

Natural Leaders Programme

Impact Evaluation



April 2025

Natural Leaders Programme Impact Evaluation

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“I’d recommend Natural Leaders, because you learn skills – and the main thing, it’s fun!”.

— Young Person



“This is brilliant – I’d like to see it in every primary school”.

— Senior Community Education Worker



“We could fill the programme for next year three times over”.

— Primary School Head Teacher



“This project really works because it instils young people with pride in their community”.

— Youth Worker

With thanks to our funders:



With thanks to our partners:





Executive Summary

Natural Leaders was a two-year action research project, piloted in areas of multiple deprivation in North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross and West Lothian. The programme was a partnership between YouthLink Scotland, local authority youth work teams, schools and natural heritage organisations who worked together to offer young people a new approach to Learning for Sustainability in their local green spaces.

Youth workers are particularly skilled in engaging and supporting the hardest to reach young people – those most severely affected by poverty and wider inequalities. Natural heritage organisations bring a wealth of local knowledge and expertise about wildlife, bio-diversity and the environment. The Natural Leaders programme brought these different sets of expertise together to create unique learning experiences for young people who were struggling to engage in the school classroom.

115 young people aged 11-12, identified as being at risk of disengaging from education have had access to the Natural Leaders programme. Over the course of the programme, participants took part in nature-based learning activities, volunteered in their local green spaces and grew in confidence to:

- **Build relationships with peers and with adults.**
- **Participate in new learning opportunities and experiences.**
- **Communicate more effectively.**
- **Plan and organise activities, in particular showing determination to achieve goals.**
- **Be resilient.**
- **Influence change in their lives and communities.**

Teachers affirmed that the youth work approach is supporting young people's readiness to learn and building relationships that will continue to support their learning as they transition from primary to secondary school.

Youth workers, teachers and natural heritage partners have also valued opportunities to work together and learn from one another. In particular:

- **Youth workers feel more confident to build young people's connection to nature and build effective partnerships with schools.**
- **Natural Heritage organisations value the opportunity to reach new audiences of young people who might otherwise not have the opportunity to connect with their work.**





What is the Natural Leaders Programme?

Natural Leaders was two-year action research project that was piloted in three areas of multiple deprivation in North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross and West Lothian. Through the programme, 115 young people aged 11-12, identified as being at risk of disengaging from formal education accessed a new approach to Learning for Sustainability designed to spark young people's connection to nature, before enabling them to create and implement their own plan of action to protect natural heritage in their chosen local greenspace.

The programme was a partnership between YouthLink Scotland, local authority youth work teams, schools, RSPB and the John Muir Trust, and also involved local natural heritage partners in each setting.

The work was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, The David Doig Foundation (via Foundation Scotland) and The Gannochy Trust.

What is the need for an approach like the Natural Leaders Programme?

Engaging all young people in learning for sustainability

- Professor Ken Muir's recommendations for education reform in Scotland ('Putting Learners at the Centre – Towards a Vision for Scottish Education', 2023¹) reinforced the need for 'values, attitudes, knowledge and skills to be significantly strengthened [across the education system] in the context of Learning for Sustainability'.
- We know that young people affected by poverty have fewer opportunities to learn outside and connect with nature² and there is growing evidence of the positive impact of outdoor learning on young people's health and wellbeing and attainment.



See our short film with the youth work team, teachers and participating young people in North Lanarkshire sharing their thoughts on the impact of the programme here: [Natural Leaders Programme](#)

1 www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-centre-towards-future-vision-scottish-education

2 [Children suffering due to lack of outdoor play, UK charities warn | Children | The Guardian](#)





Tackling the poverty related attainment gap

- An increasing number of Scotland's young people are facing barriers to engagement in learning in both primary and secondary school. School attendance is more of an issue than ever, and recent data from the Attainment Scotland Fund shows that the gap in school attendance between young people from the most deprived and least deprived areas is widening.
- A recent evaluation by the Attainment Scotland Fund³⁴ shows that more care and support is needed as young people, particularly those already facing barriers to engagement in learning, transition from primary to secondary school:
 - » Children from low-income families are almost twice as likely to experience a negative transition between primary and secondary school (Growing Up in Scotland Data)
 - » The Health and Wellbeing Census highlights a widening poverty-related gap between pupils enjoying learning and school, especially between S1 and S3
 - » The data show that the health and wellbeing gap is relatively narrow at P5, but widens between S1 and S3.

3 [Attainment Scotland Fund Evaluation: Reporting on National Improvement Framework Attainment and Health and Wellbeing Measures, 2024](#)

4 [attainment-scotland-fund-evaluation-reporting-wider-evidence-sources-2024.pdf](#)



Supporting collaborative approaches to engaging young people as learners and change-makers

A youth work approach to the needs outlined above makes sense because youth workers are particularly skilled in engaging and supporting young people who face barriers to learning due to poverty and wider inequalities. Youth work practitioners aim to meet young people where they are, in community settings as well as in school, supporting them as they rebuild their confidence and motivation to learn. However, this programme was built on a much wider collaboration between youth work, young people, schools and national and local natural heritage specialists because we believed that this partnership would enhance the learning experiences we could offer young people over the course of the programme AND build collaborative capacity within the system to continue to build on this beyond the funded programme.

Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan⁵ highlights the need for:

- Professional learning that is better at building confidence and capacity.
- A focus on “Learning for Sustainability in practice” rather than the theory.

As well as the support that is offered directly to young people through the Natural Leaders project, we had an additional aim of building the confidence and capacity of youth work and school partnerships to collaborate with the environment sector to offer high-quality, inclusive, experiential learning experiences that raise awareness of the importance of natural heritage.

A 2020 Scottish Government report⁶ highlighted the need to build ‘learning communities’ that grow confidence to recognise and maximise the potential of Learning for Sustainability to contribute to educational outcomes. The Natural Leaders approach was designed to strengthen local networks to enhance learning experiences for young people by:

- Building youth workers’ skills and confidence to co-design engaging learning experiences with natural heritage partners.
- Building the skills and confidence of natural heritage partners to engage young people using a genuinely youth-led youth work approach that starts from where young people are.
- Most importantly, enabling young people to inform new approaches to youth participation in natural heritage.

⁵ www.gov.scot/publications/target-2030-movement-people-planet-prosperity

⁶ [The Impact of Learning for Sustainability on Educational Outcomes: A Summary of Findings](#)





Programme Design

The Natural Leaders programme follows the principles of a youth work approach – young people choose to take part and youth workers partner with them in the learning process, discovering and following young people’s interests. Importantly, there is no assumption that young people should arrive on the programme with an enthusiasm for the environment or nature conservation. Instead, young people and youth workers work together over three distinct stages::

Stage 1: Sparking connection with nature

In this early stage of the programme youth workers support young people to build trusted relationships and offer short, light-touch activities that allow the group to explore different aspects of nature in local green spaces and begin to find out more about what interests them.

Stage 2: Building deeper connection

Young people begin to explore their chosen local greenspace in more depth, finding out more about wildlife and biodiversity and exploring natural heritage through a range of ‘hands on’ experiences, designed locally with heritage partners to make the most of local assets.

Stage 3: Connection in Action

Following these early experiences, youth workers support young people to decide how they want to work together to protect the natural heritage in their greenspace. Each group makes their own decision about what they wanted to achieve. What is important is that the young people feel a genuine sense of ownership for the work they choose to do to make a tangible difference to natural heritage in their local area. In this phase, young people then work together to make their ideas a reality with help from youth workers and natural heritage partners.



Figure 1

West Lothian	North Lanarkshire	Perth and Kinross
Year 1		
<p>Dedridge Primary School, Livingston</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Park clean up and working towards reintroducing frogs to Froggie pond by building a hibernaculum.</p>	<p>St Timothy’s Primary School, Coatbridge</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Building bug hotels in Drumpellier Park and a letter-writing campaign to local councillors regarding litter in the park and dangers to animals.</p>	<p>Ratray and Coupar Angus Primary Schools</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Building bird boxes and the foundations for a new pond to attract and protect amphibians.</p>
Year 2		
<p>Whitdale Primary School, Whitburn</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Improving the habitat for bees in Blaeberry Park, including creating new food sources.</p>	<p>Riverside Primary School, Coatbridge</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Working with the Park Rangers to gather information on animals in Drumpellier park, identifying the negative impact that litter has on their habitat and completing a litter pick to protect their local wildlife.</p>	<p>Ratray and Coupar Angus Primary Schools</p> <p>Focus for young people’s action plan: Onward development of the pond area in Buttery Park.</p>





The Impact of the Programme on Young People

School partners, parents and participants say that the programme has offered young people positive opportunities to build confidence, resilience and communication skills, and in many cases, strong relationships to support learning - with peers and youth workers – prior to secondary school. School partners affirm that the Natural Leaders programme is also having a positive impact on learning engagement in school.

Skills for learning

Young people tell us that the programme has helped them to build skills for learning. As a result of the experience:

- 90% are more confident to participate in new learning opportunities and experiences.
- 80% are more willing to speak up in groups and share opinions.
- 78% have got better at planning and prioritising tasks.
- 64% are better at listening to other people's opinions.
- 68% say they are more likely to try again if they don't succeed the first time.
- 61% believe they can show determination to achieve their goals.

"I got confident to do new activities – it helped us get to know each other before high school".

"I set a goal to do things I wouldn't normally do".

"We've explored new places".

"We had new experiences and got new knowledge".

"I feel more confident to talk up in groups".

"I learned thinking skills".

"It was hard work but we now have our John Muir Award and will get the certificate at the Christmas assembly. I'm glad we stuck with it".



Teachers notice these changes too:

"As a partnership for learning for sustainability, I would really recommend this. The skills the children get out of it are invaluable and their confidence has grown so much that you can see they'll really flourish when they go to high school".

"The pupils involved have been able to have the confidence to improve the way in which they communicate with both adults and peers".

"The pupils have shown that with support they can transition to and become comfortable in a new environment".

"The pupils showed that they could take on a new level of responsibility and encouraged each other to participate".

"Young people are more confident and show good team working skills. They show curiosity for the outdoors e.g working well with P1 for outdoor learning to listen/ see/hear/feel the senses".

"Young people persevere with math challenges, for example during problem solving lessons they support and encourage each other to use different strategies to get the answer".

"Young people are more confident with their learning and in sharing their ideas with others. Children who were quieter appear to be more comfortable sharing their opinions with their peers".



Personal agency

Young people also tell us that the programme has helped to change the way they feel about their ability to influence change in their lives and communities:

- **78%** say they feel they can now take action on issues that are important to them.
- **86%** say they feel more confident to ask for help if they need it.
- **66%** say they can play an active role in creating change in their community.
- **61%** say they can contribute to creative solutions.

"[the youth workers] helped me to set goals – they inspired me".

"We learned teamwork and helping each other".

"[the youth workers] listened to our ideas of what we wanted to do".

Relationships for learning

59% of young people say the programme has helped them to build positive relationships outside their friendship group:

"Sometimes I find it hard to talk to others and feel part of the group – here, the smaller group helped and going to the different outdoor places and doing new activities".

"K, J and S are new friends I've made through the Natural Leaders group".

"It's a good opportunity to make friends".

"I made friends after the first week with a girl from another school and it helped when we moved up to the High School".

"I didn't always get on with everyone but I tried my best as I wanted to be with everyone".

"She had never been away all day and had never had to manage her medication, but she wanted to be on the trip and we wanted her to go, so she made the effort to do it for herself. This helped when she went away on the Residential the following month. Being part of this group really helped her with her confidence and the friends she made" Parent



Importantly, youth workers have valued the opportunity to establish relationships with young people at this crucial stage in their education. Teachers also highlight the importance of establishing supportive relationships with youth workers that young people will carry into high school. They recognise that the continuity of these relationships will offer social and emotional support for the young people who need it most, and that they will encourage young people to continue to access community-based learning opportunities, alongside those offered in school.

Teachers and youth workers, in North Lanarkshire particularly, remarked that a number of young people have also already accessed new learning opportunities in youth work settings due to the confidence and relationships they have developed through Natural Leaders. This has also been the case in Perth and Kinross where young people met staff and volunteers from a partner organisation involved in the project and now go there after school:

"I got to meet the staff from CAYAG and I've now been able to go there in the evenings".

"I'd never been to CAYAG before, but I have been back since to meet friends".

Engagement in learning

The flexible structure of the programme and the youth work approach which, by definition, meets young people where they are and builds the programme around their emerging interests, has successfully engaged 90% of young people who joined the programme. Teachers notice young people's enthusiasm:

"Most pupils enjoyed the opportunity to go outside and experience an alternative curriculum beyond the classroom".

"On return they would talk positively about their experiences, and it was good to see them engaged in it each week".



That said, a few young people proved harder to engage fully:

"Some pupils were very engaged in the programme but others were happy to opt out when they didn't like a particular activity".

"Some children developed resilience and problem-solving skills. Others were unwilling to attend some of the sessions and therefore opted out of full/half sessions".

Young people have valued the opportunity to learn away from the classroom, with more freedom:

"Just a few hours in nature each week out of more than 36 hours in school – it's good!".

"We learned different things with [the youth workers] – it was fun learning".

"We learned outside and there weren't too many rules – and they were good rules".

"Learning in nature is fun".

"Walking in the woods and learning is so different from being stuck in the classroom".

"We learned in new places: the island on Loch Clunie, the forest, on the water when we were kayaking".

"This group is important for my learning because it's smaller and I feel more relaxed".

Some have noticed that the opportunity to participate in Natural Leaders has made a positive difference to their health and wellbeing and how they felt about learning in school:

"I have been more active ever since I did this".

"I felt happy coming here".

"This project has made me look forward to school".

"This helped me get interested in going back to school".

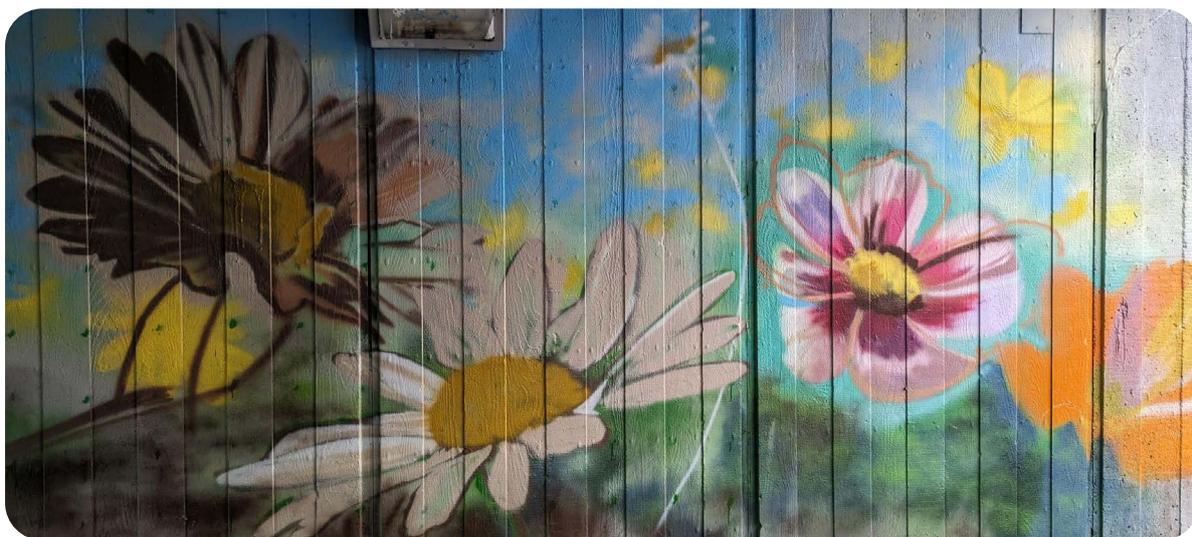


Youth workers have noticed important changes in levels of participation as young people build a sense of belonging in the group:

“Young person N was referred to Natural Leaders Programme based on behaviour in the classroom and sporadic attendance. Since attending Natural Leaders, his behaviour has greatly improved, and he has built encouraging and positive relationships with other classmates whom he wouldn’t usually mix with”.

“When she first attended the Natural Leaders Programme, B asked to sit with staff during all activities and team building games. She wouldn’t take part in group work or discussions and was extremely shy and withdrawn. Despite this, B continued to attend Natural Leaders. Now she has gained the confidence to socialise with the group, take part in team games, and group discussions. Despite her obvious discomfort at the beginning of the programme, she showed resilience and pushed through and is an absolute delight to have as part of the group”.

“C attended Natural Leaders from the beginning of the programme. Her attendance at school in general has been sporadic, but we were happy with her attendance at Natural Leaders sessions. During her time at Natural Leaders, she was very quiet and withdrawn. She would take part in team games at times but was visibly uncomfortable and wouldn’t communicate with her team during problem solving or communication activities. At the Awards Ceremony / Presentation Evening, C volunteered herself to speak in the presentation in the place of a pupil who couldn’t attend! Staff were blown away by her confidence and her resilience and she did a fantastic job, speaking in front of around 80 people! She has continued to grow in confidence and now takes part in all activities within the group”.



Teachers attribute improved engagement in the classroom of some young people to experiences on the Natural Leaders programme:

"The project helped some of these children get through the week and engaged them in their learning".

"Pupils have shown an increased level of engagement with the activities themselves and with other aspects of school life".

Parents see changes in their children's attitudes to school and in their confidence to participate in learning:

"I've noticed he is more confident in himself. He's not as shy. He approaches people more. If he needs help, especially in the classroom, he approaches the teacher more". Parent

"At the beginning of the programme F was very shy and wouldn't speak out in a group or mix with any other pupils other than her friend G. Since attending, both girls have increased confidence and attendance at school. They will now mix with others in the group with no issues. Parents of both girls spoke with staff at the Award Ceremony / Presentation evening and commented on the change in the girls wanting to attend school, increased motivation and better mood and general improved wellbeing when attending school". Youth worker

104 young people have achieved youth awards that acknowledge the skills they have learned and the commitment they have made to taking action to protect natural heritage in their local green spaces through their participation in the programme:

- **20 young people** in North Lanarkshire achieved John Muir Outdoor Discovery Awards; 26 achieved Dynamic Youth Awards and 46 achieved their Hi5 Awards (level 2)
- **12 young people** in West Lothian achieved Youth Achievement Awards; 18 achieved Dynamic Youth Awards.
- **21 young people** in Perth and Kinross achieved John Muir Discovery Awards and Dynamic Youth Awards; 7 young people gained Hi5 awards



Building Connections to Nature and an Appreciation of Natural Heritage in Place

Most young people begin the programme with no pre-existing experience of outdoor learning or any particular knowledge of, or interest in, nature or natural heritage but by the end of the programme they talk enthusiastically about what they have learned:

"I learned about the different birds that use the river in Blairgowrie".

"I've learned that there's a Bird called a dipper that only likes clean water".

"I've learned to take everything home with me and not to leave litter".

"I learned I didn't like the cold".

"I learned how to sew when making the rag flowers".

"I learned that there are animals only in Scotland and some are endangered".

"I learned that there are plants and animals that were brought here over a hundred years ago that shouldn't be here".

"I learned about Pond dipping".

"I learned about Frogs and Newts and how to make a pond".

"I've learned to tell what birds have been around from their feathers".

"We learned about new animals".

"I learned more about animals".

"We ate wood sorrel and nettles!".

"I learned that the wood at Drimmie was the same wood that made aeroplanes in the war".

"I learned about a plant that tastes like apples".

"We got to see the trees that were eaten by Beavers. Some had been cut down by them".

"We saw how other people had left a mess at Loch Clunie. We learned not to leave things behind in the outdoors".

"I'd never been that close to a waterfall before, it was really special".



They also express pride in the contribution that they are able to make to protect wildlife and their local green spaces:

"I learned how to build a hibernaculum".

"We learned how to look after the animals".

"Since Natural Leaders, I've had more of an urge to pick up litter and look after my environment".

"I enjoyed working on the Frog Pond and want to see it finished, to show what I have done".

Youth workers have observed that young people's confidence to explore nature has grown over the course of the programme:

"[These two young people] have become passionate about the group and their chosen wild space and are taking the programme in their stride".

"When we first started working with G she found it a little overwhelming spending so much time outdoors and away from the comforts of the classroom, but as time went on she enjoyed the outdoors more and more and was very interested in the nature and animals we came across. G really thrived during our trip to Sky Academy to create our Natural Leaders News Broadcast. She took a leading role as one of the news presenters and told the story of the group in an enthusiastic and clear way, taking pride in all the work and new skills she had learned".

"H found a particular interest in learning about different animals and creatures in nature. When the Park Rangers showed us where to find different insects and gave us bug viewing boxes, H enjoyed viewing all the different creatures and comparing which trees and plants they came from".

"J's autism made it difficult for him to engage with the outdoor tasks independently as it was a big change to his routine in the unfamiliar surroundings. One of the sessions that J did enjoy was when we incorporated the use of our Virtual Reality headsets into the project. Young people viewed immersive videos of different natural habitats to compare the different animals and plants they recognised in each. J loved this and was very excited with getting to use the technology and it kept him engaged. [Whilst it was challenging for J] this project was a great opportunity for him to try something new and we were able to adapt the approach to his specific needs with the help of his P7 teacher and his parents".





Programme Learning with Practitioners

It's clear that the programme has offered motivating and memorable learning experiences for young people and enabled them to build connections with peers and with youth workers that will support them in their transition from primary to secondary school. The experience has also created space for practitioners to reflect on their collaboration across sectors and consider the implications of what they are learning.

Challenges in Year 1

- In year one, there was lots of interesting learning associated with the challenges of partnership working between youth workers and local natural heritage specialists – and some push-back from youth workers about the best way to introduce activities associated with natural heritage to young people at their own pace. To begin with, youth workers were hesitant about the programme – concerned that it might be too formal and structured:

"I've got to be honest, I panicked when this first landed on my desk."

"I thought you wanted us to fill young people up with facts and knowledge".

"I thought we'd need to be experts in natural heritage ourselves".

- The youth workers valued the expertise and the knowledge of natural heritage partners, but found some of their inputs to be too structured and formal to fit comfortably within a youth work programme. Natural heritage partners learned that some of the activities they would normally offer groups of young people are not well-suited for all of those involved in the Natural Leaders programme. This is due to the range of literacy levels within the groups, the challenges with concentration and difficulties that some of the young people experienced when new adults joined a group.
- All of the youth work teams agreed that the first year of the programme was labour intensive. Having run the programme for a year, and had access to training support from the John Muir Trust, the practitioners felt much more confident as they moved into the second year of the programme.



Adjustments in Year 2:

- It became clear that we needed to place a strong emphasis on young people 'experiencing and building connections with nature and place' and demystifying 'heritage expertise' and 'fact-finding' (even in a very informal way) about local wildlife and biodiversity. Ahead of the second year of the programme RSPB developed a short resource for youth workers, using ideas for activities adapted from their 'Wild Challenge' award, with suggested bite-size and longer activities to help build young people's connection to nature from the early stages of the programme onwards using a youth work approach. RSPB also put together a directory of potential national heritage partners for each geographical location. This resource has been further developed in consultation with all partners and is now available on RSPB's website here: [Growing Natural Leaders: a youth work approach to connecting to nature in Scotland](#)
- Youth workers recognised that their principal role was to help young people build a sense of belonging in the group and find their own connection to nature, supporting young people to follow their own interests and learning alongside them.
- There was also some valuable discussion about the importance of learning within communities – and the added value of young people having the opportunity to experience and be inspired by 'best practice' in nature conservation further afield. In year 2 of the programme RSPB supported visits to their reserves so that young people could consider how the work they saw might be relevant in the local green spaces where they were volunteering. These proved very successful.

What we know works well

Youth work partners have told us that the strength of the Natural Leaders programme lies in its flexibility as a Learning for Sustainability approach, and the fact that it makes no assumptions about what might interest young people from the outset. It starts with supporting young people to develop a personal connection to nature, before they identify shared interests and set collective goals for protecting and developing the natural heritage of their own communities. Youth workers notice that one of the things that helps young people engage early on is that the programme is rooted in green spaces in the heart of their communities, and they understand there is an expectation that, as a group, they will take a lead in looking after these places.

"You see it in them from the beginning – they feel proud – a bit puff-chested right from the beginning, because they know they are being asked to be leaders in their own communities".



They are also enjoying the choice the programme offers to shape the activities that build those connections to fit each group:

"We can be flexible around the young people – adapt it to their interests".

"It's different – we had real independence in how young people engaged with it – no content sections that we had to stick to. And it's about their local places".

"The training from the John Muir Trust was really valuable – helped us feel confident in our approach".

Youth workers and teachers tell us the programme is a positive catalyst for building relationships between youth work and schools (and in some cases with parents). And that it serves as an effective transition programme in education, supporting young people who need enhanced support as they take the step from primary to secondary school.

"We don't get another opportunity like this to take young people out of the class to learn and build relationships with some of those that might need our support the most through high school".

Youth workers have also valued the opportunity to work closely with and learn from natural heritage experts:

"We've worked with [natural heritage experts] who've taught us about the local heritage of Coatbridge; we've worked with the staff at RSPB. As a youth worker, that information is really valuable to me, because I am then able to take that out to other young people in different youth work [settings]...Building these relationships with partners as part of Natural Leaders has made me a better youth worker".





Sustainable Impact of the Programme

Onward development of Natural Leaders:

- Two of the three local authority youth work teams (North Lanarkshire and Perth and Kinross) are committed to continuing to develop the Natural Leaders approach to offer targeted primary to secondary transitions support next year.
- In Perth and Kinross, the youth work team is also trialling an adapted approach for young people in the senior phase who face barriers to engagement in formal education, helping to support their transition from school into further education, training or work.
- YouthLink Scotland will actively promote the resources developed through the programme through YouthLink Scotland's national networks
- YouthLink Scotland's Youth Work and Schools team will be able to offer support and advice to youth work teams who express interest in piloting a similar programme in their locality.
- RSPB Scotland will be supporting youth workers through it's own networks to build up confidence and capacity to support a diverse range of young people to take action for nature.

YouthLink Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland are championing the power of partnerships in Learning for Sustainability:

In November 2024, Learning for Sustainability Scotland and YouthLink Scotland convened an in-person event with more than 40 change-makers from across Scotland to engage them in a conversation about the power of partnership working in Learning for Sustainability, sharing learning from Natural Leaders as an example of good practice.

Chaired by Joan Mackay, Head of Curriculum Innovation at Education Scotland, this 'round-table' was designed to identify actions needed to recognise and scale-up effective collaborative practice between youth work, Community Learning and Development (CLD), schools and settings, colleges, universities, NGOs and other local and national agencies involved in Learning for Sustainability.

Leaders at the event collectively affirmed an urgent need to scale-up effective collaborative practice to realise the entitlement of Learning for Sustainability for all young people. In the context of the current Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-20301. Their call to action included:



- a. Enhanced communications and networking: design and support a wider, more cohesive, range of cross-sectoral networking opportunities - both in person and online - where partners and potential partners can connect, share learning and resources, offer inspiring stories of impact and co-create partnership activities.
- b. Capacity building and professional learning: invest in the design and delivery of professional learning that brings sectors together to support understanding of the power of collaborative partnerships in Learning for Sustainability.
- c. Research: fund research to develop a stronger evidence base that demonstrates the impact of Learning for Sustainability achieved through partnership working; and builds a deeper understanding of what works and why in place-based Learning for Sustainability partnerships.
- d. Changes in Funding Strategy and Practice: shape funding programmes to help establish and sustain partnership working.
- e. Education reform and curriculum improvement: highlight and support the critical role of local partnerships in enabling, enhancing and engaging with approaches to Learning for Sustainability across the totality of learner experiences, offering young people a consistent approach to place-based learning.

The full summary of these discussions can be found [here](#)

YouthLink Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland are now working together to share this call to action with a wider group of stakeholders to help turn these ideas into action.





#InvestInYouthWork



With thanks to our funders:



With thanks to our partners:



If you would like to know more about the Natural Leaders Programme, please contact Gill Gracie, Senior Development Officer, Youth Work and School Partnerships at YouthLink Scotland ggracie@youthlink.scot

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