

The John Muir Award and Inclusion in Cumbria

“The John Muir Award isn't about record keeping but all about the feelings they get when they are part and parcel of nature - to see their faces, their smiles...”



The John Muir Award aims to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to discover, enjoy and care for the planet's wild places. Read on to find out more and how to get involved, how the Award reduces barriers to engagement with wild places, and the John Muir Award in action in Cumbria....

What is the John Muir Award?

The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focussed on wild places. It encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment in a spirit of fun and adventure.

In order to achieve a John Muir Award you have to do a range of activities that involve the following four challenges:

- **Discover** a wild place
- **Explore** it,
- do something to **Conserve** it
- **Share** your experiences.

There are three levels of the John Muir Award –

Discovery Award - 4 days (or equivalent) minimum time commitment
Explorer Award – 8 days (or equivalent) minimum time commitment
Conservor Award – 20 days (or equivalent) time commitment over at least 6 months

The time requirement should be seen as a minimum, and can be met by combining hours, sessions, or residential days. There is no upper limit on this time commitment.

For each Award the same four challenges are repeated, with increased involvement in terms of time, activity, responsibility and ownership.

Who can take part?

The John Muir Award is open and welcoming to all, regardless of age, sex, race, class or ability. Participation can be through involvement in an organisation, as an individual or small independent group or family. It works well for ages from upper primary as there is a need to understand its concepts.

How much does it cost?

It is completely free to take part in the John Muir Award. (You are invited to support the work of the John Muir Award by becoming a member of the John Muir Trust (www.jmt.org) or by joining Friends of the Lake District - key funders of the John Muir Award in Cumbria www.fld.co.uk)

Where does the John Muir Award activity have to take place?

Wild places are places that have some natural character, and where you find wildlife; places that give you a sense of wildness. These can be from mountain top to coastal edge, or shady wood to local garden, or anywhere nature prevails. You can decide to use one area for Award activity or you can use multiple areas.

The John Muir Award in Action

Over 11,000 John Muir Awards have been achieved in Cumbria to date, and over 50 organisations make use of it every year throughout the county. There are a wide variety of people taking part in the John Muir Award, from outdoor centres, youth groups and schools to day centres, individuals and families. Below are some examples of the John Muir Award in action around the county:



The Rock Youth Project is based in Carlisle in an area which may be seen to have limited 'natural' surroundings. However, members of The Rock have created their own corner of paradise in the grounds of Currock Community Centre, converting a previously overgrown and unusable area of scrub land into a productive vegetable garden, growing potatoes, radishes, courgettes, cabbages, lettuces and strawberries.

"I don't think there has been a single youth club meet, since we started the Award work, which the lads haven't been at!"

Colleen Baker

The Youth Offending Service first teamed up with Natural England in 2008 to deliver the John Muir Award as a means of recognising the achievements of young offenders whilst increasing the participants' respect for the natural environment. The young people involved have been focussing on Finglandrigg Nature Reserve near Carlisle, where they have been learning about wild foods, taking part in survival skill sessions, exploring the wildlife that the reserve supports and undertaking conservation tasks.

"The John Muir Award builds a work ethic with the individual young people and encourages positive behaviour within wild places."

Phillip Hoole



Beaumont College caters for residential and day students with a broad range of physical and learning impairments. Beaumont College has been using the John Muir Award since 2008 whilst creating an extensive wildlife garden in the grounds of the college, to give students the opportunity to engage with nature and access 'wild' outdoor environments.

"Using the outdoors is a natural and extremely sensory way of stimulating this group."

Chris Benson

Reducing barriers to engagement

The John Muir Award aims to ensure that social circumstances don't exclude people from opportunities to experience wild places. It aims to deliver 25% of its total Awards every year to those experiencing social exclusion.

Many aspects of the Award structure reduce barriers to engagement, for example;

- **Award Flexibility** – you choose the activities which will contribute to the challenges. Although there is a minimum time commitment, you can decide to take longer if you wish.
- **Accessibility** – it is free to participate, can be done locally and focuses on individual achievement rather than attaining a required benchmark.
- **Structure** – it can be used to complement established programmes and gives focus.
- **Challenging yet achievable** – by concentrating on individual achievement, it celebrates personal achievements which are within reach. The John Muir Award focuses on the quality of the participants' input (effort, enthusiasm, progress, commitment) rather than a set output.

- **Ongoing support** – from John Muir Award staff to help develop ideas by understanding your organisations aims and culture to identify ways in which the John Muir Award can contribute to what you're trying to achieve.

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

John Muir

Get involved!

Visit our website for more information at www.johnmuiraward.org or contact the John Muir Award staff team by email at Cumbria@johnmuiraward.org or telephone us on 01768 893656.

John Muir Award Proposal Forms can be downloaded from our website and should be emailed to Cumbria@johnmuiraward.org or posted to us at: John Muir Award Cumbria, University of Cumbria, Newton Rigg, Penrith, CA11 0AH



The John Muir Award in Cumbria is hosted by Cumbria Youth Alliance, an umbrella organisation for voluntary youth sector groups in Cumbria. For more information visit www.cya.org.uk

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