

SUPPORTING YOUTH WORK AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND

AUTUMN 2021

The Link

Our Climate Emergency – youth work's role for people and planet



YouthLink
Scotland
The national agency for youth work

#YouthWorkChangesLives

Introduction



Young people have been calling for urgent change in the face of the Climate Emergency, they do not want to deal with the consequences of global inaction on this crisis for our planet. Youth work plays a significant role in supporting young people to find and use their voice, and play an active role in ensuring climate justice.

It is important that we ensure a legacy from COP26, which is the most significant conference of world leaders since the Paris agreement in 2015. The IPCC is clear, we are running out of time to stay within 1.5 degrees of global warming. As a sector we need to build a climate literate youth work workforce and move towards a more sustainable way of working. We not only need to support our young people, we also need to walk alongside them by making sure our actions and commitment to tackling the Climate Emergency is real and lasting.

This magazine brings together international, national and local reflections on the reality of climate change, from a youth work perspective. It is a timely opportunity to share practice and learning, and that practice and learning, will prove invaluable for our sector, as we assert our commitment to support and campaign with young people to build a true and tangible legacy from COP26 in Glasgow.

Tim Frew, CEO YouthLink Scotland



Ministerial Foreword

Jamie Hepburn, Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training and Mairi McAllan, Minister for Environment and Land Reform

We'd like to thank YouthLink Scotland for giving us the opportunity to write this foreword and for inviting us to speak at the 2021 National Youth Work Conference. This edition of the LINK Magazine, like the conference, is focused on the global climate emergency and the challenges and opportunities it brings for young people throughout Scotland.

We are acutely aware of how the climate emergency will impact Scotland's young people and how central our young people have been in demanding climate action. We are incredibly grateful for the huge effort that the youth work sector have put into actively supporting young people to learn more about the climate emergency and on taking mitigating action.

With COP26 coming to Glasgow in November, Scotland will be in the spotlight on the world stage. We already have the most ambitious legal framework for emissions reduction in the world, culminating in our world-leading target to reach net zero emission by 2045; our emissions are down by 51.5% since 1990 meaning that we continue to out-perform the UK as a whole in delivering long-term emissions reduction; and as part of tackling the twin climate and nature crisis, we are leading the Edinburgh Process to ensure a global, 'whole

of government' approach to tackling biodiversity loss.

COP26 in Glasgow presents Scotland's young people with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help shape thinking on the global stage and the Scottish Government is determined that they will be heard. Youth workers all over Scotland will be crucial in supporting young people to communicate their ideas in the best way for them and we relish the chance to support this. That's why publications like this, and the National Youth Work Conference, are so important – they bring the global climate emergency and the youth work sector together.

The climate and nature emergencies affect us all. We welcome and admire the leadership that young people have shown here. They recognise, as do we, that while their generation and those to come would suffer most from any global inaction now, they also stand to benefit from a greener, fairer economy and society including in industries of the future. Future

generations deserve a more equal, just, and fair future which is healthy, sustainable and from which no one is left behind.

That is why Scotland is taking an unique, rights-based approach to involving children and young people in our climate actions and ambitions. Their rights are embedded in our National Performance Framework, in our incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in our vision and values. We are working with, and advocating for, children and young people so that they: have opportunities to participate meaningfully before, during and after COP26; and are equipped with the skills and opportunities to be champions for our net zero ambitions longer-term and to be heard and heeded by decision makers.

We hope that you enjoy reading this magazine – the thought leadership, articles, updates, and new initiatives will help in our common goal: helping Scotland's young people address the global climate emergency.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Scotland's party leaders left 'chastened' on climate action by audience of young people



In the run up to the recent Scottish Parliament elections, young people launched a scathing attack on party leaders at the #ScotHotSeat youth climate hustings, accusing them of ignoring the climate emergency facing their generation.

The Climate Hot Seat event was organised by YouthLink Scotland through Our Bright Future Project, and supported by: Fridays for Future Scotland; 2050 Climate Group; Young Friends of the Earth Scotland; Children in Scotland; Teach the Future Scotland and the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Dylan Hamilton, aged 16, a climate and environmental activist from West Lothian accused politicians of patronising young people and failing to act:

"I want to show you all we are very, very angry. We are trying to knock down your doors. I have sacrificed my education and having a normal childhood to pressure you to fix a problem that we have known about for a decade before I was born. If the comments here tonight have shown us anything, it's that young people don't agree that you have done what is necessary either."

"All of the important climate deadlines, 2030, 2045, 2050 I will live through. If I live to the same age as my granny lived to, I will see the next century. This is my future life and it's the lives of people around the world right now. You should not be inspired by us, you should be angry and upset. This is my Highers year, during a global pandemic and I have a chronic illness. I should have enough to worry about without having to worry about the possibility of the largest refugee crisis we have ever seen."

In response, Anas Sarwar, Scottish Labour Leader said:

"I know young people are impatient, fidgeting and angry. We need young people's voices to be front and centre in climate change, in teaching the true history of our country, and necessary future skills. We need to ensure the climate is at the heart of our national recovery."

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister and Leader of the Scottish National Party said it was right young people *"bang down our doors"* and that she would not *"pass the buck"* to the younger generation:

"We can't just recognise, we need to act. This is a pivotal moment. When things fall apart you can choose how you put them back together. We need to prioritise an investment-led green recovery era and tackling inequalities. Words are easy but hold us to account on our actions."

Leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Douglas Ross said it was clear that politicians had failed young people:

"We have to see and deliver meaningful outcomes at COP26 in Glasgow this year and young people will play a big part in making that a success. There is no doubt that we have a lot of work to do as it looks like we have let you down for too long."

Patrick Harvie, Co-Convenor of the Scottish Greens said these issues are frightening and daunting:

"It can create a lot of anxiety to face up to the challenges that your generation has been left to face. This moment is an incredible opportunity. We need to invest in the future and reshape

our society. The Green Manifesto will investment in renewables, warm homes, public transport, restoring nature, ensuring we have a fair and equal society."

Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Willie Rennie thanked young people for a *"feisty"* debate and said:

"You have all made us feel uncomfortable. This is the sharp end and I am grateful for you being very blunt with us. We need to make sure we contribute to the sustainable development of our country if we are going to have a planet for future generations."

During the debate, all five party leaders said they would ban single use plastics and there was agreement that climate education in Scottish schools needed to be put in place as a priority.

On the subject of protecting Scotland's natural environment, Patrick Harvie said:

"We shouldn't have large swathes of our landscape ecologically degraded so that rich people can come along and shoot birds for fun. Humanity has, and continues to, perpetrate a war against nature. The scale of what's required here is extraordinary."

The Climate Hot Seat' was organised by young people aged 13-32 representing seven youth organisations in Scotland. The event was a space specifically for young people to hold party leaders accountable for their climate action and to give other young people valuable information in advance of casting their vote on May 6th.

Anna Balmain, 13, representing Children in Scotland, said: *"Action needs to be taken to combat the climate crisis, and the decision on whether this action is taken, depends on each and every one of us."*

Fatima Bari MSYP, 18, representing the Scottish Youth Parliament, said: *"I am passionate about climate change and want to make changes that better the environment and I believe one of the ways we do this is by holding our politicians to account and making sure they have the environment's best interests at heart."*

Natalie Sweeney, 27, 2050 Climate Group, said: *"With everything going on in the world right now, it would be easy for climate issues to take a back seat and we are making sure that doesn't happen."*

If you missed the hustings you can still watch the [debate](#).



Putting young people at the core of climate policy

YouthLink Scotland's Policy and Research Manager, **Kevin Kane** looks at the symbiotic relationship between climate change action, youth voice and the need for policy change.



Come gather round people wherever you roam

And admit that waters around you have grown

And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone

If your time to you is worth saving

Then you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone

For the times they are a changing

I don't think that Bob Dylan back in 1964 could have imagined his lyrics would have such a particular poignancy for the very future of our planet, and the action or inaction that will seal the fate of future generations.

The Youth Strike4Climate movement demonstrated that young people are passionate and serious about the environment and that their voices are powerful and should be part of any engagement process. It was encouraging to see the Scottish Government commit to giving young people a strong voice through the development of "a new approach to ensuring a genuine role in the policy process for young people" as part of their Climate Action Engagement Plan. However, to make this happen, 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.

A rights-based approach

Any action on climate change must take into consideration the current challenges for young people, the disruption to their education and the increase in demand for mental health and wellbeing services. This is why we must see action on the climate crisis through the prism of young people's rights at its core, where a right to a healthy environment is a mainstay of policy and political thinking. This should be a pre-condition to the realisation of other fundamental rights, such as a right to food, housing and shelter, education and an adequate standard of living. These are all areas where youth work practitioners already make such a positive impact on the lives of young people.

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.

Participation in policy making should therefore be seen as an overarching principle to build a meaningful, effective and ongoing dialogue between young people, youth work staff and volunteers. For children and young people, knowing that they have the right to be heard in decisions which affect them boosts their sense of security and also their self-confidence.

We have a unique opportunity to involve young people and unite the youth work and environmental sectors, listening to them, and involving them in the key policy and political changes required to support meaningful policy action on climate change.

Collective response

As society slowly emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, it is fundamentally important we all now work together to limit the impact of climate change. It is young people who, along with future generations, will have to live with the worst consequences of climate change. Therefore, the youth work sector must be central to, and actively engaged in any public engagement and social/policy action. 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.



For this to be a truly national endeavour, we must work collaboratively and consistently, local and national governments must take cognisance of the significant infrastructure provided by the youth work sector as part of any action planning over the coming years.

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 lockdowns and its impact on the labour market, which is being acutely felt by young people in Scotland in relation to their future employment prospects. In doing so we can harness the potential of the sector as the gateway to a green revolution.

Investing in youth work

Recent surveys have highlighted a lack of investment in youth work services, which is cause for 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. The value of youth work lies in the difference it makes directly to the lives of the young people who engage with services, however it extends further to the many benefits it provides to wider society in working towards a green and blue renewal, where the wellbeing of people and planet are prioritised as one.

Youth work and the policy landscape

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 Research that

youth work contributes 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 potential. 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 therefore be available to all young people, in order to support the positive environmental changes required to build lasting change.

The future

The pandemic should be the catalyst for a true re-imagining of a society, one that can help more people see the need to provide food, water, a sustainable environment and a healthy planet for the future. To do so, we must put young people at the heart of climate action strategies and harness the connectedness of youth work and environmental sectors as we chart a path to net zero gas emissions by 2045.

Research Focus



New Prince's Trust research reveals young people want to be part of a green economy

Young people are facing one of the most turbulent times in living memory. The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted their lives, their education, and their career aspirations; and they are facing significant changes to the world of work due to technological, demographic and climate change.

The Prince's Trust has launched initial findings from research into the 'Future of Work' at an event attended by President, HRH The Prince of Wales and international business leaders. The discussion, which built on the work of his Terra Carta initiative, called for efforts from employers to support young people into sustainable careers in emerging industries, such as green and digital, that can contribute to net zero ambitions

Polling by YouGov of 6,073 young people aged 18-to-35 in Canada, Ghana, India, Pakistan, the UK, and US shows:

- 78% of young people believe their generation can create solutions to some of society and the world's biggest challenges
- 74% would be interested in a green job which helps tackle climate change, despite only 3% having their main job in the sector
- 71% would be interested in a job in the digital economy which is seen as providing the most opportunities for young people across a range of sectors
- 81% would consider whether the job has a positive impact on the community and wider world
- 77% would consider the environmental impact of the company or sector when choosing a job
- Working in the green economy (45%) and health and social care (43%) are seen as the most likely ways to have a positive impact on the community / wider world

“ The Prince's Trust is committed to ensuring young people are equipped to embrace the changes that are coming. **”**

The Trust is providing effective and innovative approaches to create and improve youth employment in green sectors. Working with a wide range of partners, including a recent initiative with National Grid's Grid for Good, The Trust has added employability modules relating to green jobs to its Get Into programmes and developed a Kickstart sustainability module which will feature in all UK wide delivery.

Louise Goodlad, Senior Head of Partnerships, The Prince's Trust Scotland reflects on the findings and the need to act now to secure a vibrant green economy for young people:

“This research highlights the optimism that young people have about their generation and role they want to play in devoting their careers to tackling the biggest issues facing the planet. It is therefore vital that we work with business leaders to provide more sustainable careers for our next generation.”

“Long term changes to the labour market predict that young people's future employment opportunities will reduce unless we adapt and act quickly. We know that sectors that have traditionally offered secure jobs to young people such as retail are struggling, and will continue to do so, and the disappearance of these jobs presents a real risk to social mobility.”

“However, the rapidly growing green economy does provide a new opportunity. Through awareness-raising, skills development, providing job outcomes, and changing ways of working, The Prince's Trust is committed to ensuring young people are equipped to embrace the changes that are coming.”

“We want to raise awareness of the green economy throughout our programmes, not just within our employability courses. We're looking to refocus our education work to include a greater emphasis of future careers in this sector and we have developed new learning components about ethical and sustainable business in our Enterprise Challenge. Additionally, for our young entrepreneurs we will prepare them to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the expanding green supply chain.”

“Ultimately, we know that the climate emergency will mostly harm young people, therefore tackling both the jobs and climate emergencies together is a win-win.””



Teaching the injustice of the world climate crisis

This year, **Mahmoud Makkawi** of SCOREscotland and the Education for Climate Justice Programme Team held a series of workshops to explore the relationship between climate change and social justice. Their conclusion? A more radical vision for climate education that tackles the role of colonialism and capitalism in climate injustice.



“ Who leads the fight on climate change, who’s bearing the brunt and impact of climate change, what has contributed to our world being in decline, and how we tell the real stories behind that about who caused that destruction in the first place. ”

Yvette Williams MBE,
The Justice4Grenfell Campaign

Earlier this year, a series of three-day-long workshops focusing on Education for Climate Justice was co-organised by a team from Glasgow Caledonian University, Learning for Sustainability Scotland, SCOREscotland, Teach the Future, the Third Generation Project (University of St Andrews), and the University of Edinburgh.

These workshops focused on centering anti-racist education in climate justice education, on a just transition, and on building hope in the face of climate anxiety. They were developed in direct response to demands from youth climate activists to make education for climate justice a priority and each brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, including youth activists, educators, practitioners and academics.

They also brought together a set of keynote speakers – Yvette Williams MBE from the Justice4Grenfell Campaign, Ikal Ang’elei from the Friends of Lake Turkana, and Jayden Foytlin, a youth climate activist from Louisiana – who all highlighted how climate injustice, as well as racial, gender and other injustices are rooted in histories of oppression.

The workshops have acted as a catalyst for long-term conversations about the need for, and the scope of, such learning. What was clear from the responses of workshop participants and attendees was that education for climate justice should highlight the ongoing impact of colonialism; recognise the role that

capitalism has played in the climate crisis; and identify how injustices of all types are rooted in those legacies of colonialism and capitalism. As Ikal Ang’elei noted in her keynote speech:

“The knowledge that is produced now, from a lot of young people’s work, who are seeing this thing [climate change] but also linking it to food systems, to water systems, and the role of gender in all this.”

This conclusion chimes with international research on the ways that education for climate action requires a more radical vision for climate education than currently exists. It was also clear from the workshops that across Scotland – in ways large and small – pupils and educators are already thinking about how this vision could be activated, meaning that the workshop series has been able to serve as a resource for further exchange and mutual learning.

Throughout the workshops the role of youth work in facilitating young people’s informal learning about the relationship between climate change and social justice was paramount, as was the importance of highlighting the need to collaborate with youth activists. As youth climate activist, Jayden Foytlin said:

“I think a key message would be to actually listen to the youth and actually hear what we have to say... actually talk to us about what we have experienced and what we are going through in our communities and ... really show us that you care about youth.”



Young people are already thinking creatively about climate solutions in their own communities. They are also arguing forcefully for the space to learn about alternative economic models that address the tension inherent in the notion of ‘sustainable growth’.

Models like Morocco, for example, which has changed the way that they produce energy and now leads by example in the green energy revolution.

Iceland, Albania, and Paraguay who lead the way in generating all of their electricity without the use of fossil fuels. Like the further eight nations (five in Africa, and three in Latin America) who use coal, oil, and gas for less than 10% of their electricity; and like Scotland, where work is being done to develop a wellbeing economy – “an economy which delivers social justice and environmental health” – via the Wellbeing Economy Government’s (WeGo) group.

Education for climate justice should be central to such initiatives and what this workshop series highlighted very clearly is the urgent need, not only for such educational opportunities to exist, but also that they be fundamentally based on three radical principles: voluntary engagement; a curriculum based on lived experiences; and an intergenerational dialogue where young people act as ‘educators’ themselves.

View the workshop content: <https://bit.ly/3BLU7Nk>



Therapy in nature

Outdoor Therapy has existed as a practice for decades. In recent years it has become more established as an effective means of working therapeutically. According to Katarina Horrox and Mark Rae of Venture Trust, young people have been influential in this change, through their engagement and interest in practices such as outdoor therapy, wilderness therapy and adventure therapy.

venturetrust

At Venture Trust we offer different services and programmes to young people experiencing adverse life circumstances, often living in Scotland's more deprived communities. Our services include personal development programmes in nature, therapeutic wilderness journeys, community-based outreach work and an outdoor therapy service in urban greenspaces.

The Venture Trust Outdoor Therapy Service offers individual therapy to young people who wish to have therapy in natural outdoor environments. The sessions take place in a greenspace chosen by them, usually in parks or woodland close to where they live, making the service accessible to a range of people. Safety, confidentiality and maintaining ethical standards when working in these public spaces have been given much thought by our team, and we continue to review and develop our outdoor therapy practice.

There are challenges that emerge from working in this way, however, in our experience, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. To describe what is beneficial, perhaps it is best to start with the words of the young people:

"It just felt so natural... walking and talking... I always feel better after an outdoor therapy session." Client M

"Having the opportunity to experience the wildlife and nature the way I did really helped me change my life around." Client D

At Venture Trust, we understand the benefits of outdoor therapy to be varied. Firstly, young people are choosing to have an experience with the natural world and to be in touch with themselves within it. Having experiences like this, of being emotionally aware of nature and our presence in it, are perhaps central to our ability to appreciate the impact of climate change.

As a result of spending time in natural environments, young people also experience its regulating

effects. They notice and reflect on how their emotional and physiological state changes. This reinforces what we already know from research into the impact of nature on stress reduction and psychological recovery. An example of this could be a young person noticing how their anxiety goes down as they talk about a difficult topic whilst staring into a pond. In this experience, they have the sense that they are able to manage their anxiety with the assistance of the natural world, and they are still able to stay engaged in speaking about the difficult topic.

Another benefit of taking therapy outdoors is that it can offer a sense of shared experience, which can help to build the therapeutic relationship. An example of this would be the therapist and young person living through uncomfortable weather conditions together, or the therapist and young person walking side-by-side rather than facing one another. The differences of this approach, compared to more traditional therapy settings, can make it more accessible to young people for whom a more formal setting could feel overwhelming, or sitting still and talking face-to-face with an adult could feel too difficult.

These are just a few of the benefits that we have observed in the outdoor therapy service. There are, of course, others that we have not been able to cover in this brief article. From our experience, we are convinced that outdoor therapy offers real potential as a means of working effectively with young people who may otherwise struggle to engage with traditional services. We believe the benefits of outdoor therapy should be more widely available to young people and we welcome conversations with likeminded professionals and organisations.

We must not lose our Earth



Grace McCabe, aged 18, Girlguiding Scotland Speak Out Champion and a member of the 1st Strathaven Rangers says it's time we stopped being messy lodgers.

Now more than ever, countries across the globe must intensify their efforts to meet the aims of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. We must stand together as one and spark ambition for the world to do better and to do more to fight the climate crisis. If we do not, we are building a world of ruin for generations to come.

Climate change will be the greatest challenge humanity faces and will affect every biological system which makes Earth habitable. Already temperatures are rising, hydrological cycles are changing and sea levels are rising, all of which contribute to the frequency and intensity of natural disasters. If this rise continues, food production could halt and levels of homelessness could rapidly spike as areas become inhospitable. Even more species could become extinct.

Girlguiding Scotland believes in a better world. In 2018, Girlguiding asked 76,000 girls and young women aged 4-25 what they really care about and Future Girl was born. This is a manifesto built around topics that matter to girls and young women and that inspire them to create change. With one of its key focuses being the environment, Girlguiding launched the #PlasticPromise campaign in 2019. This saw 113,668 people pledge to reduce plastic waste in their lives, leading this to become the biggest ever girl-led campaign to tackle plastic pollution.

There is power in young people. It is our future. We can make a difference.

Small ripples will create big waves. Reduce your plastic consumption: use a refillable water bottle, bring reusable cutlery when you go out, keep a jute bag handy and try to buy food with the least amount of packaging such as loose fruit and vegetables, or why not try to grow your own? Reduce your carbon footprint by lift sharing, walking/cycling where possible, unplugging electrical appliances when not in use and swapping old incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent lamp lightbulbs (CFL) as they use 75% less energy whilst giving the same amount of light and lasting ten times as long. Imagine climate change is a bear in the woods - make the trail you leave and the impact you have on the earth as minute as possible so that it can't follow you. Most importantly, you can inspire others around you to do the same.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established in 1988, but we know scientists were talking about global warming years before. The Scottish Government passed the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) in 2019, which amends the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. This legislation sets targets to reduce Scotland's total greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2045. This plan is ambitious and aims to get to net zero five years earlier than the global goal of 2050. With a focus on the principles of a Just Transition and social engagement, the real question

is: will these measures be enough? A net zero carbon future is possible with current technology and lifestyle change, but only if well-crafted policies to reduce greenhouse gases are introduced now. Time is of the essence if we are to tackle it. There can be no further delay.

My message to world leaders is this: There is no more time. No warm ups, no delays. The race against climate change must start now or we lose our Earth. Act with your nation's children and their children in mind. We must move together, now, today. Forests are burning, land is flooding, 53% of wildlife has been killed in half a century and there is no planet B. We are bringing about the apocalypse with every second we wait. How many more agonies does there have to be before you wake up? We're ready, are you?

I want young people to know that this is our world. Our future, our homes, our lives. We have to raise our voices as one if we are to be heard. If you are laughed at, laugh back harder. This is not a fight that we should have to face and yet we must. Don't be drowned out, stand tall and have your say in the crafting of the new world. You are so very important.

Planet Earth. Our home. It's time we stopped being the messy lodgers. Let's tidy up our mess.



“ The truth is, the natural world is changing. And we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have and we need to defend it. ”

David Attenborough



COP26 Scottish Climate Project

As the world looks to COP26 in Glasgow in November, YouthLink Scotland, Young Scot and Keep Scotland Beautiful are working collaboratively to support more than 370 young people across the country engage and have a voice in what is set to be the most significant climate change conference we've experienced yet.

This Scottish Government funded programme ensures that young people play a key role within the decision-making processes and actions that are taken in Scotland relating to COP26. The programme also looks beyond COP26, focussing on securing a lasting legacy and creating the building blocks for young people to continue to be meaningfully involved in all of Scotland's current and future responses to the climate emergency. For young people across Scotland the programme will:

- Increase climate action taken by young people
- Support young people as local climate champions
- Deliver a legacy of more young people involved in climate change policy and decision making

- Host a youth summit to create a Scottish youth climate declaration

The COP26 Scottish Youth Climate programme also recognises and aims to bolster the crucial role that youth work has to play in reaching net zero. It includes a specific COP26 Youth Work Champions element to ensure that youth workers across the country are equipped to support young people's climate action and participation.

For youth workers across Scotland the programme will:

- **Build a lasting bank of climate emergency and environmental youth work resources**
- **Train and develop a confident and well-equipped climate literate workforce**

Support a shift towards a more green and sustainable youth work sector

Showcase the important role of youth work in reaching Net Zero and supporting youth climate action

The youth work sector now, more than ever, has a leading role to play in influencing environmental decision-making and policy. We are uniquely placed to help young people and communities understand the climate emergency and support them to take action within that space to secure lasting environmental change.

The COP26 Scottish Youth Climate Programme is designed by young people for young people; it places emphasis on supporting local climate action to create national impact; it celebrates and champions the role of youth work and above all secures a lasting and meaningful legacy of COP26 in Scotland.

At a time when the eyes of the world will be on Scotland, the COP26 Scottish Youth Climate Programme will demonstrate our commitment to putting young people at the heart of our work to tackle the climate emergency for future generations and for the future of our planet.

Learning for Sustainability – YouthLink Scotland

YouthLink Scotland is committed to realising the ambitions of the 2030 Vision for Learning for Sustainability and Net Zero Nation Strategy. This is reflected through a number of our national programmes and work streams.

A flavour of our Learning for Sustainability programmes:

Our Bright Future

Our Bright Future is an ambitious and innovative partnership which brings together the youth and environmental sectors and ensures the needs of young people and the environment are heard through the promotion of three youth defined asks:

Ask 1: More time spent learning in and about nature

Ask 2: Support to get into environmental jobs

Ask 3: Government, employers, businesses, schools and charities to pay more attention to the needs of young people and the environment

To find out more about the Our Bright Future Project visit: [Learning for Sustainability | Our Bright Future](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/learning-for-sustainability-our-bright-future) ([youthlinkscotland.org](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org))

#IWill Scotland

#IWill is a movement that brings together cross sector organisations and young people to celebrate, recognise and promote youth social action and volunteering. The movement encourages organisations to create meaningful social action opportunities for young people whilst celebrating the young people who are already taking action and making a difference in their communities, environment and wider society. #IWill4Nature is a sub campaign that specifically focusses on showcasing and encouraging environmental youth social action. For more information on #IWill in Scotland visit: <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/iwill-scotland/>

On Our Wavelength

An award nominated youth-led research project examining the environmental impacts of coastal communities in Scotland including South Ayrshire, Western Isles, North Berwick, Fife and Argyll and Bute. For more information and content on the project visit: [On Our Wave Length | Engaging Young People in Heritage](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/on-our-wave-length-engaging-young-people-in-heritage) ([youthlinkscotland.org](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org))



Scotland's Young People's Forest

A partnership project between YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot to support a panel of diverse young people through the conception, creation and curation phases to develop [Scotland's first Young People's Forest](https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/programmes/scotland-s-first-young-peoples-forest). The panel consists of 20 young people who are leading on all aspects of the forest from the ideas through to sustainable planting strategies, land ownership and management structures.



Thriving in uncertain times

Kirsten Leask of Learning for Sustainability Scotland talks about the importance of educating our young people to be resilient, compassionate, empathetic global citizens.

“ Our vision is of a flourishing Scotland where sustainable and socially-just practices are the norm... and our roles and responsibilities within a globally-interdependent world are recognized. Learners are educated through their landscape and understand their environment, culture and heritage; and develop a sense of place and belonging to their local, national and global community, with a deep connection to the natural world. Here, learners will understand the significance of their choices, now and in the future. ”

The Report of the One Planet Schools Working Group (November 2012)



Learning for Sustainability Scotland is our Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – acknowledged by the United Nations University.

As Scotland's United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise, we are part of a [global network of RCEs](#) throughout the UK, Europe and beyond. This international network allows regions and countries to share and learn from each other, and to establish or strengthen international partnerships.

Our world faces huge challenges. Ecological, social and economic issues such as health and well-being, climate change, gender equality, the biodiversity crisis, equity and inclusion and how to live sustainably affect – and connect – us all; wherever we are.

Understanding – and taking action on – these big issues has never been more important. More than ever, we need an ethos of Learning for Sustainability to be woven across all learning. Supporting and enabling learners of all ages to acquire the skills, values, attitudes, knowledge and confidence needed to make a difference in our rapidly-changing and interconnected world has never been more urgent.

Hearts, heads and hands: joined-up learning for a better world

In Scotland, Learning for Sustainability embodies our ambitions as a nation. It reflects our core values of [justice, compassion, and integrity](#) and the [vision we have for Scotland](#).

It's at the heart of our [educational system](#) and it's been an entitlement for learners since 2013.

Embedding a Learning for Sustainability ethos provides the basis for truly meaningful, relevant and, ultimately, transformative, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral learning experiences that will help learners to thrive in these uncertain times.

We need resilient, compassionate, empathetic global citizens who can take on moral and ethical issues, understand a variety of perspectives and see 'beyond the headlines'.

We need confident, politically and culturally literate individuals who can absorb and critically evaluate complex information.

We need effective, creative contributors who can re-imagine and re-calibrate the future we need through their understanding of the impact of their choices on a finite planet.

Acting locally, thinking globally

One of the most exciting aspects of sustainability-related learning and activity is the realisation that this is now a global phenomenon. It may be known by different names in different parts of the world, but it is truly humbling to see the passion, knowledge and agency being demonstrated by young people across the planet. On every continent, young people are increasingly taking action on issues that matter to them and the

communities they live in and there's never been a better time for this global learning to be shared and celebrated.

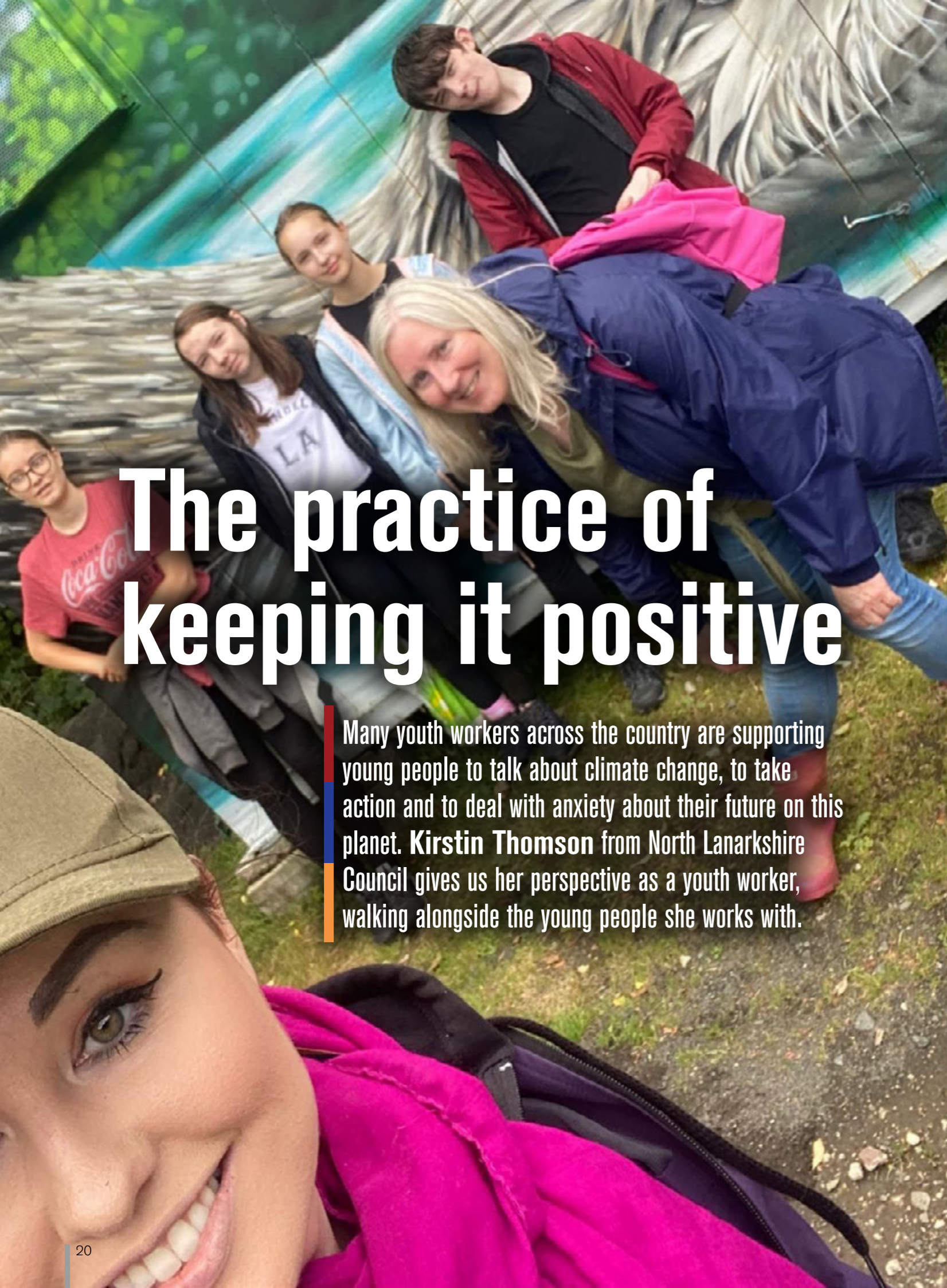
The [recent Youth Webinar](#) facilitated by the Youth Co-ordinators across the global UN University-supported network of [Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development](#), is one such example of how the voices and different perspectives of young people can be amplified and their inspirational practice made available to a global audience. During this webinar, young people from Australia, Colombia, Zambia, Japan and Denmark shared examples of the initiatives they are implementing to take action on sustainability-related issues.

"We need to encourage, respect and cherish the capacity to care and act – whatever age our citizens are – and from the early years to 18 (and I would argue in Further and Higher Education too). That is a central role of education."

Professor Peter Higgins, University of Edinburgh, March 2019

It's time for 'sustainability' to become a global, life-long, learning ethos – for everyone. It's #TimeforL4S.





The practice of keeping it positive

Many youth workers across the country are supporting young people to talk about climate change, to take action and to deal with anxiety about their future on this planet. **Kirstin Thomson** from North Lanarkshire Council gives us her perspective as a youth worker, walking alongside the young people she works with.

Of all the issues that directly impact on young people's lives the Climate Emergency arguably trumps them all. Even if it doesn't feel like it to everyone right now, it's coming down the line, and fast.

Youth workers have always had a key role to play in supporting young people to navigate their circumstances, learn about relevant topics and raise their voice on issues that affect them. In North Lanarkshire, some of our youth work provision has begun to focus on the climate issue.

In addition to embedding climate and environmental topics into general youth work provision, we have set up a new youth group of climate ambassadors. This is a group of 13-to-17 year olds, who are already climate-aware and want to do more.

I am certainly no expert in the topic, so in preparation for supporting the group and the wider youth work climate curriculum I undertook some training and upskilling to educate myself and continue to engage in this process. The young people also bring their own knowledge to our group discussions. I often find I am learning from them as much as they are learning from the information that I share, which leads to a collaborative approach to action. Over the past year I've begun to compile some key sources of information and these have been cascaded to all our youth

work staff to support their delivery of the topic - [Youth Work Climate Change resources \(padlet.com\)](#)

In the Climate Ambassadors' Group we've covered many inter-related topics during our weekly sessions, from food to fashion to global warming and plastic pollution. I find it useful to set this learning in a context of children's rights, with the UNCRC also being high on the agenda, in addition to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, right down to our own North Lanarkshire local strategies. As if saving the planet wasn't enough of a *raison d'être*!

One of the biggest challenges as a youth worker is keeping things positive. The potential impact of climate change is terrifying, and discussions on the topic can feed into new or existing eco-anxiety, leaving young people feeling hopeless and depressed. One of the best antidotes to this is to support the young people to take action. Even though many aspects are out of their control, there are plenty of changes and actions they can take on an individual or collective level to make a difference, so we tend to end sessions with conversations about what we can do next to tackle each issue. My colleagues and I also keep the sessions as fun and interactive as possible (we have been meeting predominantly online), by delivering the material via quizzes,

games, challenges, short films and other groupwork approaches. Many of the young people I'm working with are also undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh's Award or other youth accreditations such as John Muir, Dynamic Youth and Saltire awards, meaning that they get recognition for their involvement in the group, and set appropriate challenges and targets as part of their youth work.

I've also spent some time developing local and national connections with other people or organisations working in climate related areas. Importantly, we have secured seats for young people around the table of North Lanarkshire's Strategic Partnership Climate Emergency Steering Group and have facilitated discussions with key decision makers in our area. The young people can advise the partners on the most effective approaches to engaging a wider youth audience on this issue, which is crucial if we are to raise further awareness and action.



An alligator, two centuries and a pandemic

Tila McDonald, the creative spark of youth and community development consultancy, **Catch the Light**, believes youth work has an opportunity to re-wild itself.



Picture the scene... You've been scratching your head over an energetic group of young people that you are anxious to get on board. The local area manifests challenges of the ilk familiar to most Scottish towns. You believe that experiential learning is fundamental to transforming young people's lives but recognise how circumstances can be limiting. Recent visits to a nearby woodland have opened some promising discussions about living creatures from bugs to badgers. On hearing that the circus is coming to town, you find yourself contemplating if the owner might bring a baby alligator along to the group so that they can learn more about reptiles...

As far-fetched as this story may seem, the event occurred just a mile from where I am writing this article. Two hundred years ago, Robert Owen a cotton mill manager and social reformer, enthusiastically promoted his notion of a cradle-to-grave education for all, which he believed would be a catalyst for a new era of a more equal and happy society. In [his address](#) to the people of New Lanark in January 1816 he declared the following:

"That every individual may be trained to produce far more than he can consume, while there is a sufficiency of soil left for him to cultivate... That nature has provided means by which population may be at all times maintained in the proper state to give the greatest happiness to every individual, without one check of vice or misery."

By borrowing the alligator from the circus Owen demonstrated that rather than being reduced to the four walls of a classroom or the pages of a textbook, learning ought to be filled with rich experiences that excite children and young people. Although he invested heavily in schools and community facilities, he advocated children should spend as much time as possible outside, absorbed in nature.

In the intervening years, education reverted to class-based learning, with outdoor playtime separated from schoolwork. Whilst undertaking forest school leader training, I realised how much youth work, whilst more informal than mainstream education, had nevertheless assumed a predominance of building-based work.

One positive to come from the pandemic is that youth work has gained a fresh opportunity to re-wild itself, doing activities that anyone can lead using Scotland's abundance of natural assets. Building on this, youth work can learn from the Scandinavian Forest School Model. The principles are closely aligned with the [Youth Work Outcomes](#). They refer to activities taking place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world. Holistic development of everyone is central to fostering resilient, confident, independent, and creative learners. It offers the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the gravity of issues which young people currently face: rising youth mental health, obesity, reduced levels of physical activity and a shift from child-led free play outside to leisure time indoors or more structured and organised leisure activities. Therefore, the [Forest School Model](#) can help to strengthen youth work's offer to young people and sharpen the skills of our workforce.

During a recent session an experienced forest school leader traced the outline of two arches in the mud at our feet and asked if anyone knew what the symbol was.

"McDonald's" they cried in unison.

"How do you know that?" asked the leader.

"Everybody knows that symbol" replied a group member.

The leader then picked up some leaves from the ground and handed them out. Smaller than a human hand, with a distinctive curvy edge, the leader asked what kind of tree the leaves were from. The group fell into a deep silence. Nobody could identify the oak tree we were sheltering under at New Lanark, which incidentally was old enough to have stood since Owen's time.

Has it taken two centuries and a pandemic for us to understand what Robert Owen gifted to us all those years ago? Let us continue this path of broadening our outdoor youth work provision. After some initial awkward sessions group members will start showing signs of natural curiosity, enquiring about the names of trees and other flora, examining animal droppings and footprints, or digging in the mud and under logs for minibeasts. Some like working with tools, some prefer cooking on the fire whilst others enjoy swinging in hammocks looking up at the tree-canopy above. If Owen is right, it may just lead to happier and healthier people that are more connected to the planet.



It's our social responsibility to go green

The youth work sector has the great mission of supporting and guiding young people through some of their most transformative years. It's a mission **Eurodesk** and **ERYICA** take to heart by always finding different approaches to serve young people and focus on what matters to them.

eurodesk



Here are 10 tips so you can start today

The [2021 report](#) of the Climate of Change project surveyed over 22,000 young people in Europe on their opinions on climate change.

65% believe that climate change will affect them personally.

66% ranked it as the first or second most important Sustainable Development Goal "take action to combat climate change".

The [United Nations report](#) on climate change in 2021 reflects on the alarming state of the planet and emphasises that human actions still have the potential to determine the future course of climate. For many young people, being conscious about the climate is not a choice of interest but a necessity to secure the future. While many young people find their own ways to contribute to the fight against climate change, they demand their surroundings to be more conscious of their environmental impact and what this may mean for their future.

As Eurodesk and ERYICA, two European-wide youth information networks, we have decided to embed this consciousness and responsibility into our everyday work. While doing so, we put together a guide to support other organisations and institutions in evaluating their impact and developing a strategy for climate actions. Going green doesn't have to be more costly, it is about making a conscious effort to prioritise our environment and the planet when making choices. Here are some areas for reflection and where you can start today:

Get everyone onboard

1. Plan your green transition in a participatory way, invite colleagues and those using your services (e.g. young people) to brainstorm potential measures that can be put in place.
2. A way to motivate you along the way is to set targets. Start off by measuring your organisation's [carbon footprint](#), [water footprint](#) and/or [eco footprint](#) to understand what your impact is today.
3. Introduce green practices and eco-friendly policies in everyday activities as well as office and service management.
4. Don't forget your digital footprint! Did you know that an employee who participates in 15 hours of online meetings with their camera on, generates the same amount of CO2 as it takes to charge your mobile phone, every day, for 3 years!

Engage young people

5. Raise awareness about the importance of fact-checking and provide young people with tools to identify disinformation related to environmental impact online.
6. Empower young people to reflect on their own climate impact and which ways they can reduce their ecological footprint.
7. Organise workshops and training related to the topic. [The Greening Youth Information Guide](#) is filled with non-formal education activities you can carry out with young people.

Create favourable policies

8. Create incentives in youth activities, programmes and in workplaces that favour green practices. This could be done by prioritising environmentally-friendly alternatives, incorporating environmental awareness in training activities, or awarding a Green Hero of the Month - be creative!
9. Include the topic of sustainability in training of youth work professionals.
10. Advocate for environmentally-friendly youth programmes by thinking of how the programmes can better inform and create awareness, empower young people to take action and connect green initiatives.

Promoting youth action for people and planet

As a UK-wide conservation charity - dedicated to the experience, protection and repair of wild places – we believe that wild places are essential for people and the planet. Tackling climate emergency and biodiversity loss is core to the work of John Muir Trust.



We work with hundreds of organisations every year who, in turn, engage individuals and families in our national John Muir Award. Each year Award participants are encouraged to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places – with around 90% under the age of 25. Flexibility is built into the Award's Four Challenges, enabling young people to help shape their activities and challenge themselves from where they're at.

"Think global, act local" is a message often referenced in conversations about planning Award activities. It resonates well with youth work approaches, enabling exploration of the issues that matter to young people and reinforcing self-belief that everyone can be a positive force for change.

The Award encourages meaningful time in nature and tackling bigger-than-self challenges through real-world learning. As one young person describes it, exploring Learning for Sustainability through local action *"gives a sense of perspective and connection with the greater world."*

During Scotland's Year of Young People, we audited how Award participants took action for wild places. Nearly 19,500 young people undertook over 29,000 days of practical conservation activity to benefit climate and nature. Their total contribution was valued at over three quarters of a million pounds.

From tackling plastic pollution by organising community litter picks or tree planting for flood management, to pollinator-friendly planting to help urban wildlife flourish, every Award participant takes pride in the difference they make. Young people can be empowered to broaden their impact, using their voices to advocate and campaign for the importance of our wild places in building a more sustainable, happier and healthier society.

Research from the #iwill movement tells us that young people want to make a difference to society; and taking action from a young age is key to forming habits and future participation. Nurturing connections with and action for nature benefits people too. Supporting young

people's health and wellbeing is key to ensuring they can fulfil their potential, and for many, nature has a lot to offer. The outdoors also gives countless opportunities for learning, skills building and personal development – whether developing leadership capacity, honing navigation and surveying skills or learning to assess and manage risks.

There's never been a more important time to expand opportunities for all young people to deepen their connection with nature. From politicians and wider society to local communities, organisations and youth leaders, we all have a part to play. We're continuing to support youth workers, educators and other practitioners to inspire our young people by encouraging them to connect with, enjoy and participate directly in caring for wild places. Listening to young people's concerns around climate and nature and creating space for youth-led discussion, problem solving and conservation is a fantastic place to start, ensuring a brighter future for our young people, communities and planet.

“ Young people bring energy, enthusiasm and ideas for change. ”

Young climate leaders

Rachel Cameron from the Scotland Malawi Partnership's Youth Committee interviews two young people who are pushing for the change needed to save our global community, despite the voices of their generation struggling to be heard over the din of indecision and inaction from world leaders.

The Scotland Malawi Partnership are a charity that represent and inspire people-to-people links between Scotland and Malawi. Our Youth Committee aims to represent the voice of young people between our two countries.

I was lucky enough to interview Joanne Chigwenembe from Malawi and Nia Hujan from Scotland. They are Young Climate Leaders from the 2050 Climate Group, a volunteer-led and youth-run charity that aims to empower young people to take action against the climate crisis. I was delighted to be able to gain their views from both countries. This is what they had to say:



“ I look forward to the day when Malawian Youths will be adequately represented ”



Joanne Chigwenembe - Malawi

“Malawi's population is about 18 million. 60% of this population are the youth, those under 35 years. This tells you that, the youth are not just the future, they are our today.

For Malawi, an economy that is largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture, we are already experiencing several challenges; climate induced disasters affect agricultural output.

If we can't produce enough food, what does that say for our major exports. From this there is a ripple effect on other systems, manufacturing, health and our general resilience. Our livelihoods and our general wellbeing are at risk.

I have been on this journey since 2017. I must say that I have found it quite exciting. The learning never ends. I can't say it's been a smooth sail, many challenges along the way; differing mindsets, inadequate funds for the cause, having to take the side lines sometimes but well it has been educative and very fruitful.

Many development policies in Malawi including those on climate change outline the youth as key stakeholders. However, the youth are only involved in menial tasks.

I look forward to the day when Malawian Youths will be adequately represented not just on paper but even at high level. I enjoy seeing the likes of Greta Thunberg etc. When they speak and are heard. For us who are feeling the pressure that comes with climate change, we want to speak out and be heard even globally.”



Nia Hujan – Scotland

“The climate crisis is a threat to young people around the globe, and something that we will have to live with for the rest of our lives. One of the major issues is 'climate migrants' - those that will be forcefully displaced from their homes due to the climate crisis. It is crucial that we work on changing and adapting our current systems in order prepare for this.

In Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland we have experienced extreme weather events such as flash flooding that we were largely unprepared for.

As Scotland is an oil economy, there needs to be an energy transition towards renewables. It is crucial that young people are included and on-board with this transition, as we are the ones who will be living in this new economy.

Young people bring energy, enthusiasm and ideas for change.

I believe that public pressure is one of the strongest forces in making changed in the climate sphere. Therefore, my main goal is to speak to people outside of my circle, to try and communicate the severity and urgency of the crisis.”

The Scotland Malawi Partnership continues to work with young people across both nations, promoting all manner of civil society connections so we can work ever closer on the challenges that bind us. Speaking to Nia and Joanne gave me a significant insight into the drive of young people in both countries to be heard and involved in the climate crisis – to be the leaders of their own future.

Why Scouts are making a Promise to the Planet

Gregor Mitchell and Morven Bayton, Scouts Scotland's MSYPs tell us why world leaders must act on climate change and how Scouts are making a hands on difference.



You don't have to be a scientist to know that climate change is a big deal. As Scouts, we're committed to finding a global solution. That's why this year Scouts have launched Promise to the Planet. Some simple hands on ways to make a difference in our own communities, but also to use our voice to inspire decision makers to make changes. This is a worldwide campaign, 57 million

Scouts from across the world will take a stand and work towards a better world by taking action to reduce climate change. This campaign will help us work towards a number of Sustainable Development Goals, including: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water and Life On Land.

The planet won't be ours forever so we must ensure it is preserved for generations after us. Climate change is already affecting people across the world today and will continue to have even more of an impact in the future. This a terrifying thought as we see the lives already lost to the changes invoked by human activities. We should all be helping tackle climate change in every way possible.

In recent years, young people have led the way in campaigning for action on climate change from Greta Thunberg, to our very own MSYPs in Scotland, but climate change is everyone's responsibility and that includes leaders across the world.

The leaders coming to COP26 are the ones who have the ability to change the direction of the world forever. We want world leaders to think about the next generation of citizens and act now. We believe that leaders should lead by example, both in the decisions that they make,

but also in their own lives. This will demonstrate that they do care about the issue and will encourage others to take similar action. Climate change is an issue affecting people worldwide, so it is essential that world leaders work together instead of only acting in the interests of their own countries.

Scouts is a worldwide movement and some of our members are already facing the results of climate change. The environment, both local and worldwide is a large part of our activities and part of the Scout promise is to leave the world better than we found it. If we as an international movement can help tackle climate change, the results would be unbelievable! From doing a beach clean or a litter pick during a camp, to reviewing the eco friendliness of your Scout group, all of these things help!

We will use our voice at and ahead of COP26 to talk to world leaders about

the impact of deforestation, the harms caused by single use plastics, the problems associated with offshoring our waste to different countries, how to encourage active travel, how to improve public transport and more.

We hope that the legacy of COP26 means that decision makers start to think about the next generation of young people in every decision that they make. But the legacy of COP26 should be more than just promises, more than just words. We hope the legacy of COP26 will be a change in the attitudes of those with power towards a greener future, protecting the planet for future generations.



“ Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is. ”

Greta Thunberg,

Environmental Activist, speaking at the World Economic Forum, 2019



Cultivating a climate of change

Dumfries and Galloway Council's Youth Work Service have taken a different route on climate change education.



Through Youth Work Support Hubs in Secondary schools, they have reached out to groups of young boys 12-to-14 who would not normally be interested in issues around the environment. Using practical work in the outdoors, young people in Newton Stewart have created a garden for outdoor learning and a new path network incorporating climate information for locals. All tying in with the Council's wider priorities around environmental change.

On a piece of disused land at the back of the school, the boys began their work on the garden, digging away weeds, replacing an old polytunnel, making vegetable patches, learning about how to plant and rotate produce, repairing fences, putting up secure gates and above all learning how to work as part of a team. They brought local business on board to donate to the garden project. And it was quite a haul, oak barrel

planters from the local whisky factory, top soil from a local provider, gravel from another, and more donations are still coming in.

The group have transformed the garden into a space that all young people can enjoy whether it is for outdoor learning, or just a safe space to relax with friends at breaks or on free periods at school. As well as doing the garden, the young people have built links with staff in the school and with local businesses. They have also learnt skills for life, with some of them wanting to go into the construction sector.

Their enthusiasm has created another initiative at Newton Stewart's Douglas Park, the Path Project, creating a new walking path. It gives local people the opportunity to do their daily mile, and to learn about climate change, with information boards a key feature of the path, enabling folks to learn about

how they can make a difference in their local communities to lessen the effects and impacts of climate change.

"It has given us something to do and gives us a focus. We all enjoy the manual side of the work we have been doing, and it's giving us lots of experience for the future. It's been good to see the group growing as time has went on too, and it's nice that the work we have done so far is recognised and appreciated by the local community."

For this particular group of boys, it would typically be hard to engage them in climate change work, but by getting them to take part in work that focuses on climate change in a different way, getting them to think about the re-purposing of land and how to produce their own food, it has increased their knowledge on these issues.

Seeing the first swallow of summer

According to NatureScot connecting with nature can help tackle our three biggest crises: biodiversity loss, climate change, and mental wellbeing.



The critical global issues of climate change and biodiversity loss suggest a failing relationship between people and the rest of nature. This disconnect leads many to undervalue nature and its contribution to our health, wellbeing, and wider society.

Nature connectedness is a robust, psychological construct which describes the relationship between an individual and the rest of nature. The construct of connectedness to nature has multiple dimensions, including affective, cognitive and experiential factors related to our belonging to the natural world. Nature connectedness is also concerned with an individual's sense of self and the extent we believe we are a part of nature. This influences how we respond emotionally to nature and therefore influences our attitudes and behaviour towards it.

There is not only a growing body of science that demonstrates connecting with nature has positive benefits to our health and wellbeing, but also that those who notice nature are more inclined to live in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way.

Connecting with nature is much more than simply spending time in nature. To connect with nature, we must tune into the natural world, noticing the sounds, sights, textures, and scents.



Pathway	Action	Examples
Contact	Engaging with nature through the senses for pleasure	Listening to birdsong, smelling wild flowers, watching the sunset
Beauty	Engaging with the aesthetic qualities of nature	Appreciating natural scenery or engaging with nature through the arts
Meaning	Using nature or natural symbolism (e.g. language and metaphors) to represent an idea, thinking about the meaning of nature and signs of nature	The first swallow of summer
Emotion	An emotional bond with, and love for nature	Talking about, and reflecting on your feelings about nature
Compassion	Extending the self to include nature, leading to a moral and ethical concern for nature	Talking about, and reflecting on your feelings about nature

According to the five pathways to nature connectedness, there are a number of ways we can bond with our environment.

According to a [recent report](#), young people's connection to nature drops sharply from age 11, reaching a low between 13 and 18, and doesn't fully recover until age 30.

The teenage years are a time of many changes, and it's thought that lower nature connectedness is related to difficulties and changes in emotional regulation and self-identify. This highlights the importance of youth work. Youth workers can provide opportunities for young people to meaningfully experience the outdoors and facilitate the building of this vital relationship with nature.

There are many sources of support and inspiration to be found at: [Beyond your Boundary](#), [Outdoor Learning Directory](#) and the [Learning Outdoors](#) section of our website.

As Scotland looks to become a Net Zero Nation, NatureScot's Make Space for Nature campaign, looks to help the people build their connection to nature and take positive action towards a nature-rich, low carbon future.

The first two of the [Make Space for Nature](#) steps, are about building an emotional connection with nature, with the following steps outlining a natural progression of gaining knowledge and understanding, and taking action.

- Step 1**
Being in the natural environment, enjoying it and feeling comfortable in it
- Step 2**
Connecting with nature – noticing and experiencing
- Step 3**
Developing knowledge of the natural environment its resources and benefits
- Step 4**
Understand your own and others impact on nature and why sustainable action is needed
- Step 5**
Decide on your own values and beliefs on managing Scotland's nature now and in the future
- Step 6**
Be part of a resilient and nature-rich community, influencing society as an active, responsible

It's likely that people have already taken a few of the steps without even thinking about it. By using these steps we encourage everyone to Make Space for Nature, physically, emotionally, mentally, and in your lives.

Personal challenge leads to global awareness

“There is more to us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps for the rest of our lives, we will be unwilling to settle for less.” Kurt Hahn, founder of The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.



The benefits to the health and wellbeing of young people of being outside and engaging with nature have been highlighted over the last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Where some young people have easy access to the outdoors, others were limited due to their geographical or personal situation. The DofE (The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award) recognised this and adapted to allow participants to change their activities and gave them ideas and opportunities to continue – encouraging community volunteering action close to home, using time outdoors for physical activity, and suggesting outdoor activities such as photography and conservation, like the John Muir Award.

Evidence shows nature connectedness can help with reducing stress, improves memory capacity, productivity and concentration. It also helps with the connection and involvement in the

local community and an understanding of how young people can have a positive impact on the environment. DofE helps young people to build a life-long belief in themselves, supporting them to take on their own

challenges, follow their passions, and discover talents they never knew they had. It provides young people with a framework to explore their personal strength and weaknesses. It gives them opportunities to consider their response to global and local issues.



Encouraging meaningful volunteering is important to DofE, with the aim of inspiring young people to make a difference within their community or to an individual. It provides young people an opportunity to increase their environmental awareness,

“For me personally, completing the DofE – particularly the Volunteering Section – was the catalyst for me finding my voice, allowing me to both understand and utilise my overflowing passion for activities, youth work and social justice.”

Fatima, Bronze Award, Morgan Academy and Do It 4 Youth Champion

campaign, or work alongside partners on environmental projects. The number of participants taking up activities with this focus is increasing year-on-year.



Many activities undertaken for the Physical and Skills Sections can be outdoors; beyond this the Skills Section gives opportunities to explore science and technology, and the natural world. DofE participants have worked with their local Nature Wardens and built paths, planted trees and litter-picked in their local area.

“Getting to go outside and take photos whilst out walking for my physical section, definitely helped me mental health wise and for my physical health.”

CAMHS Bronze and Silver Participant, Edinburgh

And, of course, the Expedition Section encourages young people to explore both physically but also cognitively through the aim of the expedition. DofE Participants undertake training in teamwork, navigation, campcraft, first aid and importantly the Scottish Outdoor Access code – the “leave no trace” message is key to this. We are delighted too, that some of

our licenced organisations are beginning to explore carbon neutral expeditions, with tree planting offsetting carbon emissions undertaken by the young people.

“The expedition section was so freeing. Instead of spending six hours a day staring at my screen, I could stare and take in the stunning scenery of the country we live in...but maybe don't appreciate as much as we should. I had the best time over those four days. Our team chatted non-stop! Afterwards I ended up developing such great and meaningful friendships.”

Lucy, Gold Award, South Lanarkshire

We are delighted that 65 years on, DofE continues to be a personal challenge that helps young people get the most out of life and make a difference to the world around them – because when you prove to yourself that you are ready for anything, nothing can hold you back.

A voice for our seas

Scotland's seas and wildlife are truly spectacular and have rightly been recognised as being so by the Scottish Government. **Catherine Gemmell** of the Marine Conservation Society, talks about ocean optimism in the face of climate crisis headlines through empowering our youth generation.

Here at the Marine Conservation Society, we work to recover, protect and celebrate our ocean for both people and the planet and we couldn't do it without the support, passion, expertise and campaigning of young people.

To drive the change our ocean needs, our teams work with communities, business and politicians to ensure action is taken at every level of society. We couldn't do this work without our Sea Champions – volunteers of every age giving their time and knowledge to a variety of projects and work areas across the UK.

In Scotland many of our young Sea Champions have been vital to our campaigns to call for the changes our seas need. From research projects on cigarette filters to civil servant presentations, beach cleans and surveys to biodiversity monitoring, speaking at conferences to setting up student societies – the list is long and is a constant source of inspiration and ocean optimism.

Anyone can be a Sea Champion and you can sign up easily on our website at www.mcsuk.org to find out what training and opportunities are available. There is something for anyone who wants to be a voice for the ocean, whether that means taking part in citizen science projects or education training and events support.

The Climate Emergency is pushing our oceans into crisis, but we can turn the tide if we work together. Working with youth organisations like YouthLink Scotland has been incredible for the Marine Conservation Society. From [#iWillAmbassadors](https://twitter.com/iWillAmbassadors) championing marine species to youth groups collecting important data on beach

litter and seaweed, we would encourage anyone and any group to get in touch to see how we can support more young people and youth groups in marine conservation across Scotland.

Together we can fight to save our precious blue planet.

The list of crises impacting our planet can be overwhelming, which is why it's so important to champion what we like to call 'Ocean Optimism'. The idea that we are optimistic that the work we are doing is going to turn the tide and save our seas, as well as the optimism the sea itself provides us.

Our ocean is not just a life source for us by providing oxygen, food and regulating the climate but also a life source for our wellbeing. So many of us will have benefitted in body and mind from our local blue spaces this year and we hope that many more will be able to access this blue benefit going forward. It is completely true that people will only protect what they love, so sometimes the first step to marine conservation is just helping people fall in love with the sea.

All of us at the Marine Conservation Society would like to thank the young people, youth groups and youth organisations we have worked with so far and can't wait to work with more of you in the future.

See you on the beach!



Facing up to climate anxiety

This generation of young people are facing the very survivability of the human race. **Stephen Finlayson**, Head of Innovation for mental health charity, Penumbra believes climate anxiety is normal, it's a rational response to the Climate Emergency. These global issues are real and distressing for many, diminishing the actual reality is not helpful to our young people but giving them a sense of genuine agency over the future is.

I grew from teens to early 20s in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Looking back now, it can seem almost like a golden age in terms of the national, and global factors that can affect our mental wellbeing. While there were of course many problems, there was also a real sense of optimism. The Cold War appeared to be over. South Africa had been liberated from apartheid. Many of the social divides such as racism and the battle for a more inclusive society seemed to be going in the right direction.

That is different today with the climate crisis, it is worth reflecting on the unprecedented nature of what young people are facing - both in terms of global events, and the psychological and emotional toll this creates.

Even going back to the fears over nuclear catastrophe of the cold war period, never has there been a generation of young people who have had to contend with messages that the very survivability of humans as a species could be at risk. Add into the mix the justified anger at the actions of previous generations that

have led to this place, and it is no surprise that so many young people are experiencing distress, despair and a sense of powerlessness.

How we conceptualise what is going on for young people is critical here. It is important that we view these reactions as normal, rational even - they are not signs of any inherent mental ill health. Arguably, anyone who is not experiencing anxiety at the realities of climate change is not paying attention. That being said, the impact will of course be greater for young people who are also experiencing challenges with their mental health for other reasons.

It is hard to write about these things without sounding bleak. In my organisation, Penumbra, we talk of hope as being fundamental to supporting people through difficult times with their mental health. It is important not to be trite about this. The challenges are immense, and superficial positive thinking is not going to cut the mustard. And yet, hope we must, and hope there is.



The recent IPCC report made clear that while the challenges are immense, there is still time and opportunity to step back from the brink. Adults must offer hope to young people. We cannot simply pass the buck on to them.

As Greta Thunberg powerfully said "... you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words."

Our job as adults, as parents, as youth workers, as mental health advocates must be to support our young people in three key ways:

1. To validate their experience.

We must not diminish the reality or provide false comfort. We need to look young people in the eye and acknowledge that this is real.

2. Be allies.

Whether as individuals in our own relationships with young people, as people working with young people directly or as representatives in our organisations we must communicate powerfully that we are committed to being alongside them to fight for their future, not blindly leaving it to them as Greta Thunberg rightly rages against.

3. Help young people to feel in control.

In terms of young people's mental wellbeing, this may be the most critical, and the most challenging factor. There are few things more important to wellbeing than a feeling of agency and control over your life. The Climate Emergency poses an unprecedented challenge to the ability to feel in control. The nature of the issues is so globally complex that feeling a sense of agency can be daunting. We need to support young people to find ways that they can meaningfully feel they have agency while tolerating the fact that the bigger picture is out of any one person's control.

If we can do this, and support the huge energy among young people, then we do indeed have the potential to create a hopeful future for all of us.

penumbra

Muddy boots and curious minds

An outdoor learning partnership between Scottish Borders Council and Borders Forest Trust has helped a group of young people to grow and move on as Louise Rawlins and Anna Craigen explain.

“being in the group has changed everything in my life and I loved walking to different places”

“thank you for talking about different jobs I could be interested in... it's just been amazing and awesome”

We've been on a journey! We've supported a group of young people with different needs and abilities to achieve the John Muir Explorer Award. The award framework helped us to **discover, explore, conserve and share** our local wild spaces.

The programme embraces youth work principles, it encourages young people to take risks and creates a level playing field where young people and workers learn together. As a CLD worker and a Borders Forest Trust community educator we blended youth work with expertise in outdoor learning. We used humour, creativity and interactive activities to help group members access the outdoors and be inspired.

Discover

The award framework pushed us all. From having limited interest in nature and being cautious in the outdoors, the group were now going on weekly walks and explorations!

One of the key issues was kit. Not having the right kit can cause stress and stop participation in the outdoors. [Borders Children's Charity](#) funded every young person to purchase their own kit. This was significant. They started looking like hill walkers, their posture changed and they started walking with purpose. We discovered new routes and got lost together! The hills around Galashiels gave us much needed respite in challenging times.

Explore

Every young person had a role, we rotated the walk leader and we learned to listen and to get on. By the programme end the group had learned navigation skills and led the explorations themselves.

Conserve

Assisted by resources from Borders Forest Trust, they learned about wildlife and the need to protect our environment. They collected litter, planted trees, created bird boxes and habitat spaces. Fun and active sessions like catching butterflies worked best!

On catching butterflies

"I was sneaky...sneaky like a ninja... but it never worked because someone keeps standing on sticks!"

"The technique I used was the predator technique where I have to be real quiet and real careful."

Share

Using voice recordings the young people shared their views on the group and their learning. During lockdowns they independently engaged with activities and used their mobile phones to share photographs of their adventures and wildlife.

Families got involved too, with one family getting a bird feeder.

Endings

We explored and discussed their life choices, many were not enjoying college and we introduced them to volunteering and careers in the outdoors. They all have more awareness of their own abilities, the benefits of taking risks, and now see the outdoors as a source of escapism, learning and inspiration. We will be celebrating with families and colleagues their amazing achievements.

"I loved learning about birds, and leaves, trees and how to light a fire, it was just wonderful experiences... thank you for kitting me out and letting me choose what I want to wear... I look like a proper leader... being in the group has changed everything in my life and I loved walking to different places... thank you for talking about different jobs I could be interested in... it's just been amazing and awesome."



The science behind climate action



The eyes of the world will be on Scotland this November and more specifically, Glasgow, as the UK plays host to the UN's Climate Change Conference – COP26.

As if that wasn't exciting enough, Glasgow Science Centre's (GSC) beautiful riverside building and outside space will be temporarily transformed into the 'Green Zone' – the dedicated public engagement venue of COP26, which will be located across the water from the conference's official 'Blue Zone' for certified delegates.

In response to this significant news, GSC have added more activities to their climate science public engagement programme, 'Our World Our Impact', to inform, inspire and empower a diverse national and international audience to tackle the climate crisis, particularly the disengaged.

The Community Learning and Development team at GSC saw this as an opportunity to support young people in our communities and Earth Allies was born. It weighs in at a whopping 12-week course, and we couldn't be prouder.

They have listened to young people and combined their needs with our experience in creating outstanding STEM resources, to create a unique learning journey that will bring new

voices to this important year for climate action.

Earth Allies is an online course that aims to equip young people aged 16-to-24 from underserved communities with the tools to be advocates for climate action. The programme is designed to build knowledge and understanding of the issues, develop digital and campaigning skills, plus empower and build confidence, equipping young people to participate in the ongoing dialogue about the future and the changes that are required to combat climate change.

Groups from New College Lanarkshire and the Youth Community Support Agency (YCSA) will be taking their first steps into this exciting journey. They'll have the opportunity to swing by the Green Zone during COP26 to meet other youth groups, businesses, exhibitors and artists. It really is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

YCSA is a youth work organisation based in Glasgow's south side which aims to empower young black and minority ethnic people and provides opportunities for their

members to develop skills and achieve potential. They have been very busy working on various climate action themed projects including woodworking and sewing classes to promote upcycling; cooking classes to prevent food waste; gardening skills to reduce food miles, to name a few. Their short film '[Our take on Climate Change](#)' is passionate, well researched, with an intelligent message, delivered with such a positive attitude.

The GSC wants to support the development of their passion, digital and campaigning skills, and climate science learning. Over the next few months they are looking forward to working with both groups of young people and believe they will all benefit hugely from the experience, and of course become the voices of climate action for the next generation!

If you'd like to keep up with what GSC is up to before, during and after COP26, follow them on social media. Plus discover exciting events, festivals, resources and content on their '[Our World Our Impact](#)' page.

Why it should be the final straw

The Scottish Youth Parliament's 2019-20 national campaign, [Pack it up, Pack it in](#), aimed to empower young people to speak out and take action to reduce pollution levels in Scotland. **Liam Fowley MSYP**, SYP's Vice Chair, speaks about why this issue is so important to Scotland's young people.

We exist to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign to effect the change they wish to see. One of the ways we do this is through our annual campaigns.

We know young people are passionate about tackling the climate crisis. Over recent years, we have seen young people flock in their thousands to Scotland's streets to demand action. Through consultation for our current youth manifesto, [From Scotland's Young People](#), 75% of young people agreed that: *'The global climate emergency is an issue of climate justice, where those who contribute least to greenhouse gas emissions are most impacted. Countries most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions must be the first to reduce their emissions.'*

Our Pack it up, Pack it in campaign aimed to contribute to efforts to tackle the climate crisis by focusing on reducing pollution in Scotland. Our campaign aimed to empower young people to speak out and take action.

During the campaign, we had opportunities for young people to get involved and take action. From going plastic-free to writing climate poems, the actions were broad ranging and most importantly, they got young people thinking and talking about climate change. We even held our own [online eco festival](#) – 'unpacked' – where hundreds got involved in interactive activities about the environment.

We researched young people's views and recommendations for reducing litter and single-use packaging, and improving recycling. We received the highest number of consultation responses above any other national campaign we have run, which shows how engaged young people are on this issue. In our research, young people told us that individuals should have most responsibility for reducing the amount of litter in Scotland, and that environmental awareness education should be improved.

Our campaign was powered by the hard work and passion of young people who, like many in our society, want to see things done differently. They wanted to see everyone take bold steps to reduce the effects of climate change. When we hear of young people being told 'no you can't' or 'it's too late', there is no worse a feeling. But we young people aren't going to listen to that. We are going to stand up, do what we can, no matter how big or small, and help change our environment, reduce the adverse effects of climate change, and ultimately save our clean and green world. We know we will be the ones facing the most impact when it comes to climate change, so we're going to stand up for ourselves.

We can't do it on our own. Adults take note...we're coming. Let's get this done together!



'All young people in Scotland should receive improved practical environmental awareness education, and be empowered to take action to live more sustainably. To help achieve this, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland should take a human rights based approach when implementing the 'Learning for Sustainability (LFS) Action Plan', by meaningfully including children and young people in the design and delivery of LFS programmes.'



Pack it up, Pack it in Recommendation November 2019

@OfficialSYP

#SYPReducePollution

Be brave

Kate Allen of Scotdec, the Global Learning Centre in Scotland, challenges youth workers to be more brave in their approach to the climate emergency and question the education wrongs we may be perpetuating.



“ . . .this (Western) education system promotes the continuation of a lethal system for the planet and for humanity ”

Youth work in Scotland has always provided an alternate, safe space for young people. We are proud that we work to transform lives. But if real transformation is the ability to learn from the social and historical shortcomings of the dominant world-view we must ask ourselves if youth work practices have been complicit in developments related to the current climate emergency. Has our youth work space become too safe? How do we move towards braver spaces where real transformative change can happen?

At a recent conference, hosted by Bridge 47, [Chief Ninawa Huni Kui](#), spokesperson for nearly 15000 indigenous people in the Amazon region of Acre in Brazil challenged current education systems and their teaching around climate change:

“...this (Western) education system promotes the continuation of a lethal system for the planet and for humanity, this education promotes individualism and encourages consumerism... where the most vulnerable are exploited... this form of education is sold as progressive, development and even as a superior form of civilization.”

This invites those working within the Scottish education system, including informal youth work, to question what wrongs we have been perpetuating. Our climate emergency is, for many, distant and scary. Issues

framed within the [17 Goals for Sustainable Development](#) are viewed as abstract and so complex we may unconsciously want to protect young people from the realities they bring.

Yet we know that climate change is already negatively affecting young people and will be felt the most by those who are already vulnerable because of geography, poverty, gender, age, indigenous or minority status and disability. In Uist for example, [Crofter Iain MacDonald](#) talks about how 'he is scared of the storm now'. Rising sea levels and powerful storms are eroding the dunes and machair land that protects many low-lying communities.

Young people experience real fear about climate change as they understand that there are no quick fixes and that there is no master plan for the future. Taking a Global Citizenship approach to these issues offers a framework and methodology to enable youth workers to promote hope, and a sense of agency, counteracting eco-anxiety.

At [Scotdec](#) – a Global Learning Centre in Edinburgh – we work within the IDEAS national network to support Global Citizenship Education. This latest [Global Citizenship Resource](#) from IDEAS, doesn't tell young people what to think and do about the Climate Emergency, but provides stimuli for critical thinking, debate and

discussion to inform taking action. It is written primarily for teachers, but the activities are participatory and can be adapted for any setting. Critically it draws connections between lived experiences of young people in Scotland and Somaliland as understanding how we are connected to others is at the heart of [Global Citizenship Education](#).

There is increasing momentum globally for questioning established education approaches in terms of whether they can equip future generations to cope with the multiple crises we face.

Climate change is not a 'green' issue. Teaching the science and data, the Greenhouse Effect, climate science, the ecological crisis or biodiversity loss, is not enough. Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, sharing the burdens of climate change and its impacts equitably. It is important that youth workers recognise that they can explore climate justice without a deep knowledge of climate science.

For youth work to be truly transformative in Scotland we must offer a braver pathway for young people to participate more fully in society and contribute towards solving social and environmental issues.

Of living things

Deep in the urban environment of Provanmill, St Paul's Youth Forum has created a green oasis, bringing together the community and growing a generation of climate activists.



Over a decade ago, the seeds of Blackhill's Growing were first sown. During an exchange trip to Zambia, local young people saw first-hand how growing, cooking and sharing food could help create a cohesive, supportive community. They wanted to try and replicate this back in their own community and started with a small flock of laying hens. At the time, due to the stigma of the area we were told that the chickens, and any attempts at improving the neighbourhood through something as fragile and easily vandalised as a garden wouldn't last one night; they would either be stolen or destroyed.

However over ten years on we're still here and the project has only grown since. We now have a large community garden, with three polytunnels, raised beds, hens, an orchard and bee hives. Alongside this we run three school gardens in two local primary schools and a local nursery. As a project we work with people of all ages, from mother and toddler groups, right up to retired

pensioners. However a lot of our most passionate and committed volunteers and participants have been young people.

Young people work with us for a variety of reasons, some are big foodies, interested in learning more about where food comes from, others are nature lovers, wanting to help care for our chickens and bees, whilst some just appreciate the peace you get from a few hours work in the garden. As one young person told me this week after helping with the chickens, *"it's the most therapeutic thing I've done in ages."*

Through working with us a few of our young people have gone on to advocate passionately and articulately for a fairer food system and for climate justice, one young man made a short film with Glasgow Community Food Network last year about his local food system, whilst another of our young people was recently interviewed in a piece by the BBC about climate justice.

The garden has been a fantastic resource for the community. Not just for the food we grow there, but as a unique learning experience for people, both young and old.

A lot of the way we understand the world, including much of the learning we receive at school is increasingly disembodied. More and more as a society we are experiencing the world through textbooks, TVs, laptops and phones. However, if we want our young people to really care about their environment, or to even understand the dramatic changes that are taking place right now, we need to get them out into spaces like community gardens. Here they can experience the rich sensory world of plants, see how many different insects and animals share the space with us, and understand the huge journey a seed goes on to become the food we eat.

When we run school workshops, instead of labelling lifeless diagrams of cells and flowers we take the young people out into the garden

and ask them questions like: why do plants have flowers, or why are leaves shaped like sails, where does bread come from?

They also learn a lot about themselves, what it means to be reliant on such a vast system of interrelated plants and animals, what it means to grow something yourself, to nurture it through an entire lifecycle

and then see how it's remains are recycled back into a massive interconnected system of living things.

Through getting young people to interact physically with and directly question their natural environment they can explore the deep interconnectedness of nature and understand both how ingenious and fragile a system it is.



Supporting young leaders in climate action



With COP26 on the horizon, according to **Catherine Leatherland** of Scottish Wildlife Trust, there has never been a better time for Scotland to focus on the climate crisis. And this is the main issue that has most engaged young people in recent years.

At the Scottish Wildlife Trust we felt that impact, and that of the ever present lack of young voices within decision making levels of our organisation. The Year of Young People gave us a chance to do something about it. In 2018 the Trust piloted a Young Leaders programme, with no additional funding, for just eight months. Two years later the team is still going strong!

As a team of 12 volunteers, aged 20-to-30, the Young Leaders very existence makes our work more accessible to other young people.

We are very keen to make sure each Young Leader's skills and knowledge are listened to and used, as well as given the chance to develop during their time in the role.

Rosie, SWT Young Leader:

"One of the first major projects I was involved in was the Scottish Election Twitter Campaign, in which we produced a video stressing the importance of wildlife in the fight against climate change to politicians. The success of this led to the Young

“Enabling young people to have a level of responsibility within an organisation is a great way to boost confidence and directly encourage other young people to get involved alongside their peers.”

Leaders getting their very own Twitter account where we interact with politicians and the public directly whilst highlighting youth voices. Enabling young people to have a level of responsibility within an organisation is a great way to boost confidence and directly encourage other young people to get involved alongside their peers.

"Many young people heading into the conservation sector fear that they may not have studied the correct degree or have the necessary experiences. However, even as one of the newest members of the Young Leader team, I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of how conservation organisations run and the huge variety of career paths available in this field.

"This role allows me to work alongside my peers to develop opportunities for young people to interact with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and have their opinions on climate and conservation heard. I'm looking forward to the success of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Young Leaders showing other organisations

how valuable young people are in the fight against climate change."

This year, the Young Leaders are working on their biggest project yet – to lead the youth engagement work ahead of COP26.

This summer we held Young People's Nature Assemblies, which will lead to a Youth Manifesto. A series of videos highlight Nature Based Solutions – measures that restore nature and as a result help to solve wider problems.

All of this work demonstrates the action young people across the UK believe is needed from leaders both locally and globally, to tackle both the climate emergency and the interlinked biodiversity crisis.

The Young Leaders' work will directly help thousands of young people have their say. It is led and delivered by young people, for young people. Just two years ago, the team didn't exist. It goes to show what young people can do, if they are simply invited to the discussion.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

www.youthlinkscotland.org



YouthLink Scotland, Caledonian Exchange, 19a Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG

T: 01 31 313 2488 E: info@youthlinkscotland.org W: www.youthlinkscotland.org

YouthLink Scotland is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in Scotland No: 164547. Charity Ref: SC003923