

# Hayley Marshall - Taking therapy outside – Reaching for a vital connection

## Keynote Presentation at CONFER Conference Psychotherapy & the Natural World November 12 - 13<sup>th</sup> 2016

I am excited to be speaking and presenting at this wonderful conference. It is an honour, and an opportunity to celebrate the past 9 years of my professional journey. During this time I have interwoven two important aspects of my life; my personal, spiritual connection to the natural world; and my professional interest in the relational creativity of therapeutic space.

So in this presentation I am inviting you along on some wanderings through my attempts to combine these two into what I call outdoor psychotherapy. As this is a keynote speech I thought I would sound these as **(Slide 2)** 4 'keynotes' in relation to nature-based therapy for us to consider together. These are all aspects that reflect my understanding of the value of introducing nature into the work but also of introducing the work to nature. As we go I will introduce you to my outdoor therapeutic space, refer to some personal and case material, and invite you to participate by engaging with some discussion with each other.

A bit of context about me - I have been practising for over 20 years, having originally trained in TA, and tend to work long term in private practice now. I would place myself as a relational therapist in the sense that I work with embodied non conscious processes in the work, and have a leaning towards relational trauma work. Much of what I am about to present is based on my own clinical experience. This has involved working outside week on week, whatever the weather both internal and external. It is therefore, knowledge lived with and learnt from my outdoor clients, supervisees, and participants in training groups. It has also come from the many outdoor facilitation experiences and peer supervisory conversations I have had with my colleague Martin Jordan, who sadly is unable to be here today due to illness. And last but probably first, this learning has also come from a deep connection with the wonderful places that I work in, both in Derbyshire and East Sussex.

I want to introduce you to one of my important places - this is Lightwood - My outdoor therapeutic space. **(Slide 3 & 4)**

Nested within my local environment this is the place I work in with individuals, for both supervision and therapy. It is a large area (approximately 150 acres) of open access land on the edge of Buxton in the Peak District. This place consists of large tracts of mixed woodland; some flatter ground with tracks and paths; lots of streams and waterfalls; a nature reserve with ponds of still water; and some steeper climbs up to wilder open

moorland and rocky edges. As we will see this place is central to the way I practise and think about outdoor work.

And here is Lightwood in a more alive sense [\(slide 5\) video clip of Lightwood](#)

As we enter this space I want to share with you a short case vignette:

*About a year into her therapy my client Jen and I are walking along the main track and suddenly she says 'I want to go this way for a change'*

*We veer off the track towards the stream - there is still a vague path to follow but then she decides to take us off that one too!*

*'What's up here?' she says*

*'I'm not really sure' I reply. Although I have some notion of what's up there I don't know this 'route' in at all.*

*We then proceed to slip, slide, and scramble our way through lots of brambles and tight bushes together. This feels like a quite a struggle to me but it seems like something important and different is happening, so I go with it.*

*We emerge on the other side - covered in mud with our clothes and hair roughed up and I'm aware of feeling quite pissed off.*

*We stand panting with the effort, catching our breath and looking at the state of each other.*

*Jen says*

*'Ugh..... Are you OK?'*

*Um....I say – I'm still absorbing what we've just done together.*

*She continues with '.....this is what I do...it's always so difficult..... I make it awkward for everyone else too. It's my body, it's just wrong .....I'm just difficult.'*

*I invite her to stay with what she's feeling at this point and as she connects with that she slowly leans back on the nearest tree.*

Illustrated in this vignette, is the essence of why I work outside with people. It can be summed up in this statement

- **(Slide 6)** In a natural setting the therapeutic process is vitalised. Here, the client can connect with a pivotal embodied way-of-being-in-the-world through a lived process

with the therapist and the place; and gain additional containment and support for that process.

With Jen she connects with an aspect of herself (that of feeling difficult), known to her in some ways but not really 'known' on a bodily lived-out level. She does that by shifting us to a different part of the place we have been working within for some time. So a deeper core process comes alive as she co-opts me into a physical re-enactment (following her and feeling pissed off). Now I really know what this is like for her!!

Let's break that general statement down into my keynotes

The first of which is Vitality **(Slide 7)**

### **Keynote 1 Vitality**

My first encounter with outdoor therapy came when I decided that 12 professional years sat in a chair inside a room was long enough. My body was suffering and I felt a very strong impulse to get moving. This, coupled with a curiosity about how to help others access and transform deeper aspects of their experience, meant that I began a search for 'something else'. In the event this proved to be a Wilderness Immersion experience up on Skye.

This trip focussed on an experiential exploration of wilderness therapy led by 2 therapists and an outdoor guide. It involved us living and working as a group **(Slide 8)** all within a majestic Scottish sea and landscape. **(Slide 9)** A classic example of the process was our rather turbulent journey by canoe around a headland where the sea had become a bit rougher than anticipated. **(Slide 10 & 11)** A lot of anxiety and anger was evoked as people made more direct contact with some powerful personal processes. I was in touch with a sense of my own physical inadequacy and vulnerability in the world in a way I'd never quite managed to access in the many years of personal therapy I'd undertaken by this point. I was both disturbed and amazed at the immediacy of this process.

One of the important aspects that I learnt in that experience on Skye was about how being out in the natural world invites and supports our vitality. By vitality I am meaning our experience of our aliveness, & allied with this, our capacity for growth & transformation. My view is that the natural world is an inherently enlivening space, and that vitality is the single most important aspect of working outdoors as I think it underpins all other aspects.

**(Slide 12)** Once outside in nature, the physical 'container' for the therapy has now become a range of dynamic and living processes. This setting automatically calls for a sharpening of the senses – an organismic 'switching on' – involving a more active level of engagement for both therapist and client. Many clients report a sense of 'coming alive', particularly in the early stages of the work, as they relate with the world around them through increased sensory interaction and awareness.

By way of example I'm going to share part of a vignette taken from my chapter in the book *Ecotherapy Theory Research and Practice*. This is my client Fiona -

**(Slide 13)** *It's mid spring and in a session early on in the work, we are walking up the track. Fiona is commenting on how happy she is that there are so many trees in this place, and how loudly the birds are singing. She is feeling really excited by the noisy cascading water that is in evidence, owing to the recent heavy rainfall. She says she feels that she 'is opened up and alive' when she's out here. She goes on to say that she feels more alive in this therapy than she has before, comparing it to some previous indoor therapy. I am noticing how excited I feel about being out here with her today, even though I've just had a session with another client in this same place where I'd felt rather flat. I note that, I too am feeling very tuned in to the vigour present in the environment. She also notices this, smiling as she says to me at one point 'you really seem to like it out here!'*

This can be a stimulating environment for clients to experience their own vitality with a sense of embodied immediacy. This vital resonance is a significant part of building what I term the *vibrant alliance* (**slide 14**) between client, therapist, and the setting. With Fiona I think it was important that I experienced the space as full of excitement and vigour as she did, as it proved to be a way of forming the human to human aspect of the outdoor alliance.

The vitality in the outdoor space invites a dynamic resonance inside us that has the power to evoke and support all kinds of important experiences. This then, is therapy in a vitalizing space, where I think that all human participants are effectively being 'tuned up' to hone in on movement and process. Returning to Fiona and our walk up the track (**Slide 15**)

*As well as listening to her, I am also aware of her style of movement. She seems eager to keep up with me, yet at the same time not quite certain of where to place herself. She keeps trying to turn sideways and adjust her pace to match mine. I begin to experience a sense of unease and awkwardness in my own body, and feel unsure about whether to keep my own pace or try to match hers. As a result our walk up the path although enthusiastic, is also somewhat stilted!*

So here we come to an important consideration in the forging of the vibrant alliance in that it seems to root both therapist and client more firmly in their bodies, potentially offering instant access to the immediacy of bodily experience and all that this may hold. (**Slide 16**) I think it important to stress that any therapeutic work outside has to take account of the impact of the setting on the human body, even if it is simply in a background non-conscious sense.

Looking for some theoretical support for these experiences, the closest I've found have come from the child developmental psychologist and psychotherapist Daniel Stern.

**(Slide 17)** In his writing about forms of vitality, Stern (2010) elegantly portrays how we relate to and make meaning of the world surrounding us through the cross-modal (multi-sensory) languages of movement. He foregrounds the primacy of movement in our basic

sense of who we are, arguing that vitality forms provide the fundamentals of our felt experience. This is part of our non-conscious sensing of others and the world around us, the manner in which we know the movement essence of others, and reveal ours to them.

Interacting with nature stimulates and vitalizes the movement domain of our experience, **(Slide 18)** thereby potentially placing the therapist in a position of not only feeling and understanding but almost living within the 'movement signature' of the clients they are working with. With Fiona, through feeling the vitality of the setting I also felt a heightened sense of her physical style as we walked. As a result I began to catch her movement process through observing her awkwardness, and feeling a resonance with this in my own body. Put simply, I view all this as an enlivening of my somatic counter transference through the sensory contact with the setting. It opens a powerful channel for really 'knowing' my client.

Working in this vital realm also means that people can feel the aspects of self that are deadened (as in dissociation or depression) and begin to bring these alive through experiencing them more keenly. **(Slide 19)** Generally, the stimulation of the physical domain gives us access to the nonconscious (non-verbal) domains of our experience - forms of 'knowing' such as implicit-relational-knowing (Lyons-Ruth, 1998). This is important in therapy because it is here that the elements of stuckness and trauma also reside, as deeply held dynamic unconscious material. Returning to the seminal experience I had on that trip on Skye, one of the important elements that really struck me at the time was how through working live in the process both I and others seemed to go direct to the heart of the matter - i.e. we contacted the real essence of our ways-of-being-in-the-world.

More from Lightwood **(slide 20)** [Video clip - the big tree](#)

As we look at this big tree - just a quick reminder of my summary statement **(slide 21)**

- In a natural setting the therapeutic process is vitalised. Here, the client can connect with a pivotal embodied way-of-being-in-the-world through a lived process with the therapist and the place; and gain additional containment and support for that process.

## **Keynote 2 Expansive Relating **(Slide 22)****

My second keynote brings our attention to the expansive shifts in therapeutic relating that happen outdoors. Effectively, now we have what I would call a 'living third' in the therapeutic equation, so relationally something really significant is happening. Even if it is never directly referred to, nature is always present, influencing and underpinning the human to human relationship. However, it is often flowing in and out of the work in other more obvious ways. So I view all of this as a dynamic 4 way relating illustrated here. **(Slide 23)** This basic diagram offers a framework to show that nature is constantly influencing the

human elements all of the time, much of this on a non-conscious nonverbal level; and then it forms a discrete element in the relational process, where both participants have their own more explicit relationship with it. The various overlaps may become important at different times within an overall therapy or within a session; or may form the dominant way of working with the human nature relationship - for example where the therapist is a facilitator of the client's relationship with nature.

The natural setting can of course, be a canvas on which to project and an opportunity to work with metaphor but it can also form a variety of significant 'others' in which to come into relationship. In my practice many examples of this occur with the tree in the clip. This large beech tree is a significant presence in this landscape. It brings a powerful sense of 'otherness'. Many clients working out here have formed a distinctive relationship with this being. So this tree for some is a stimulus for internal process – like the client who said it reminded her of being a small child walking beside a large person who was all height and legs, thus connecting her back to a significant memory. And the tree is also itself, a self-willed being that is doing its own thing for its own reasons, a being that is very different from us - so it's a being that many have marvelled at; and a being that many have drawn solace from –needing to go and be with this big tree for comfort and support.

As we saw with Fiona, clients are also witnessing and I think sometimes facilitating my relating with the natural world. This can be revealing of all sorts of aspects of me that a client indoors would never get a direct glimpse of, and so this needs to be thought about in terms of when it may be helpful or otherwise in the therapy. It can certainly be a rich source of material to be worked with and we will come to an example of this later.

The part in the middle is where all 4 elements are being more directly worked with – an example of this was what happened in my practice on March 20th 2015. (Does anyone recognise the significance of this date?) I had a 10 am outdoor session scheduled and realised on that morning that the solar eclipse was due to happen during it! The client arrives and wants understandably, to talk about his current difficulties, but there's a tension, because as we discussed how on earth do you ignore this major cosmic event?! Answer - You don't! - It's not possible! So we sit on the side of the hill and witness the eclipse together and after a long period of sitting in silence, we talk with each other and share what this is like for both of us – the sun leaving. Then, led by him we shift gently back to the material he came with – his experience of someone important in his life going. This is an example of what I call 'eco intimacy' (Slide 24) where client and therapist share moments of wonder, magic or sometimes distress out in nature. These are powerful experiences of therapist and client being out in the world together – human-to-nature-to-human. Of course it isn't always idyllic and the inherent unpredictability of nature also brings elements that can provoke and disturb.

Enriching the relational mix further we must also consider both our clients and our own historical relating with the natural world. This can be significant in terms of thinking about

traumas that have taken place outdoors for instance. But importantly this takes us into the transference domains, involving questions such as - what has nature offered to this client in the past? For example in Kohutian terms has it been a soothing self-object, medicating some kind of human relational gap? With this type of enquiry we can also begin to build a picture of where nature sits in someone's psychic structure internally i.e. where it sits as part of their protective defense system. Understanding this is particularly important, especially when working with trauma.

**(Slide 25)** It would seem that many people coming for outdoor therapy experience the natural world as a less pressurized relational space essentially comprised of undemanding others. There is some great very precise work done relating to this by conservation psychologist Gene Myers (2007), where he explores how small children can develop their sense of self and other through their interactions with animals. He deduces that the animal world is easier for children to relate with because there are none of the confusing mixed messages that can often occur between verbal and nonverbal domains in human interactions. **(Slide 26)** Therefore, there is a sense of directness that is easier to engage with.

But what has been less written about is the work with adults who have called upon the natural world in some way in their histories to manage difficult human to human situations. In terms of my own history I have certainly used the natural world generally as a way of managing emotion. I was outdoors on my own as soon as I could walk. Accompanied by 2 large Alsatian dogs, I would escape from the house at every available opportunity. We lived on an isolated farm and I distinctly remember experiencing the sense of release and freedom that trundling out into the fields would offer me. There was no sense of danger; this being located much more in the human world at that time.

For my client Sam the natural world had clearly helped her manage some early trauma. It had been a space to move away from unbearable feelings associated with abusive experiences. So this is nature almost as a dissociative space – a place to move out of contact with experiences associated with the human world. This is clearly different from a classic dissociative process in that the client moves directly towards another kind of relating. There is then a form of aliveness within the dissociation. In much of Sam's therapy we effectively walked around in her defense system - this took the form of her using the natural world as distraction/protection from too much contact with me and her own feelings. In other words, nature mediated the human to human for her, forming a type of relational buffer.

Mindful of this process, we gradually helped her come into contact with her trauma through our 'dosed' human to human connection. My understanding of this process is that I have to meet my client in her eco-world of dissociation and gradually help her find new ways of tolerating the human to human. And of course, nature can be a part of those new ways...Sam then expanded her range to include nature as enhancing the human to human rather than as always protection.

Let's take a moment to summarize - This then is a dynamic 'contextual psychology' (Wachtel 2008). We are working in a multidirectional lived world of 'we-in-context' relating (Tudor 2011), so this is far beyond the relational 2 person psychologies (Stark 1999). **(Slide 27)** By introducing nature into the therapy we have the potential to offer increased vitality and its associated emphasis on movement, coupled with a more dynamic and expansive relating process. Therefore, there is a promotion of relational fluidity and I think we are moved towards working much more in a process mode. As was the case with Jen at the beginning, in this process focus we have an opportunity to work with the past being alive in the immediate present through embodied relational enactments. **(Slide 28)** Nature, it appears, helps to promote 'movement from fixity to changingness, from rigid structure to flow, from stasis to process.' (Tudor & Worrall 2006)

Returning to Lightwood **(Slide 29)** Video clip from crag

So as we arrive up here a brief check in with the statement again

- **(Slide 30)** In a natural setting the therapeutic process is vitalised. Here, the client can connect with a pivotal embodied way-of-being-in-the-world through a lived process with the therapist and the place; and gain additional containment and support for that process.

And to move in on the final sentence

### **Keynote 3 is Systemic Regulation (Slide 31)**

Following on from the previous keynotes - I think if we are to invite the client into a more unpredictable relational space; we do have a responsibility to consider how the client is to be helped to contain and assimilate the resultant experience. Out in nature this issue no longer has to rest within the human to human therapeutic relationship. The creative use of nature in challenging times in some people's lives clearly highlights the regulatory possibilities to be found there. This is such a significant aspect of the human-nature relationship, tapping in to our evolutionary heritage (Wilson 1993) through our innate ability to be both soothed and cognitively restored by natural settings. If we refer back to my diagram **(slide 32)** you will remember that I have this aspect as an ongoing relational background to the work.

The systemic regulatory aspects of nature's impact on us continue to form the backbone of a lot of ongoing research and are so well documented that I won't go into them in great depth here. **(Slide 33)** But briefly, the original research emanating from the field of environmental psychology seems to demonstrate that contact with natural environments promotes a psychophysiological stress reduction response (Ulrich 1983) within our limbic



system, as well as an activation of an attentional recovery system (Kaplan 1995; Hartig 2004) in the frontal cortex of our brain. These are ancient innate survival responses, with the **(slide 34)** former important in affecting a swift recovery from fight, flight or freeze response; and the **(slide 35)** latter significant in clearing the mind, providing space for reflection and then regaining cognitive focus.

As a TA psychotherapist I understand this as a green relational process nestling at the heart of our dynamic Adult ego states (Summers 2011) i.e. the present centred, here and now aspects of our process. **(Slide 36)** Adult transactions with nature involve nonconscious (nonverbal, implicit) regulating interactions with the environment (the stress reduction theory), and by promoting the shift to a more reflective state, also helps us to develop our more conscious (verbal explicit) Adult process (the attention restoration material). Thus the Adult ego states of both client and therapist are infused with this green potency assisting them in tolerating and making sense of their experience within the therapeutic process. A classic example of this is with my client who often needed to get up high on the crag in the clip and look down on where we'd been working the week before in order (as he put it) to 'see the wood instead of getting lost and confused in the trees' – this would aid both his understanding of his own process and help him to develop a sense of compassion towards this, as he literally took an over view.

So these inherent regulatory and restorative mechanisms can help significantly with the containing and assimilation of emotion, and they potentially offer the client a new way-of-being with the emotion of trauma. This is largely a body based process that is ongoing throughout the therapy on an implicit level, but can be explicitly worked with, for example by supporting the client to follow an impulse to connect with a part of the environment that offers a resonance with their experience. It could also involve finding the elements in the place that are settling and grounding. An example of this in my work with Fiona came when she lay down on some bracken - this offered her a physical sense of feeling supported by the earth and helped with 'letting go' into what she was feeling. For her it also represented that her feelings could be 'earthed'. Another example is in the opening vignette with Jen where she quite instinctively leant back against the tree after connecting with a powerful experience. These interventions offer the client support that can be internalised through the body – a new felt sense of internal support.

A final visit to Lightwood **(Slide 37) - [Video clip of the woods](#)**

- **(Slide 38)** In a natural setting the therapeutic process is vitalised. Here, the client can connect with a pivotal embodied way-of-being-in-the-world through a lived process with the therapist and the place; and gain additional containment and support for that process.

## **Keynote 4 Place (Slide 39)**

So now to the elements in my statement that refer more directly to the all-important place.

In my experience through the process of the work the space becomes a place. It is a place in which both client and therapist find a 'them' that isn't experienced anywhere else; a place - identity that I view as central and unique to each therapeutic relationship. An example of this was demonstrated in the early work with Fiona - how I felt more alive with her in the place than I had with another client earlier that day. The natural setting is certainly a place to develop an important attachment to, or in the case of some clients, to try to avoid this occurring.

How this place-attachment is developed relates in part to some of the areas already covered. Thinking back to the early stages of the work with Fiona - through forming the vibrant alliance, a vital bond with the place was formed through opening to the vitality in the setting. Another example is that important process whereby clients explore aspects of the landscape that match and illuminate their internal experience. These are interventions that are important in terms of the client feeling connected to and supported by the environment. What is maybe less apparent is that the therapist too will usually experience the place as providing an important support for them in the therapeutic work, significant in the management of counter-transferential experiences. This highlights the real importance of the therapist carefully choosing a setting that they can really connect with, as in many ways the therapist's relationship with the place is as significant as the client's.

In therapeutic terms I relate much of this attachment process to aspects of the Winnicottian concept of the holding environment, as written about by psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden (2004). He refers to one aspect of holding as (slide 40) 'the means by which the sense of continuity of being is sustained over time'; and, as 'an unobtrusive state of 'coming together in one place' that has both a psychological and physical dimension'

From these definitions it is a small step to broaden this traditional therapeutic concept to include interactions with the wider context of the natural environment. In this I foreground the ongoing presence and structures of landscape, as enduring reference points; functioning as a 'gathering place' for parts of us that need integrating. These structures can, over time, be incorporated into the body-mind as an internal holding environment.

On a personal level this way of thinking relates to practice I term (slide 41) 'minding my landscape'. This is a kind of embodied storying, achieved through literally walking local topography into the body-mind - almost absorbing the contours of the land. This is landscape as elemental sustenance. In my view this perspective is important for thinking about well-being generally; in terms of how people could develop a more expansive sense of relational support in their lives, via forming an explicit embodied bond with their local

terrain. The shape of Lightwood on the last clip offers an example –the bowl-like terrain of the place is something that has been commented on by many clients – several reporting a sense of safety and feelings of being held and supported by it.

It occurs to me that all of this entails understanding the natural environment much more as part of our identity; a way of being that in westernized cultures we seem to have lost touch with, certainly on any conscious level. In long term outdoor therapeutic work for some clients the place itself begins to feel like ‘me’, where ‘me’ (referring to ecopsychological ideas), is now not just cut at the skin but extended to include the natural environment. In terms of the therapeutic relationship, the place is also part of ‘us’, so the ‘cut’ here is now no longer made at the therapy room door. **(Slide 42)** This psychological territory is about a more fluid ‘place-in-us and us-in-place’ identity. Through surrendering to the therapeutic place, inner and outer can often actually become less distinct although paradoxically more clearly known

For referential material that comes close to capturing how porous we are to the world, I have turned to the world of nature writing. Robert Macfarlane (2012) speaks about how ‘our minds, moods, imaginations, and identities are influenced by elements of the landscapes that we inhabit, remembered and actual’.

Here is Nan Shepherd writing in *The Living Mountain* of the bodily thinking that occurs when on the mountain.....

**(Slide 43)** ‘...something moves between me and it. Place and mind may interpenetrate until the nature of both are altered’

And **(slide 44)** a quote from Mark Cocker who incidentally used to live just along the road from Lightwood as a child.

*‘Lightwood was mine. Yet I didn’t so much feel ownership. I felt I belonged completely to it... Lightwood wasn’t just my local patch it was part of my identity’*

I believe that in moving therapy out into nature we are promoting reciprocal relationships with the natural world. This is inherently a connective practice that nourishes a more fluid sense of self-identity and as such is likely to invoke care for the place. One way this can show itself in an obvious sense is through clients noticing what is happening to the place through monitoring certain birds, animals and trees; picking up litter, and reflecting on the sometimes destructive human activity that takes place. But as this connective process is also the case for the therapist, for a final example I will return to my own relationship with Lightwood. This place really has become one of the great loves in my life, and I fully realised that when things began to happen to it earlier this year.

I arrived at Lightwood to work one day in order to find signs up, large machinery moving in and a massive drilling rig being set up. **(Slide 45, 46, 47)** This was all in a spot where only the

day before I'd been on a break between clients watching Grey Wagtails flitting about. I was appalled and devastated. This felt like an assault. And it was of course an assault on the land but, linking this to the material just mentioned, it also felt like an assault on me. The fact that this was a therapeutic place imbued all this with a particular quality, so the sense of assault was intensified. I realise I felt especially protective of Lightwood as the place contains not only elements of me as therapist and the clients I am currently working with, but traces of all the people I have ever worked with there.

Whilst holding my own feelings about the events occurring, as each client came into the space I then heard their experiences. These ranged from totally ignoring the activity to being very distressed - as one client put it... 'I can never have anything can I, before it's destroyed?' and describing how the minute he saw it he was working out where we could move to next. After some research it became apparent that the company that owns Buxton mineral water - Nestle - was going to test the water in one of the rivers coming off the moorland planning to bottle it and sell it as part of their Pure Life range. I was, and still am, incensed.

Part of working in this place during this time has involved sharing with some clients how I feel about what's happening and what I might do about it. Remember the overlap on the relating diagram where the client gets to witness the therapist's relationship with nature? Here is a direct example of this. My upset, concern, and care about Lightwood have at times flowed into the work, and my clients have seen the political side of me in a way I would almost certainly have kept more private or been less passionate about in a room.

Returning to my clients in all of this - as well as wanting to take action to protect Lightwood, many of them have also been prompted to bring more about environmental issues generally and where big corporations fit into that.

And in terms of the place it feels important to add there are local moves afoot to try to stop what's happening at Lightwood and protect this beautiful place.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To summarize - through connection with place, both therapist and client are flushed through with a fluid nonverbal otherness that is both mobilising and stirring, but also metabolising and regulating. **(Slide 48)** In this hour we have visited some underpinning ideas concerning vitality; the perpetual, expansive relating that occurs; the soothing, containing process that nature can support; and the holding attachment to a therapeutic place that promotes a shift in identity, and ultimately can lead to a cherishing of the environment. Outdoor therapy works both with our deepest innermost places, and our widest sense of the places we live in and love.

But put more simply, - to paraphrase Richard Mabey- I think working out in nature can support us to experience and work out what it means for each of us to be a living thing amongst other living things – part of the vital world.

So I will end by saying that I hope you have enjoyed the opportunity to connect with a significant place of your own and share that; and I wish you the joy of more curiosity about therapy and nature. But I do invite you not to reach for what I consider to be the deadening of certainty about this work too quickly; because in the very wise words of a recent workshop participant

**(Slide 49)** - 'Our interaction with nature is a wonderful mystery and personally, I hope.....

**(Slide 50)** ....it's one I never solve'

**Hayley Marshall - November 12<sup>th</sup> 2016**

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