

## PRESS RELEASE

29 March 2018

### CONTACT

Alan McCombes 0771 744 2805  
e: alan.mccombes@johnmuirtrust.org



## 16-year-old GCSE student to research marine pollution in Thailand thanks to Scottish mountain men's legacy

Cardiff GCSE student Sam Belcher's dream of pursuing a natural history career was given a huge boost this week when he won funding to help him take part in a marine conservation expedition monitoring the impact of fishing and pollution.

He was one of five winners of the grant –run by the John Muir Trust a Scottish-based wild land charity – in honour of two respected mountaineers.

Bill Wallace, a former national treasurer of the John Muir Trust, died in 2006 at the age of 73 while skiing in the Alps. Des Rubens, a popular 63-year old teacher in Edinburgh, was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident.

Sam said: "When I signed up for the trip I thought it was a really worthwhile thing to do, and I was really happy to have this view verified by being awarded this grant. It takes a lot of pressure off my fund raising efforts when I also need to devote time to studying for my exams, so thanks very much to the John Muir Trust for this award.

Toby Clark, the John Muir Award Scotland Manager who coordinates the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant said: "We are becoming more aware of the devastating impact of marine pollution, and we see this is an expedition as an important contribution to understanding the impact of plastic in our seas in one of the worst affected areas in the world.

"We received a large number of high calibre applications and Sam was only one of five who were successful. We're pleased we've been able to support this worthwhile environmental expedition and wish him all the best in this great adventure. "

## NOTES

### ABOUT THE DES RUBENS AND BILL WALLACE GRANT

The John Muir Trust administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant for free. The grant aims to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild places of the world in ways which will benefit both the person, and the wild places themselves.

The grant commemorates two former Presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club who each led inspiring and adventurous lives.

The John Muir Trust looks to support projects, adventures or expeditions that reflect the ethos of both men and give others an opportunity to follow in their footsteps.

### ABOUT THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

The John Muir Trust is named after the great Scots-American scientist, environmentalist, explorer, mountaineer, writer and campaigner who was born on the North Sea fishing village of Dunbar 180 years ago this month (April 23).

The Trust looks after some of Britain's most scenic famous scenic landmarks, including Ben Nevis, Helvellyn, part of the Skye Cuillin, part of the Knoydart and Assynt peninsulas, Sandwood Bay in the far north west corner and Schiehallion which towers over Highland Perthshire.

The Trust also runs the popular environmental scheme the John Muir Award across Scotland, England and Wales.

### **For more info about the Bill Wallace Grant, contact:**

Toby Clark

Bill Wallace Grant Manager

John Muir Trust

0141 951 0884

e: [toby@johnmuiraward.org](mailto:toby@johnmuiraward.org)

<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/grants-and-awards/the-bill-wallace-grant>