



PHOTOGRAPH: KEITH BRAME

The John Muir Award is a UK-wide environmental award scheme, focused on wild places.

USE OF THE John Muir Award can support teachers to deliver learning outcomes through practical, creative and engaging approaches that are beneficial to all. In a school setting, it can be used to support experiential learning outside the classroom, and celebrate achievement in and beyond formal education.

Curriculum for Excellence places an emphasis on the development of children to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. It focuses on developing skills for learning, life and work and contributes to raising attainment for all. It encourages an active, healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyle and aims to support children and young people to learn beyond the classroom. It embraces initiatives that support outdoor learning, such as the John Muir Award.

How can the John Muir Award contribute to learning in schools?

Use this document to find out more about the John Muir Award and how it can be used:

- in teaching contexts and contribute to learning
- to support school priorities
- to help deliver Experiences and Outcomes
- to help raise attainment for all

“Every learner should receive their entitlement to Learning for Sustainability.”

Vision 2030+ Report: Concluding Report of the Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group, 2016

Introducing the John Muir Award

THE JOHN MUIR AWARD encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. It's free, open to all and works best with participants at later stage of primary education and beyond. For further guidance on suitability please see the 'Get Involved' section of the website prior to planning your involvement.

It provides a flexible framework within which activities identified by your school, college, or youth organisation can be tailored to meet the needs of the group, the wild place(s) chosen, and the curriculum. It is achieved at an individual level, and can be used with class groups, whole year groups, small groups of learners, individuals and families.

Four Challenges are at the heart of the John Muir Award. They are designed to promote a holistic approach to learning – including awareness, understanding and action – and reflect John Muir's wilderness experience (For more on John Muir, see discoverjohnmuir.com).

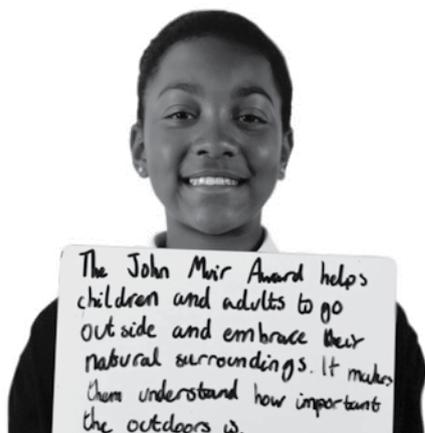
To achieve a John Muir Award each individual participant engages in a range of activities that meet the following four Challenges:

- **Discover a wild place(s)** – this can range from school grounds to mountain ranges
- **Explore it** – do things to raise awareness, increase understanding
- **Conserve it** – take personal responsibility
- **Share your experiences**

Summary documents demonstrating how the John Muir Award contributes to the education landscape can be found at:

[Scotland Education Overview: Resources & links and the John Muir Award](#)

Search 'John Muir Award Scotland Education Overview'



Why use the John Muir Award in your school? Use it to:

- deliver curriculum for excellence outcomes through outdoor learning approaches
- encourage an experiential approach to teaching
- join up learning across subjects and themes (see P4 and P5)
- celebrate individual achievement with a nationally recognised Award
- give focus and structure to a residential experience, field trip or visit, providing links between remote and school-based activity
- promote physical and emotional wellbeing
- help meet the needs of learners, including children and young people with special educational needs, or those learning outside mainstream education
- help meet priorities such equity and raising attainment, improving behavior, attendance and increasing engagement with learning
- reinforce values-based learning, promote citizenship, and encourage Learning for Sustainability as a way of teaching
- support priorities for school improvement¹ in particular:
 - enhance learning experiences through contributions of partnerships, parents and wider community
 - support assessment and tracking evidence as part of promoting improved outcomes for young people
- provide Continuing Professional Learning and Development opportunities for staff
- be cost effective - it's free to use
- provide opportunities for progression, increasing personal responsibility, leadership and challenge
- complement other award schemes and initiatives e.g. Eco-Schools, Rights Respecting Schools, Forest Schools and Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- support youthwork and community learning approaches in schools

¹Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016
<https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/inspection-and-review/about-inspections-and-reviews/principles-and-frameworks/Quality%20and%20improvement%20in%20Scottish%20education>

The John Muir Award in action in schools



Enhancing School Grounds and the Local Environment

Use of the John Muir Award prompts students and teachers to get to know and improve the quality of local wild places, including school grounds and parks. It can stimulate a process of engagement, valuing and taking ownership.

Bonhill Primary School

The school used the Award to guide their outdoor learning progression from the school grounds to Bonhill's local park to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Pupils embraced the challenge to gain a fresh perspective on their local community through a range of cross curriculum activities. It all made for positive and meaningful learning experiences both in the school grounds and in the local environment.

Search 'John Muir Award case study Bonhill'

Curriculum and Interdisciplinary Learning

Enhance subject delivery and promote interdisciplinary learning and themes across learning.

Bellahouston Academy

The Award helps to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence outdoors, in particular to make Geography more hands-on and enable links to be made with other subjects such as Expressive Arts and Science.

Search 'John Muir Award case study Bellahouston'

Youth Work and Youth Awards

Youth work awards provide important testimony to a young person's non-formal learning and personal achievements. They stand alongside academic qualifications as evidence of the skills and experience that young people bring to their future world of work and higher education.

Awards Network

The John Muir Award is a member of the Awards Network in Scotland and supports Awards Aware to raise awareness of the value of non-formal learning. Amazing Things – a guide to youth awards in Scotland, features the John Muir Award; it is the only award scheme with a primary focus on the natural environment.

Search 'Awards Network' 'Amazing Things' 'Awards Aware'

Residential Experiences

A residential learning experience provides opportunities, benefits and impacts that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting (Learning Away Evaluation Report 2015). Use the John Muir Award to enhance awareness and understanding in relation to the stimulating natural environments in which they often take place, and to help bridge the gap between school and outdoor/field centre experiences.

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre

Ardroy OEC integrates the John Muir Award with the Centre's diverse activities to give a strengthened environmental context and focus. It's used as a way of 'book-ending' the experience, creating a thread of experiences for school groups before, during and after their residential programmes at the Centre.

Search 'John Muir Award case study Ardroy'

Learning Away – #BrilliantResidentials

The approach to using the John Muir Award at Ardroy OEC shares many of the key aspects identified in a significant 5 year study into residential experiences, 'Learning Away - Brilliant Residentials':

- fully integrated with a school curriculum and ethos
- part of a progressive programme of experiences
- planned with clear learning objectives to meet students' specific learning needs
- includes a wide range of new and memorable experiences
- designed to allow space for students to develop collaborative relationships with both peers and staff
- planned so that learning is embedded and reinforced back in school

Brilliant Residentials, Learning Away Report, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, June 2015

#BrilliantResidentials

Search 'Learning Away'



How can the John Muir Award be used across the curriculum?

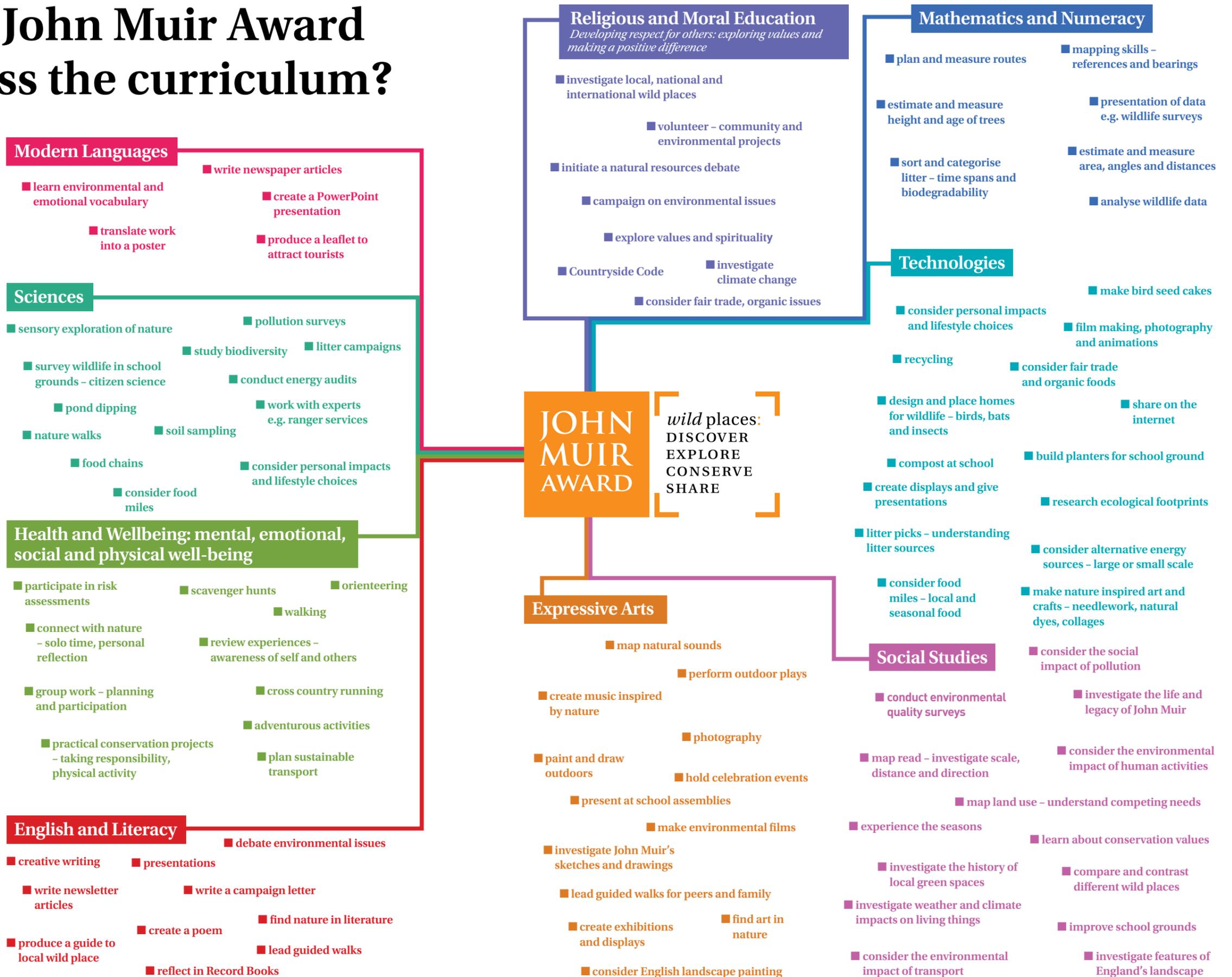
EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES and topics that have contributed to meeting John Muir Award Challenges of Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share.

Activities can:

- Meet Experiences and Outcomes by taking learning outdoors
- Make connections across the curriculum
- Help raise attainment in core areas of Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing
- Support whole school priorities such as Learning for Sustainability (sustainable development education, global citizenship, outdoor learning, children's rights and play)

"We think this is the Curriculum for Excellence in action."

Murdo MacDonald, Bellahouston Academy



How can the John Muir Award support school priorities?

Raising Attainment for all

Raising Attainment for all Scottish Government describes attainment as a broad term, beyond a narrow definition of exam results or test scores: 'the measurable progress which children and young people make through and beyond school, and the development of the range of skills, knowledge and attributes needed to succeed in learning, life and work'.² It is dependent on certain key foundations for learning: good literacy, numeracy, and health & wellbeing.

The John Muir Award is part of the rich menu of strategies and interventions used to raise attainment and achieve equity in educational outcomes.³ '73% of organisations that deliver the John Muir Award in Scotland agreed that it helps the people we work with improve attainment'.⁴

Teachers using the John Muir Award report an increase in individuals' motivation and confidence. They find it can help develop skills such as planning and decision making, reasoning and communication. For many it is a way to re-evaluate their abilities, to see themselves achieving, and be more ambitious. These are seen as key to an engagement in learning and a foundation of attainment (see Natural Connections Figure 1).

For more information see: [Attainment and the John Muir Award in Scotland](#)

Search 'John Muir Award Attainment'

Inclusion and equity

A key aim of the John Muir Award is to ensure that social and economic circumstances aren't a barrier to experiencing wild places. It is designed to be inclusive, accessible and encouraging. Every year at least 25% of people involved are experiencing some form of disadvantage. It is effective with many pupils who have additional educational needs and can support young people in alternative provision settings to widen their educational opportunities.

Nationally, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make on average less progress and have lower attainment than their non-disadvantaged peers. Everyone (who can meet the criteria) has the same opportunity to participate and succeed in the John Muir Award. This equity helps close the poverty related attainment gap.

For more information, see [Inclusion, Wild Places and The John Muir Award](#)

Search 'John Muir Award Inclusion Wild Places'

Health and Wellbeing

There is a sizeable body of evidence demonstrating positive associations between learning in the natural environment and a range of educational, social, developmental, and mental or physical health outcomes.⁵ Schools have a key role to play in promoting the health and wellbeing of pupils and teachers. Many use nature as a backdrop for this, and the John Muir Award to support their activity. In a [survey of John Muir Award Providers in Scotland](#), organisations were asked about how the Award contributes to the Scottish Government's SHANARRI indicators. 87% agreed that participation in the John Muir Award helps people to be more active.

The John Muir Award can also be used as a tool to help improve social, mental and emotional wellbeing. [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) illustrates how schools and outdoor centres have used it in this context.

Search 'John Muir Award five to ways wellbeing'
Search 'John Muir Award Scotland Provider Survey'

Literacy and Numeracy

Writing activities such as planning and reviewing, as well as personal reflections in journals, contributions to school displays, poetry and sharing online can all contribute to achieving a John Muir Award. Celebration events, guided tours of wild places, presentations at school assemblies or community events can help to develop vocabulary and confidence.

Opportunities can be created for learners to analyse survey data (as part of Citizen Science activity), measure areas and angles, or calculate bearings and journey times.

"I've been delighted by the pupil's responses to an outdoor learning environment and feel that their writing and focus in English has improved as a result of engaging with nature" English Teacher

[Larbert High School](#)

Search 'John Muir Award case study Larbert'

[John Muir Award Resource Guide - Literacy and Nature](#)

Search 'John Muir Award Literacy and Nature Resource Guide'



Employability skills and preparing for the world of work

Involvement in John Muir Award-related activities can help young people to develop and practise core skills for life, learning and work. It can provide positive, real life examples and experiences where skills such as problem solving, decision-making, communication and team-working are cultivated. It often brings young people into contact with a range of outdoor, creative and countryside-based roles and can provide positive examples to include in personal statements and discuss at interviews.

Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy recognises the importance of creating opportunities for all through employment, education or training to tackle youth unemployment.⁶

[Employability and the John Muir Award](#) gives an overview of how it is being used to help move participants towards employment.

Search 'John Muir Award Employability'

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education, outdoor learning and children's rights to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.⁷ Learning for Sustainability is an entitlement for all learners and has been embedded within the revised Professional Standards for teachers by the [General Teaching Council of Scotland](#).

The John Muir Award embraces outdoor learning approaches and offers a personal learning context for exploring sustainability through direct experiences of nature. Its Conserve Challenge promotes simple concepts of personal responsibility - 'making a difference' - which helps children and young people understand the impact of actions, both local and global, and engages them in developing solutions to the challenges they face as global citizens.

Outdoor Learning

The outdoors offers huge potential for learning that can be fun, adventurous, exhilarating, challenging and creative. It can offer a context for formative experiences that inspire confidence, awareness and appreciation, values and responsibility. Learning can take place in a broad spectrum of settings and timeframes, from spontaneous school grounds activities to expeditions in National Parks, from field study trips to residential at outdoor centres. The John Muir Award can inspire more activity outdoors, bridge indoor and outdoor learning, and give recognition for ongoing endeavours.

Evidence highlights that securing pupils' interest and engagement with learning through outdoor approaches has a part to play in raising attainment. It has wide-reaching and positive outcomes for pupils and teachers, including: improved relationships, behaviour and attendance; enhanced health and wellbeing; enjoyment and engagement in learning. These are seen as foundations to successful learning (See Natural connections Figure 1).

The John Muir Award is a tool that can contribute to Education Scotland's vision for outdoor learning to provide 'progressive and creative outdoor learning experiences' that are 'regular, frequent, enjoyable and challenging and that teachers 'embed outdoor learning in the curriculum'.⁸

[John Muir Award Resource Guides - Sustainability and Outdoor Learning](#)

Search 'John Muir Award Sustainability Resource Guide'

Search 'John Muir Award Outdoor Learning Resource Guide'

Figure 1: The pathway to raised attainment through outdoor learning, Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2012-2016: Final Report
Search 'Transforming Outdoor Learning in Schools'
John Muir Award Resource Guide - Outdoor Learning
Search 'John Muir Award Outdoor Learning Resource Guide'



²Education Scotland's Scottish Attainment Challenge: www.education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/sac1tosac11scottishattainmentchallenge.aspx

³Education Scotland Interventions for Equity: www.education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/Interventions-for-Equity.aspx

⁴John Muir Award Providers Survey, How Good Is Our Third Sector Organisation www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/scotland-provider-survey-2015

⁵Links between the Natural Environment and Learning- Evidence Briefing, Natural England 2016 <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5253709953499136?category=6502695238107136>

⁶Developing the Young Workforce: www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7750

⁷Vision 2030+ Report: Concluding Report of the Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group, December 2016 <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/lfs1vision>

⁸Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/hwb24-cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>



PHOTOGRAPH: JACKI CLARK

Planning your next steps

For further information visit our website www.johnmuiraward.org, where you can:

- Watch a 10 minute introductory film
- Download an Information Handbook – detailed guidance on delivering the Award
- Read Case Studies – see the Award in action in a wide range of settings
- Download Resource Guides on: Outdoor Learning, Biodiversity, AONBs, Literacy & Nature, Wildlife Gardening, Sustainability, Surveys, Outdoor Access, Campaigning, National Parks and John Muir
- Find Key Documents online to plan and review activity, including Proposal Form guidance
- Find out about John Muir at www.discoverjohnmuir.com

To register, outline your activities on a Proposal Form and email this to scotlandeducation@johnmuiraward.org. We will review and (if necessary) develop this Proposal with you.

Contact

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Continuing Professional Learning and Development

Using the John Muir Award can be approached from an existing skills base. Any educator can use it, utilising their own attributes and teaching competences. For many, its structure (and guidance available) offers encouragement to take the first steps outside – in an educational/professional sense. It can be used in the context of Continuing Professional Learning and Development, invite support and cross-departmental interaction, and help to remove barriers that can prevent learning in the natural environment. The John Muir Award can be used as a tool to help meet General Teaching Council of Scotland Professional Standards and as a basis for, or part of, a portfolio to gain Professional Recognition. For further information see [John Muir Award - Professional Development for Teachers in Scotland](#) which explores how the John Muir Award can be used as a tool for teachers in Scotland.

Search 'John Muir Award Professional Development'

Training is not a requirement - the Information Handbook and website provide all the information needed to run a John Muir Award. Training is available to complement this information, helping leaders find out more about the ethos of the John Muir Award and practicalities of delivering it. We offer two-day residential and one-day 'John Muir Award in Schools' courses. Training can, at certain times, be tailored to meet the needs of groups of leaders and runs for a single day or half day. Please contact us to discuss further details of John Muir Award training including course content and costs.

Please contact us to discuss use of the John Muir Award in your school, college, outdoor centre or organisation.