

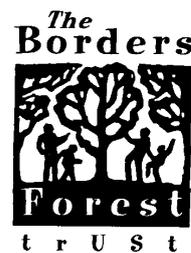
Borders Forest Trust & Earlston High School: Forest School Case Study

JOHN
MUIR
AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

“The John Muir Award fits perfectly with the development and delivery of Forest School projects, particularly with High School pupils working towards their ASDAN awards, as elements of both award schemes neatly knit together and the four challenges provide a perfect structure for this type of project.”

Anna Craigen,
Community Liaison and Education Officer, Borders Forest Trust.



Pupils with additional educational needs from Earlston High School participated in a six week Forest School programme delivered by the Borders Forest Trust (a woodland charity based in the Borders). The pupils worked towards a John Muir Award at Discovery level and also towards various Community and Environmental elements (modules) of the national ASDAN Award (Stepping Stones Award). The programme aimed to increase opportunities for personal development and building participants' self esteem.



Pupils based themselves at the Gordon Community Woodland and carried out investigations and monitoring of local wildlife through mini-beast and pond life surveys. They kept records of their findings and submitted these to the local Biological Records Centre and national wildlife surveys. Pupils carried out woodland management tasks to assist the Community Woodland Group such as native tree planting, tree tube removal from mature stock, footpath work, and willow and hazel coppicing.

“Working towards the John Muir Award within the local Community Woodlands allows students to learn by experience and has encouraged students to work together as a group, to solve problems and treat the woodland environment and wildlife habitat with respect.”

Anne Brown,
Teacher, Earlston High School

Throughout the project pupils practiced using traditional crafts, safe tool use and developed new skills and knowledge. The pupils kept an ongoing record of their project work and created a visual display of their project experiences, including photos, arts and crafts.

“Participants have a brilliant time discovering and exploring a place they would probably never dream of going unaccompanied and also working towards making a real positive contribution to their local community and environment. It is also a fantastic bonus and a great addition to the young folks' CVs to earn a respected and recognised certificate at the end of a project that proves that they have worked hard and shown true commitment.” Anna Craigen

The pupils greatly benefited from learning through practical experiences and are often found to do better out of the classroom situation.

“It is great to see them taking a real pride in what they achieve and really enjoying themselves. They always like receiving certificates recognising their achievements. The John Muir Award is very well received alongside their Bronze and Silver ASDAN awards.” Anne Brown



This particular example demonstrates the strong links between delivery of a Forest School programme and working towards a John Muir Award. It also highlights how this can be complemented by working towards an ASDAN Award. The ASDAN Award involves students choosing and completing different challenges and requires the development of students' core skills (working with others, communication, problem solving, improving own learning, IT, numeracy). All this can be achieved when working towards a John Muir Award and through a Forest School programme.



“Forest School has gone from strength to strength with the support of organisations such as the Border's Forest Trust and the Forest Education Initiative. The benefits of taking young people into woodland settings as part of a learning experience are becoming more widely recognised. Further linking these experiences with recognised outcomes such as the John Muir Award and ASDAN only reinforces the benefits of outdoor learning in the development of young people, and helps to embed it into the Curriculum for Excellence.”

Alasdair Horning, Central Scotland Education Officer,
Forestry Commission Scotland

Links

- [Borders Forest Trust](#)
- [Forest Education Network](#)

Useful references

- [Amazing Things: A Guide to the Awards in Scotland](#) - This guide is a comprehensive list of organisations providing Awards for young people in Scotland.
- Learning and Teaching Scotland - [Curriculum for Excellence](#)
- [Scottish Government](#) – Greener, Healthier, Smarter