

Introduction

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of the voluntary and statutory sector. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society and that they are supported to achieve their potential.

Scotland's youth work sector reaches in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. Youth work has three essential and definitive features:

- Young people choose to participate
- Youth work must build from where young people are
- Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process¹.

While the activities, venues, and approaches utilised to deliver youth work are varied, including youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation. Youth work in all its forms provides fundamental support to young people across the length and breadth of Scotland.

Climate Change Priorities

The Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change states that “*the impacts of climate change are not felt equally. People who have done the least to cause the problem are often most affected by it*”². This is true for young people, who will inherit the consequences of climate change caused by the actions of previous generations. A 2020 report by Ipsos Mori found that 84% of the Scottish public are concerned about climate change with 96% of those aged 16-24 saying they are concerned.

The Youth Strike4Climate movement demonstrated that young people are passionate and serious about the environment - and that their voices are powerful and should be listened to. It is encouraging to see the Draft Public Engagement Strategy intends to give young people a strong voice through the development of “*a new approach to ensuring a genuine role in the policy process for young people*”. YouthLink Scotland, Education Scotland, and the Scottish Government are co-developing the National Youth Work Strategy (2021-26). One of the main features of the new strategy is co-production with young people and youth work practitioners. This process highlighted climate change as a priority area of action for young people in Scotland. This is just

¹ [YouthLink Scotland | Youth work approach](#)

² Page 5 - [Net Zero Nation - Draft Public Engagement Strategy - Climate Change](#)

one example showing that Youthlink Scotland is experienced in working alongside youth workers and young people so young people have a platform for their priorities to be heard and given a central role in the development of policy.

Engaging with the Youth Work Sector

For the Public Engagement Strategy to be successful, it is crucial that there is direct and concerted engagement with Scotland's 80,000 youth workers and the 350,000 young people they work alongside. The youth work sector and colleagues from the children's sector and young grass roots climate activists have forced climate change up the political agenda. The Draft Public Engagement Strategy comes following an incredibly challenging year, with unprecedented disruption to education and a



significant increase in the demand for mental health and wellbeing services for young people during the Covid-19 pandemic. Out of this hugely challenging terrain, we have a unique opportunity to consider how to involve young people and the youth work sector in public engagement, listening to them, and involving them in the key policy and political changes required to support meaningful policy action in this area.

We understand that the intended audience for this strategy is primarily communicators of climate change. YouthLink Scotland, its member organisations, and the wider youth work sector, stand ready to assist the Scottish Government to engage with the public on this matter. For this to be a truly national endeavour, it is imperative to work collaboratively and consistently alongside trusted messengers and networks, so that the general public are at the heart of the national approach. We would ask Scottish Government to take cognisance of the significant infrastructure provided by the youth work sector as part of any action planning over the coming years. This will help deliver on the plans for public engagement, especially on the themes of communicating climate change policy and encouraging action.

Youth Work as a Key Partner

Within the theme of 'Encouraging Action', it is stated that Scottish Government intends to support key messengers to deliver the Strategy, noting: "*we are aware that the best communicators of climate change are often those who are relevant to, and trusted by, their audiences. We will continue to work with, and support, a range of networks which encourage climate change engagement and which motivate individuals and communities to take action*". Youth work plays a vital role as one of the key



messenger in this area, connecting with some of the most vulnerable young people in society and ensuring greater inclusivity on climate action.

We ask that the Draft Public Engagement Strategy on Climate Change recognises the positive impact of youth work by embedding youth work's contribution within the final strategy as a key partner. The legacy building potential of the youth

work industry to promote understanding, deliver key messaging, and encourage youth action towards Scotland becoming a net zero nation is unparalleled.

The Role of Youth Work: Learning for Sustainability

A comprehensive framework for public engagement on climate change strategy should include education as a key component, particularly by connecting with Learning for Sustainability (LfS). LfS³ is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. This brings together global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning experiences, supporting young people's development and understanding of the world around them. LfS is an entitlement for all learners within the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which are central to Scotland's national vision.

Green and blue recovery, including environmental sustainability, is intrinsically linked with social justice, human rights, global citizenship and democratic participation. Sustainable development education must therefore be integrated into all forms of

³ [Learning for Sustainability \(youthlinkscotland.org\)](https://youthlinkscotland.org)



learning across people’s lives, including through informal learning such as youth work. Using the LfS model is shown to increase attainment and have positive mental and physical health benefits⁴. This will help inform young people about the impact of their individual behaviours, as well as being prepared for future employability in low carbon industries.

This approach clearly connects with the aims of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy to “*support trusted messengers to increase climate literacy*” and to “*support climate education*”.

The Role of Youth Work: Encouraging Action in Young People

YouthLink Scotland are the operational and strategic lead for #IWILL in Scotland, supported strategically by Young Scot. This campaign aims to increase the opportunities for young people to take part in youth social action activities such as volunteering, campaigning, fundraising and activism. We believe that young people have the energy, skills and ideas to change their communities, society and the environment for the better.

The #IWill4Nature⁵ sub-campaign champions the vital role that young people can play in supporting and improving the environment through their individual and collective actions.

This includes a Power of Youth Charter, providing a framework for organisations to empower more young people to take up action and influence change. When organisations sign up, they are making a public commitment to take meaningful action, empowering young people to be changemakers⁶. We commend the campaign and associated resources to the Scottish Government Public Engagement team. The group is increasing in number and is primed to take action and encourage others to do the same. This is just one example where collaboration with the youth work sector would help to deliver on the Public Engagement Strategy.

⁴ Education Scotland, *Outdoor Learning: Practical guidance, ideas and support for teachers and practitioners in Scotland*, p. 8-10

⁵ [#Iwill4nature](#)

⁶ [mini-charter-pack.pdf \(youthlinkscotland.org\)](#)

The Role of Youth Work: Working Collaboratively with the Environmental Sector

At YouthLink Scotland, we are involved in collaborative approaches between the youth and environment sectors. For example, YouthLink Scotland is currently engaging with young people from the Scotland-based Our Bright Future⁷ projects and other interested people/groups in creating change for young people, the environment and



their communities. The policy and advocacy work focuses on more time spent learning in, and about, nature, support in securing environmental jobs, and ensuring Government, employers, businesses, schools and charities give greater priority to the needs of young people and the environment. In addition, we have hosted climate change focused programmes and

training with young people and youth workers, and through our policy seminar planning group, we delivered several climate change policy seminars⁸ for youth workers and policy professionals during 2020.

These projects and seminars clearly connect with the aims of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy to “*support trusted messengers to increase climate literacy*” and to “*support climate education*”.

We believe that collaborative approaches between the youth work sector and the environmental sector can be used to develop and deliver upon the Draft Public Engagement Strategy.

As stated, YouthLink Scotland has been working with Our Bright Future to support their policy and advocacy work in Scotland. This innovative partnership is led by The Wildlife Trusts, bringing together the youth and environmental sectors and is formed of 31 projects across the UK. Each project is helping young people aged 11-24 gain vital skills and experience and improve their wellbeing. They act as catalysts for delivering change for their local environment and community - contributing to a greener economy.

Highlights include:

- Almost 4,000 qualifications or awards gained by participants, around 80% of which are accredited

⁷ [Our Bright Future – Our environment is our future](#)

⁸ [Policy Seminar Planning Group | YouthLink Scotland](#)

- 758 young people have entered into employment, training, and volunteering. Of these, 283 have gained paid employment and many of the roles appear to be in the environmental/sustainability sector
- 214 entrepreneurial projects started (50 businesses and 164 enterprises)⁹.

There are two main Our Bright Future projects running in Scotland: Fife's Our Bright Future, run by Falkland Stewardship Trust and Creative Pathways Environmental Design project, run by Impact Arts.

A snapshot of other successful projects working alongside the environmental sector and taking a youth work approach in Scotland include:

- Woodcraft Folk provides an informal and supportive environment for young people to develop their ideas, share experiences and explore opportunities, including future employment possibilities, in and around their local area and beyond¹⁰
- The Conservation Volunteers accredited learning programmes are delivered outdoors with environmental conservation as the main focus of hands-on practical activity. The group offers a range of short and long term accredited environmental employability programmes for people aged 16 and over, regardless of level of experience, disability or background. They are a registered centre with The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and incorporates the John Muir Award, HSE and Lantra accredited training into all of their programmes¹¹
- Venture Trust has a focus on moving group-based personal development in Scotland's wilderness and outdoor communities and offers young people core skills development, with employability support aimed at those looking for further training and progression to employment¹². In the past six years the group has worked with almost 1000 young people. It has seen 78% of participants improve their confidence, 75% increased their range of employability skills and as part of The Next Steps programme (supporting 644 women) - 60% of women who completed the wilderness journey went on to achieve at least one 'positive destination' (education, employment, training or volunteering)¹³
- The Pre-Accelerator programme is a collaboration between the Rural Youth Project, NFU Scotland Next Gen and Scottish Association of Young Farmers in

⁹ [Our Bright Future Mid-Term Evaluation Report 2019](#)

¹⁰ [Woodcraft Folk](#)

¹¹ [The Conservation Volunteers](#)

¹² [Venture Trust](#)

¹³ [Next Steps Evaluation](#)

partnership with Royal Bank of Scotland to foster greater entrepreneurship within Scottish agricultural and rural communities. Individuals will complete various modules, following graduation they have the opportunity to enroll in the fuller 16-week course¹⁴

- The EVOLS Project (Environmental Volunteers Outdoor Learners) helps vulnerable people aged 13 to 18 develop their skills through practical conservation work such as tree planting and activities including climbing, abseiling and kayaking. As a result, hundreds of young people in Edinburgh have improved their health, wellbeing and job prospects¹⁵.

Investing in Youth Work

A recent survey of youth workers¹⁶ highlighted perceived reductions to youth work services, budgets and staffing across Scotland over the last three years and is a serious concern. The youth work sector is well positioned to work with young people and their communities in areas relevant to climate change policy. This can only continue to be the case if youth work is valued and properly resourced. In 2019, YouthLink Scotland launched the #InvestInYouthWork campaign¹⁷ to show the value of youth work lies not only in the difference it makes directly to the lives of the young people who engage with services, but extends further to the many benefits it provides to wider society in working towards a green and blue recovery.



Investing in our young people provides considerable long-term benefits and directly addresses a shift towards “*encouraging action*”, as outlined in theme 3 of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy¹⁸. Within this theme, it is stated that “*[e]mpowered communities are able to take forward their understanding of how climate change will affect their community, and take action to improve local resilience. When combined, engaged and empowered communities support people in Scotland to be adaptable to the changing climate*”¹⁹. The #investinyouthwork campaign demonstrates that youth

¹⁴ [Pre-Accelerator Programme](#)

¹⁵ [EVOLS Project](#)

¹⁶ [Final Survey Report](#)

¹⁷ [Invest in Youth Work Campaign](#)

¹⁸ [Climate Change - Net Zero Nation: draft public engagement strategy - consultation](#)

¹⁹ Ibid: 24

work plays a fundamental role in empowering young people. Youth work changes lives and empowers young people to affect change from within their communities.

Further, youth work in Scotland is deeply embedded within the national policy landscape. The sector makes a significant contribution on equality and inclusion and improving outcomes for children and young people and ensures their rights are respected and enhanced. We know from our Universal Youth Work Research²⁰ that youth work contributes to a growing body of evidence developing in Scotland making a significant contribution to young people's lives through providing opportunities to lead and help others as well support to become more active citizens, broadening their horizons and realising their potential²¹. All of this is crucial in order for young people to take action on climate change. We need to see greater recognition of the benefits



of youth work as a form of informal education. Youth work opportunities should be available to all young people and in turn, will help to support the positive environmental changes required to build lasting change.

The youth work sector has a fundamental role to play in encouraging action, supporting climate education to help young people make connections to

nature and biodiversity - as a trusted messenger to increase climate literacy.

Investing in youth work is an investment in the future of young people and our local communities. If Scotland truly aspires to be the best place in the world to grow up and to be a leader on climate action, then youth work should be an essential partner in making both these things happen. We need to ensure that funding is in place to deliver this for all our young people, including crucial support for volunteers – many of whom are activists and/or taking up positions of leadership on environmental issues.

The Role of Youth Work: Involvement of Young People in Decision Making and Policy Creation

We consider the three objectives of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy - communicating climate change policy, enabling participation in policy design and encouraging action - to be appropriate. However, within the second policy objective we would encourage explicit recognition of the role of young people within enabling participation and policy design. It is contained within an action. However, we believe it deserves to be a stand-alone objective. The strategy aims to “[e]nsure those most affected by our transition and climate impacts are engaged in the design and delivery

²⁰ [Impact of Community Based Universal Youth Work](#)

²¹ [Final Report - Community Based Universal Youth Work](#)

of policies". There is no group more affected in Scotland than our young people. As such, we would like to see the strategy state more explicitly that our young people stand to be the most affected by climate change and that they should have a central role in decision making processes and policy design.

During a survey of over one thousand young people on their priorities for the youth work sector, engagement and action on climate change was highlighted as a key priority theme for action by the majority of respondents²². Young people have driven the climate change agenda to where we are today. It is young people who should be actively participating and leading on fair and inclusive policies that encourage



adaptation to - and mitigation of - climate change. It is important that this is recognised as part of the strategic aims and featuring prominently in the Draft Public Engagement Strategy. Young people will be the most affected by climate change so they should be at the forefront of consultation on the response.

We agree with the strategy proposal that widespread participation and engagement

is essential if we are to successfully limit the effects of climate change, prepare for the impacts that are already locked in, and harness the opportunities to innovate and adapt to a changing climate. It is important to recognise that those working with people and communities in areas relevant to climate change policy will have an essential role in the delivery of the strategy. As the main audience for this strategy is delivery stakeholders then youth work practitioners should be viewed as playing a crucial role, as trusted participants in policy design to position young people at the heart of the strategic national approach.

Participation of children and young people is one of the General Principles of the UNCRC. Article 12 is clear that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This principle recognises children and young people as actors in their own lives and this applies at all times throughout a young person's life²³. There is a wider group of relevant articles addressing the right of children to participate, and which influence our understanding of participation, including a young person's right to seek and receive information, to express their own views and to associate with others²⁴. These articles all clearly link to the role played by the youth work sector.

Participation in policy making should not be seen as a one-off, event-based undertaking, or an end in itself; but an overarching principle which builds a meaningful,

²² [New National Youth Work Strategy – The Journey Continues \(youthlinkscotland.org\)](https://youthlinkscotland.org/)

²³ [Recognising and realising children's rights: A professional learning resource to promote self-evaluation and improvement planning | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](https://education.gov.scot/)

²⁴ Ibid

effective and ongoing dialogue between young people, staff and volunteers. For children and young people, knowing that they have the right to be heard in decisions which affect them boosts not only their sense of security, but also their self-confidence²⁵. This opens the way to developing and applying the skills, language and concepts that empower them to claim their rights and to advocate for their rights. Taking a youth work approach on participation is legacy building as it contributes to the core aims of UNCRC.

Case Study Examples: Supporting Youth Participation in Decision Making

The consultation paper asks for practical examples or case studies of good practice for enabling participation in decision-making that could be useful for informing the approach of the Public Engagement Strategy. There are many examples of this from the Youth Work Sector.

In the Shetland Islands, the service level agreement between Shetland Islands Council and UNICEF for the Right Respecting Schools Programme is being renewed through the regional improvement collaborative. As part of their youth work offer to schools, a workshop themed on children's rights is being made available by their Youth Development team to ensure every young person in the community is aware of their rights. They continue to support the two Members of the Scottish Parliament. In doing so, youth work plays a pivotal role on the realisation of Article 12 Right for Respect of the Views of the Child and to have their views listened to and be taken seriously. By engaging young people in social activism, youth work builds citizenship, respect for human rights and a sense of mutual responsibility.

In South Lanarkshire Council, the commitment to young people, citizenship, rights, and participation from the youth work sector is long standing. The Local Authority have had a strong Youth Council since 1996 and active within community planning since the early 2000's as an equal partner on the Youth Partnership (Corporate Connections Board). This is integral to increasing participative approaches for young people and they are uniquely positioned to encourage partners in the council to do the same.

Recent notable rights based participation by South Lanarkshire Youth Council has included:

- Rural Youth Summit (Biggar) - 24 service providers engaging with Bigger High School pupils - organised and funded by young people (SLYC)
- Larkhall Youth Housing Forum (Scottish Youth Parliament members, Housing and Technical, Larkhall Housing Forum and Larkhall Academy)

²⁵ [The Right to Participation for Rights Respecting Schools - UNICEF UK](#)

- SPT - rebadging and framing of Dial-a-bus service - young person identified issue and took direct action, supported by keyworker staff.
- Scottish Youth Parliament mosquito device at Hamilton Train Station – young person identified and took direct action, supported by keyworker staff.

The Care Inspectorate Services for Children and Young People recognised the outstanding commitment to participation and consultation, by South Lanarkshire Youth Council stating:

“Staff are hugely committed to skilling up and supporting members to carry out their roles and responsibilities. The Youth Council has a high profile in civic life. The voices of children and young people meeting at a local level and those coming together around a common cause shape the work of the Youth Council. It is at the heart of developing and delivering the Youth Strategy. The Youth Council is positively influencing a growing number of policy, planning and service developments which impact on the lives of children and young people” (Services for Children and Young People in South Lanarkshire, Care Inspectorate, 23 February 2015).

During inspection of Community Learning and Development, it was noted:

“South Lanarkshire Youth Council is influential and is regularly consulted on issues affecting communities. Young people are active and enthusiastic contributors to strategic decision making. Their views are valued by senior officers and elected members. Their actions are leading to positive change, for example, through recent work with Scotrail. The work of YOYP Ambassadors is leading to good levels of involvement in YOYP events with over 900 attending the recent launch” (Inspection of Community Learning and Development in South Lanarkshire, Education Scotland, 23 July 2018).

There are numerous examples of young people and the youth work teams participating within decision-making structures. Some examples, include:

- North Lanarkshire youth participation structure cited in the most recent Being Heard Report
- Youth representatives at the Enterprise and Communities committee meetings presenting reports with CLD Officers
- Using a Rights Based approach to the new youth work delivery plan and co-production with young people (including one providing all the graphic images for the final version)
- Establishment of Youth Reference group who have 3-weekly meetings with the Director of Education and Young People / Families Manager supported by Youth Development Officer (young people from this reference group were all part of community hubs)

- Prior to Covid-19, the group had discussions with the Chief Executive’s Department about a Young Person’s Steering Group for Climate Change
- North Lanarkshire Council has established nine new Town Boards and have include youth representation on all nine.



In a discussion with Donna Anderson, Youth Participation and Democracy Officer at North Ayrshire Council, Donna outlined the importance of youth work as a key partnership anchor for local participation. She referred to youth work’s role at informing local strategies and the importance of a National Youth Work Strategy (2021-26) to build on an already

positive council wide approach to young people’s participation. She believes youth work’s role is *“crucial in realising and driving forward plans for young people’s participation in policy making”*.

The Role of Youth Work: The Link Between Skills, Employability, and Climate Action

The response to the environmental challenges of the climate emergency and the transition to a Net Zero economy, means that new skills will be required in addition to the creation of new jobs. There is an integral relationship between youth work and employability through the role youth work plays in supporting young people in schools, community and post-school contexts. This relationship should be developed further as we continue to adjust to the consequences of COVID-19 and its impact on the labour market, which is being acutely felt by young people in Scotland in relation to their future employment prospects²⁶. In doing so, it is also possible to harness the potential of the sector as the gateway to a green revolution. For those young people living in poverty and who were already furthest away from the job market before the coronavirus crisis, inequalities are worsening²⁷. A report from the UK-based Youth Employment Group (YEG) found pre-lockdown in the UK, 750,000 young people were NEET (not in education, employment or training). The Resolution Foundation estimates that a further 600,000 could find themselves unemployed this year, with estimates from the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Learning and Work Institute (LWI) that 500,000 young people will become long-term unemployed over the next year²⁸. In Scotland, the youth labour market (16-24 year olds) is showing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Scottish Youth Unemployment was 13.1 per cent at the end of

²⁶ [Lockdown Lowdown Final Report](#)

²⁷ [Poverty in the pandemic: An update on the impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children | CPAG](#)

²⁸ [A generation of young Scots faces threat of long-term unemployment – Amelia Morgan | The Scotsman](#)

April, 2020. This represents a rise of 5.7% since January the same year. Applied to Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures, this means 45,000 young Scots out of work²⁹. Therefore, considerable sustained support will be essential for young people and the youth work sector in Scotland to navigate this extremely precarious time.

It is notable therefore that employability features strongly in the Draft Strategy as crucial to creating green jobs, developing sustainable skills and nurturing wellbeing



and connects to wider Scottish Government objectives, including commitments made on youth job guarantees³⁰.

COP26 and Employability

The Scottish Government should consider using COP26 as the catalyst to bring together the

youth and environmental sectors to focus on employment in green and blue jobs to ensure we can combine essential recovery from the pandemic for young people with employability bolstering their long-term prospects – in doing so, forging positive and long-lasting links between the sectors to enhance life chances of young people. The formation of the Scottish Youth Employment Group led by third sector and private provider networks on employability and training has been a positive step in the right direction. However, the youth work sector can drive engagement with partners to ensure COP26 is a success and the associated issues are highlighted on a local and national scale. This will help ensure the involvement of young people in the process so they are given the prominence they deserve. The event provides an opportunity to solidify existing relationships and bring together other key leaders within the youth and environment sectors. We can promote collective thinking with government and wider policy-makers, ensuring Scotland's young people are adequately supported during recovery by being aware of the youth and environmental opportunities available to them. This should include volunteering opportunities (as part of a National campaign) so young people are the drivers of a wellbeing economy that is supportive of direct and sustained action on climate change. We believe this will support the long term intention of the Scottish Government Youth Guarantee³¹, moving young people into the Green New Deal to help the nation tackle climate change. The youth work sector should be recognised and invested in at local and national level to support businesses and organisations to support new and increased opportunities for green and blue job creation.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ [£100 million for employment support and training - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/news/2020/04/20/100-million-for-employment-support-and-training/)

³¹ [Scotland Launches Youth Guarantee - Youth Employment UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scotland-launches-youth-guarantee)

Significant investment is required for youth work organisations to support young people to engage in COP26 and have a voice in decision making and advocacy work moving forward towards a green and blue recovery. The Draft Public Engagement Strategy should therefore consider the impact of potentially new types of employability on young people, linking the engagement strategy with broader issues affecting young people in Scotland.

COP26 is an opportunity to invest in the next generation through improving the skills required to support the transition to a low carbon economy. Youth work organisations play an integral role in helping young people's access to work, especially for those who are not in education, employment and training and come from a disadvantaged background. Therefore, YouthLink Scotland urges Scottish Government to fund new training schemes that would allow the youth work and the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers.

Recommendations

Utilise Youth Work as a Key Partner

As a sector of society which is trusted by young people, youth workers are well placed to work with and support a range of networks which encourage climate change engagement and motivate young people to take their actions in their communities. It has been evidenced within this document that youth work plays a vital role as one of the key messengers in this area. We ask that the Draft Public Engagement Strategy on Climate Change recognises the positive impact of youth work by embedding youth work's contribution within the final strategy as a key partner.

Upskilling Youth Work Leaders on Climate Emergency

For a green/blue recovery it is essential that youth workers, and young people who are leaders and mobilisers, are equipped with a working understanding of the climate emergency and that they are given the skills and tools to help young people to turn their concerns about climate change into positive action³².

Investment in Outdoor Learning

³² As just one example, YouthLink Scotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful with funding from the Scottish Government are delivering climate emergency training as part of the Youth Leader Climate Project <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/events/july-2020/climate-emergency-training-for-youth-workers/>

It is well documented that outdoor learning experiences can contribute positively to Scotland's children and young people, providing opportunities to raise young people's awareness of environmental and sustainability issues³³. In so doing this supports climate education, one of the aims of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy. Young people's understanding and engagement with nature is essential to a green/blue renewal. Greater investment in outdoor learning can help to achieve the Strategy's aim of working with partners to help people make connections to nature and biodiversity.

Investment in Youth Work

We need to see greater recognition of the benefits of youth work as a form of informal education and this includes the capacity of youth work to provide wide reaching climate education.

Facilitate collaborative approaches between the youth and environment sectors

Collaborative approaches between the youth work sector and the environmental sector is essential to develop and deliver upon the Draft Public Engagement Strategy. The youth work sector has a fundamental role to play in encouraging action, supporting climate education, as a working partnership to help young people make connections to nature and biodiversity, and as a trusted messenger to increase climate literacy.

Support for Environmental Jobs

Young people have said they want a new future jobs scheme, allowing the environmental sector to support young people into environmental, conservation, horticulture and other careers. A joined-up approach to investment is urgently needed to tackle both unemployment/poor employment and the need to recover Scotland's natural environment. This should be a strand of any public engagement on climate change. We believe the collaborative approaches listed previously in this document - between the youth and environment sectors - could be used to help deliver sustainable industries.

³³ [Youth Link Scotland - Outdoor Learning and Education Recovery](#)

Utilise COP26 for Green Employability and Strengthening Relationships between the Youth and Environment Sectors

COP26 ought to be used as the catalyst to bring together the youth and environmental sectors to focus on employment in green and blue jobs to ensure we can combine essential recovery from the pandemic for young people with employability bolstering their long-term prospects – in doing so, forging positive and long-lasting links between the sectors to enhance life chances of young people. The COP26 event provides an opportunity to solidify existing relationships and bring together other key leaders and broader issues within the youth and environment sectors.

Blue Recovery

Young people demonstrated during the Year of Coasts and Waters (2020), as part of YouthLink Scotland, youth-led research project “*On Our Wave Length*³⁴”, a commitment to better understanding the need for a blue recovery for Scotland coasts, marine/wildlife and communities. A comprehensive engagement plan should include reference and commitment to a blue recovery so all key messaging is captured and included within associated education and training programmes. With 71% of the Earth’s surface covered in water, blue recovery is a crucial component of tackling the climate emergency.

Participation of Children and Young People Built into all Policy Planning Processes

Training on children’s rights and participation should, in the first instance, be offered to all staff/volunteers (including youth workers) in schools and community settings who have the initial contact with children and young people and thereafter expanded to all staff that work with young people or have a responsibility for children’s services planning.

Address Social Class as a Barrier to Young People’s Environmental Activism

Research has shown that on environmental issues one of the biggest barriers is social class. The public engagement strategy should specifically outline how it plans to target SIMD groups 1 and 2 so young people from these areas have an opportunity to use their talents and immerse themselves as part of a new wave of campaigners, as well

³⁴ [On Our Wave Length](#)

as ensuring they have access to the opportunities arising from the measures taken to tackle climate change.

Create Campaign Packs

Positioning climate campaigning as part of the new normal for young people will broaden support. Campaign packs for youth workers to utilise alongside young people will speak from known successes of young people and carry relatable messages, imagery and include easily understood language. These can be discussed and shared in youth work settings.

Peer Support and Highlighting Success

Research has found that young climate campaigners feel isolated and powerless³⁵, however when they work together, they feel more empowered to effect change. Youth work settings provide opportunities for storytelling and a receptive audience to connect and share messages and build campaigns³⁶. The voluntary nature of running a campaign can be an obstacle to success, however being in the company of other young campaigners is an important motivator. There is potential to build upon inter-generational initiatives and forge stronger communities as by-products of climate action. Where there is a tangible difference made by young activists, this should be highlighted, in order to inspire confidence and foster an optimistic outlook amongst more young people. This will increase the chance of young people persevering in the long term.

Knowing Your Audience and Including Marginalised Groups

There is a growing movement for change among young people, however some groups are more engaged than others. When reaching out to new audiences without a background in activism, organisers should consider carefully what type of campaigning strategy and messaging will appeal³⁷. For example, engaging with existing well-established campaigns is known to provide inspiration, validation and support. Furthermore, consideration should be given to ways to remove barriers to participation for marginalised groups of young people, such as young people of colour, LGBT

³⁵ [Climate Action Survey](#)

³⁶ [Greta Thunberg: teenager on a global mission to 'make a difference' | Greta Thunberg | The Guardian](#)

³⁷ Ibid

groups, those with disabilities, care experienced and young people who come into contact with the law.

Policy and training support for youth work charities

Consideration should be given to investing in training and policy support for youth work organisations to green their youth work spaces and procedures so there is a culture of sustainable practice. This should include upskilling youth work practitioners to understand use the SGD's in their activities, evaluation, and reporting.

Sustainable Development Goals and the UNCRC

There is an opportunity to link the strategy with overarching frameworks such as the 17 SDGs - also referred to as 'The Global Goals'. This is a collection of independent but interconnected goals carefully designed to give everyone a better future, with hundreds of targets and measurement indicators geared toward a date of 2030. The goals range from ending poverty to building sustainable cities. The SDGs are also aligned with the UNCRC and all the SDGs are relevant to children and young people. Fundamental children's rights cannot be realised without the success of the SDGs. Scotland was one of the first nations to accept the SDGs and pledge to work towards them, so it would be fitting for these Goals to feature in the Public Engagement Strategy.

Participation of Children and Young People in Rights Respecting Schools

Another avenue to increasing Climate Education and to facilitate young people's participation in policy design is the participation of young people in the issues of the day within Rights Respecting Schools. In these schools, children understand that participation is a right, "*an entitlement not a permission*"³⁸. Children and young people are supported to get involved and the impact of participation on policy development.

Conclusion

"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children"
(Native American proverb)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed young people make huge sacrifices for the greater good of society. They have done so largely to protect older

³⁸Ibid.

generations from risk of harm, with young people themselves facing a comparatively smaller risk from the virus. As society emerges from the pandemic, it is fundamentally important we all now work together to limit the impact of climate change and to implement the changes necessary to do this. It is young people who, along with future generations, will have to live with the worst consequences of climate change. This is why young people must be central to, and actively engaged in, the public engagement strategy.

Throughout this pandemic, young people have demonstrated they have the capacity to implement and adapt to society-wide transformation. We know the climate is a priority area of action for young people and they are eager to engage in action to address the climate emergency.

While there are enormous challenges brought by the coronavirus pandemic, there is a strategic opportunity to build a greener/bluer, fairer and more inclusive society. The global pandemic is an opportunity to inspire change in our communities. In the past this has been hindered or thinking has been limited by operating within current political and policy frameworks. A forced re-imagining of a society (currently united in a global struggle) helps more people see the need to provide food, water, a sustainable environment and a healthy planet for the future.

It is imperative that we capitalise on this awareness. Many people are going through an awakening as a result of their own experiences of COVID-19. We have already seen the pandemic lead to a reduction in emissions harmful to the climate, making the air safer for us to breathe³⁹. However, it is essential that we adopt a shared vision, otherwise any positive strides made on climate change will only be temporary.

By putting young people at the heart of the strategy and harnessing the connectedness of the youth work sector we can empower everyone in Scotland to be a part of shaping our transition in a just and equitable manner. To maximise the effectiveness and inclusivity of the strategy for young people, youth organisations must be at the heart of delivering it. This will help build the societal transformation required for Scotland to become a net zero nation.

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES

[Climate Change - Net Zero Nation: draft public engagement strategy - consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-public-engagement-strategy-consultation-2020/pages/10.aspx)

³⁹ [Covid pandemic drove a record drop in global carbon emissions in 2020 \(cnbc.com\)](https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/29/economy/covid-carbon-emissions-2020/index.html)



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