

EAC/SAC BRIEFING PAPER

WHY?

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It supports people to connect with, enjoy and care for nature, landscape, and the natural environment. It does this through a structured yet adaptable scheme delivered through partnerships with youth organisations, schools, Local Authorities, etc. It's for people of all backgrounds and ages, is non-competitive, inclusive and accessible. Named after John Muir, the Scots-born conservation pioneer known as 'the founding father of National Parks'. The John Muir Award, Launched in 1997, is the main engagement initiative of the UK conservation charity the John Muir Trust. You can do programmes at 3 levels; Discovery, Explorer or Conserver Awards. Over 375,950 John Muir Awards have been achieved across the UK.

The John Muir Award provides a framework for schools to contextualise and deliver across Curriculum for Excellence outcomes and demonstrate Learning for Sustainability in action. It recognises pupils (usually P6 upwards) taking responsibility for nature (in school grounds and communities). It helps establish aspirations for healthy behaviour, and improves wellbeing in line with Scottish Government SHANARRI indicators. It fosters a culture of achievement in schools building essential skills for life, learning and work. *"Children work very well together outdoors, they are less likely to argue and have disputes, they are proactive and engaged in their activities and problem solve together on certain tasks"* Class Teacher Patna Primary School.

John Muir Award experience led to increased aspirations for regular contact with natural environments, which has been shown in NHS research and prescribing to both protect and improve our health. This effect was found to be strongest for young people from the most deprived communities. 88% of East Ayrshire pupils said they would continue to go outdoors after completing their John Muir Award. *"I feel happier when I am outside and less depressed and bored. It is also makes me calmer and stops me from being angry"* P7 pupil.

Cabinet Secretary for Education John Swinney *"I am very pleased to see this growth in pupils working to achieve a John Muir Award in schools. Its popularity, especially with pupils living in deprived areas, indicates that the Award is aiding improvements in literacy, numeracy, physical and mental health. Through Learning for Sustainability pupils have an entitlement that includes outdoor learning and daily contact with nature. It is therefore reassuring to hear that outdoor learning is increasingly embedded within our schools, helping children and young people stay connected with the natural world"* 2018.

In the school year 2017-2018 46% of East Ayrshire Primary Schools and 55% of Secondary Schools offered the John Muir Award. 37% of pupils were SIMD 1&2 and/or LAAC, this is up from 28% previous year.

WHAT?

An EAC JMA Coordinator post has been created to address this lack of equity and opportunity for some young people in East Ayrshire. The role supports schools to develop infrastructure and a leader base to enable equitable participation in the following years. The Coordinator can work across all schools providing direct delivery and staff support for the JMA programme to increase participation and award completions of targeted young people.

WHO?

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