

## **TRUSTEES' REPORT 2019**

The Areti Charitable Trust has been in operation for two years now, and as trustees we have found ourselves on a steep learning curve. Putting children and young people in touch with the natural world is not always as simple and straightforward as in the past: there are curriculum expectations to be met, essential health and safety requirements to be followed, and every activity makes extra demands on existing staff (while also, we hope, bringing extra rewards). Nevertheless, we are pleased with what has been achieved to date.

Over the last two years the RSPB at Leighton Moss has used Areti funding to bring nature to children from primary schools with above-average pupil premium levels, and in 2019 over 400 children benefited in this way. Other activities funded by Areti include residential trips and days out for community centres and youth groups to develop and enhance their understanding of and respect for nature.

Some of the beneficiaries have used the natural world as a stepping-stone to creative activity. Morecambe Bay Partnership, for example, has taken primary school children to Sunderland Point to learn about the fishing history and ecology of the bay, and these visits are followed up by dance workshops that build on what the children have learned. This is what we mean by "a learning curve": we were barely aware of such projects before the establishment of the Trust.

Seeing the charity's funds being used in this way is satisfying, but we also wish to see regular, sustained (rather than just one-off) interaction with the natural world for those children and young people who would otherwise have no opportunity to enjoy it. In this regard we are excited about a pilot project that the trust is funding in 2020 for Arnside & Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to work with young people from a Pupil Referral Unit, making use of regular work visits to a woodland site.

Our motivation is our belief that children and young people today are increasingly disconnected from the natural world and that this trend needs to be reversed. With increasing habitat loss for species other than ourselves and more extreme destructive weather events, we feel that children need a greater understanding and appreciation of the environment. This is not just for the benefit of our planet: studies find that children's confidence, concentration and general wellbeing also benefit from outdoor activities.

We look forward over the coming years to using the income from the trust's capital to fund further mini-adventures and learning opportunities for more children and young people who would not otherwise have such chances in their lives.

February 2020