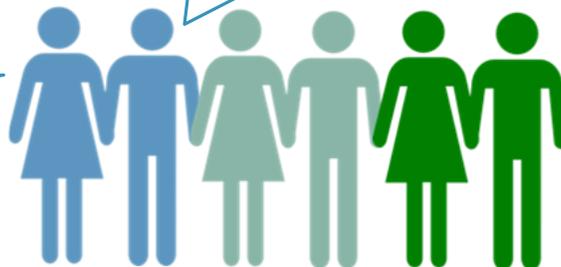
I have a sense of belonging and attachment when I'm in nature.



Spending more time outdoors and in nature improves your sleep.



Many people are not aware that mental health and wellbeing is very tied to spending time in nature



I am happiest when I am outside.



Barriers?

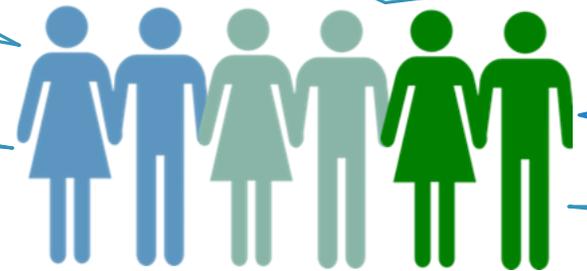


Access to land can be a barrier in Ireland.

People have become disconnected from nature

Lack of time is always a big barrier.

Weather can be a big deterrent for people to go outside.



Not knowing how nature can be incorporated into daily life can be a barrier to engaging with it.

People can be afraid of nature



Bridges?

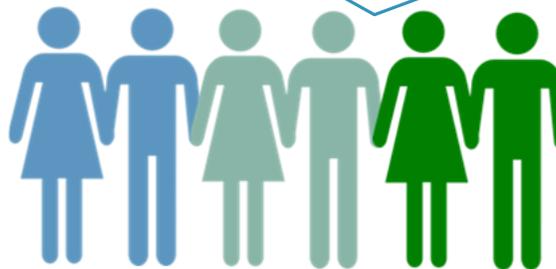


By showing people what nature is around them they are more likely to want to keep and conserve it

Peer support is key to engaging people in nature

It should be compulsory for children to take part in an outdoor activity

Having a group leader to lead an activity is really important to get people engaged with the outdoors





What about healthy places on campus?

NUIG Buildings and Estates



But lets look at the students, first...

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What about student health on campus?



- Up to 29% of students **don't attend class regularly**
 - academic (e.g., self-confidence, perceptions of environment)
 - personal (e.g., depression levels, cannabis use)
- 23% students (UG) are severely / very severely **anxious**
- Less than 50% students are **physically active** for 30 minutes a day, 4 or more times a week
- Less than 50% students feel well **rested** on 4 or more days each week.



NUI Galway campus location

Situated in the west
of Ireland, edge of
Galway City,

On the west side of
Lough Corrib

Campus adjoins
sites protected for
nature conservation



NUI GALWAY SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Our journey towards a green, smart and healthy campus

learn live lead
www.nuigalway.ie

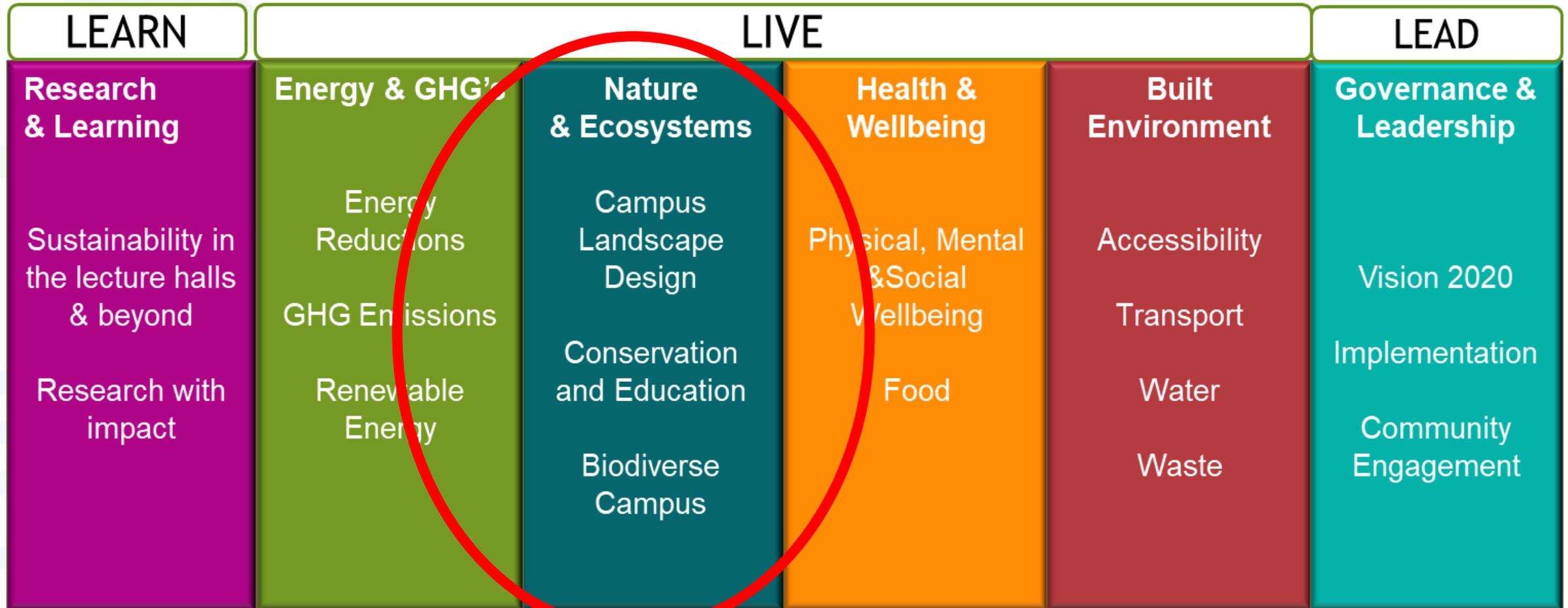


NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy





NUI Galway Sustainability Strategy





Typical teaching scenario?

Current Situation

2015: 196
sustainable/environmental
modules

2018: At least 231 modules
relate to environment or
sustainability.



MSc Health Psychology,
NUI Galway



Aengus McMahon



Increase outdoor classes to 500/pa by 2020

Current Situation:

About 342 students take at least one outdoor class on campus.

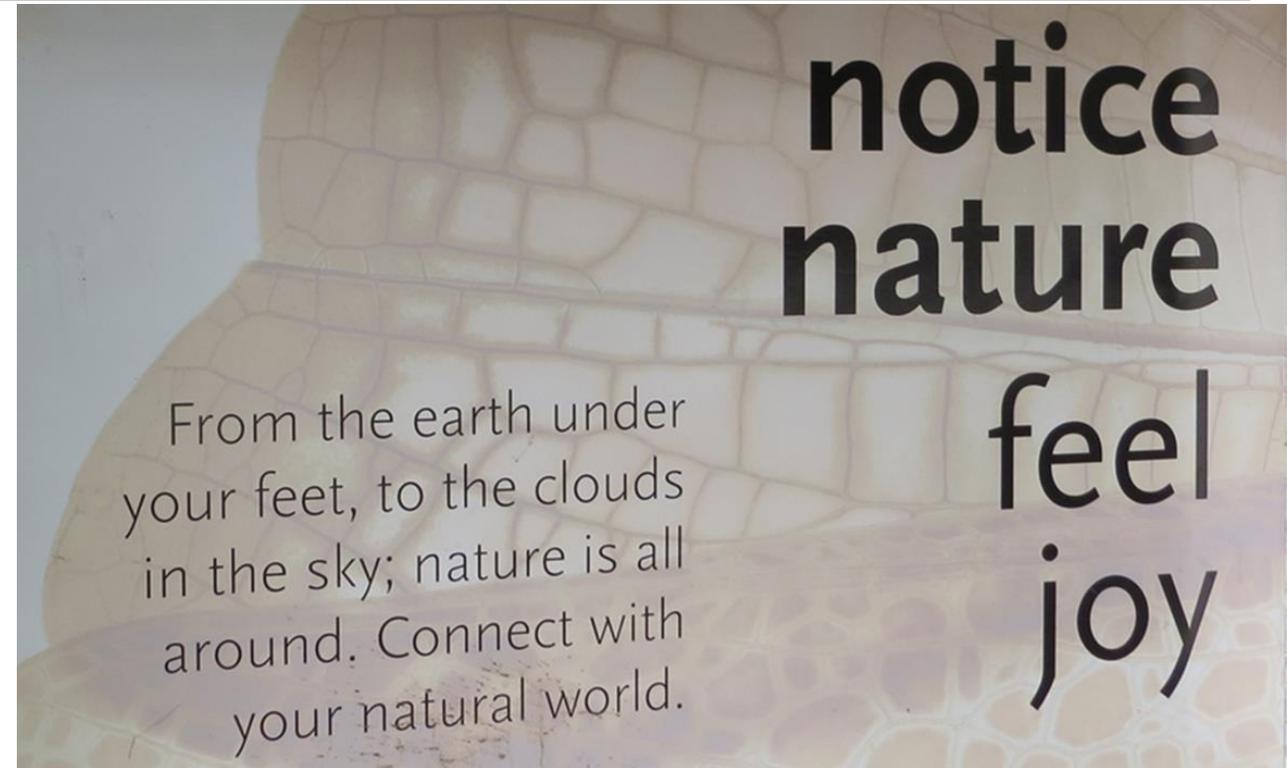


How to promote work outdoors, in nature?



Can we design biodiverse spaces to notice nature, feel joy and inspire learning? Thank you for listening.

The NEAR Health project, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Health Service Executive under Grant Award No. 2015-HW-MS-2, supports the implementation of the EPA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 – ‘Our Environment, Our wellbeing’ and Healthy Ireland, the national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland.



Centre for Health from Environment
Ionad Sláinte ó Chomhshaoil



Ryan Institute



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



Whitaker Institute



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



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