



Sustainability — so what?

The John Muir Award can help you get over a wider message about environmental responsibility, explains **Rob Bushby**

'Sustainability — Let's live on the planet as if we mean to stay here'

GREEN ISSUES ARE all over the news at the moment — global warming, climate change, carbon footprints and much, much more. Yet many people still ask: How does all this relate to me? So what? Why should I care?

The John Muir Award doesn't have all the solutions. But it can be a tool for heightening awareness of issues, and offering a context in which to take action and personal responsibility.

How can the John Muir Award help relate to these big environmental themes?

- It's built around 4 Challenges: these can be used to break down what seem like insurmountable problems into more accessible chunks
- It's about first-hand experiences of wild places, and direct connection with the natural world that is impacted on by our actions
- It emphasizes connection with place and nature as being a key part of the process of engaging in these bigger issues
- It's about enjoyment, achievement, and celebration of our relationship with planet Earth

The John Muir Award doesn't tell people *what* to do for wild places and sustainability, but it does ask people to do *something* for wild places and sustainability.

'I talk to my daughter about conservation and stuff like that and years ago, I wouldn't have. I didn't really care much about the Earth.'

- Award Participant, Glasgow

If you are engaging with the natural environment, here are some golden rules for communicating with people. They reflect much of the good practice we're already aware of in schools, Ranger Services, youth groups and outdoor education centres throughout the UK.

- **Focus on people and enjoyment**
- **Focus on local** — make nature and wildlife relevant to people's everyday lives
- **Keep it simple** — let people make connections in their own time and on their own terms
- **Be positive and inviting** — don't leave people feeling helpless, or use guilt tactics
- **Frame people as part of the solution**
- **Popularise** — understand and engage with the motivations and language of the people you work with
- **Be topical and connected** — relate to issues of transport, health, technology, culture...
- **Understand the trade-offs** — people have lives to live and priorities to meet...
- **Make it a two-way relationship** — promote a sense of shared ownership and involvement
- **Lead by example**

Adapted from Scottish Biodiversity Communications Strategy Framework — A Report to the Scottish Executive & Scottish Natural Heritage by Newhaven Communications 2007 — available online at www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk