

Case Study

JOHN
MUIR
AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

Connecting young people with wild Glasgow through the John Muir Award

Wild place learning through day sessions in preparation for residential experiences

Blairvadach Outdoor Education Centre at Pinkston Basin uses the John Muir Award as its main engagement tool to connect Glasgow pupils with nature in the inner city, building confidence and resilience.

Pinkston Basin, a site of fast new development within North Glasgow is perhaps not the place you would expect to find young people engaging with nature. Yet this is exactly what Pinkston aims to do using the John Muir Award: promote a greater understanding of the environment while improving pupil confidence and learning.

The dedicated Blairvadach Outdoor Education staff based at Pinkston run sessions for primary and secondary schools in the city. Their expertise in risk assessment and adventure provides a safe space to experience Glasgow's wild places using the Four Challenges of the Award. From secondary nurture groups to mainstream primary school pupils, the Award's adaptability is instrumental in supporting a variety of participants with often first-time wild place encounters.



Pupils find invertebrates through canal dipping.

Sustainable Transport

Students from the nearest schools travel by foot to the centre while learning about their own carbon footprint and sustainable transport. On arrival they Discover a whole new side of Glasgow linked closely to the topic of transportation: the old coal canals. Steeped in history from the late industrial revolution, these waterways are now safe havens for all kinds of wildlife. Canoeing and canal dipping studies are integral ways in which the pupils immerse themselves in hands-on learning experiences.

“I loved exploring the canal in canoes and learning about John Muir and the impact he had on the world”- John Muir Award participant at Pinkston.



Award participants enjoy the canals at Pinkston by canoe.

Urban Wild Places

Hamiltonhill Claypits, a stone's throw away from Pinkston and Glasgow's only inner-city Local Nature Reserve, lends itself well to exploring food webs, flora, fauna and the threats wild places face today. By litter picking in and around the canals, groups take action against plastic pollution. Since February 2022, pupils visiting Pinkston have contributed a combined 1,054 hours of Conserve Challenge activity.



Participants listen to stories about the adventurous John Muir.

Once sessions comes to a close, stories on [John Muir](#) and reflections on pupils own experiences in wild places are shared around a campfire. This provides the perfect opportunity to practice minimum impact approaches and introduce the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#).

Preparing for their first residential

“The precursor P5 and P6 Award sessions lay the foundation for a deeper learning during the residential, which helps meet the goals set out in the Curriculum for Excellence.” - Ruaidhri Murphy, Blairvadach Outdoor Education Instructor.

The non-residential format allows for P5 and 6 pupils to experience the John Muir Award in preparation for their first residential in P7. This not only eases the transition to a week spent away from home but also helps equip every student with the tools to handle the change. The John Muir Award is central in building confidence which supports them in taking the next steps at their residential to care and advocate for wild places further afield.

Find out more about the John Muir Award at johnmuiraward.org.

Visit [Blairvadach at Pinkston Basin](#) for more information on their non-residential John Muir Award programme.

Further relevant resources:

[Blairvadach Impact report 2021](#)

[Achieving Awards in, through and for nature](#)

[Glasgow National Park City](#)

[Urban Good Nature Map Glasgow](#)

[Glasgow Council Outdoor Learning Page](#)

[NatureScot Learning in your Local Green Space](#)

[Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability](#)