

A &
D S

SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

Shared Learning Event

Outdoor Learning

Summary Report

10th October 2023

Introduction

Attendees

Aberdeenshire Council
Aberdeen City Council
Angus Council
Architecture & Design Scotland
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Dundee City Council
East Ayrshire Council
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Glasgow City Council
Inverclyde Council
Midlothian Council
Moray Council
North Ayrshire Council
Orkney Islands Council
Perth & Kinross Council
Renfrewshire Council
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Futures Trust
Scottish Government Learning Directorate
Shetland Islands Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Stirling Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
West Lothian Council

Presenters

Ian Menzies	Education Scotland
Patrick Boxall	Queen Margaret University
Matt Robinson	Learning Through Landscapes
Duncan Zuill	Levenmouth Academy

Context

This Shared Learning Event was the second of 2023, and as with previous events, was designed to promote discussion and sharing of best practice.

The theme for this event was 'Outdoor Learning' which was born out of discussions and areas of interest raised in previous Shared Learning Events.

As with previous events, it was hosted and facilitated by Scottish Futures Trust's (SFT) Learning Estate Infrastructure Team, alongside Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS). The event was open to all Local Authorities across Scotland to provide an open forum to discuss initiatives and share ideas, best practice and challenges.

Event

The event was held online on Tuesday 10th October 2023 and brought together 75 delegates from Local Authorities across Scotland, including representatives from Scottish Government Learning Directorate.

It included presentations from:

- Education Scotland
- Queen Margaret University
- Learning Through Landscapes
- Levenmouth Academy

There was also a discussion slot where delegates were invited to bring forward any comments or questions they had.

Outdoor Learning in Scotland's Curriculum

Ian Menzies

Education Scotland

Ian Menzies is Senior Education Officer at Education Scotland, who leads on a number of areas including outdoor learning, Learning for Sustainability (LfS), sciences curriculum and the STEM strategy.

We are in a significant period of education reform. The OECD when it reviewed Scotland's curriculum encouraged us to go back to our vision and purpose of the curriculum. The Curriculum for Excellence – the aim of which is to help our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st Century. 4 capacities that underpin the curriculum for excellence are that we want our young people to be:

- **Successful learners**
- **Confident individuals**
- **Responsible citizens**
- **Effective contributors**

If we take a close look at some of the skills, capabilities and attributes that sit underneath these (refer to slide) - we know outdoor learning has a key role to play in many of these skills, capabilities and attributes and that many are best developed in outdoor learning environments rather than a classroom environment.

Within Scotland's curriculum, Learning for Sustainability is an entitlement for all learners, and one of the key aspects of this is to make sure young people have access to daily contact with nature. *"I think its really important we take steps together, working in partnership, to make sure that's realised for all of our children and young people."*

We know that many young people across Scotland are really passionate about climate change, are passionate about Learning for Sustainability, and are passionate about outdoor learning and as a result a new action plan has been launched to try and improve the

experience of young people in relation to these areas.

In developing the action plan a number of consultations with young people were undertaken through **The Scottish Youth Climate Declaration**, the Children's Climate Assembly, **Children's Parliament** and **Young People and Practitioner perspectives** – a piece of research conducted by Dundee University to support the development of the new Learning for Sustainability Action Plan. Every time we talk to young people about education reform and what they want from Scotland's curriculum, they're telling us strongly that outdoor learning is a key part of what they're looking for.

This also came through strongly in the consultation response to Professor Ken Muir's report who produced a **key document** outlining the process and the vision for the educational reform that's underway just now. Within his report Professor Muir said *"learners see climate change as one of the most significant issues facing their futures and that must be recognised as a key driver influencing the future of our education system"*.

NatureScot in partnership with University of Stirling have done an interesting piece of **research** that took a snapshot in 2006, 2014 and also in 2022 about outdoor learning provision. What this highlighted is that in terms of Early Years the percentage of time spent outdoors has increased, perhaps due to the expansion of early years provision. But in Primary School, worryingly, it has decreased from 30 minutes 'per pupil per week' in 2014 down to 7 minutes in 2022. This is only one study and the numbers weren't particularly huge, but you would expect after covid that access to outdoor learning would have increased but this study shows that the opposite is happening here. So we've got work to do in terms of giving young people access to learning.

curriculum for excellence



Successful learners

- Enthusiasm and motivation for learning
- Link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations

Confident individuals

- A sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
- Pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
- Live as independently as they can and assess risk

Responsible citizens

- Participate responsibly in social, economic and cultural life
- Know & understand the world
- Evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues

Effective contributors

- Have resilience and self-reliance
- Work in partnership and teams
- Take the initiative, lead and solve problems

#ThisisLFS

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

Learner voice Call to action



Outdoor learning

1. All children should have the chance to learn outdoors throughout the school year.
2. Outdoor learning should be part of every school subject.

Sustainable Development / Climate Emergency

3. Adults who decide what we learn, need to learn about the climate emergency too.
4. Children's views should be included in how and what they learn about this climate change.
5. Scottish Government should take urgent action to protect and respect trees and the natural environment.
6. Children and adults should have opportunities to work together on children's rights, climate change and sustainability.

Global citizenship

7. Scottish schools should have links to other schools around the world.
8. Schools should support children to take part in learning, protests and action on the climate emergency as part of global events.
9. Children and adults around the world should have their human rights respected.



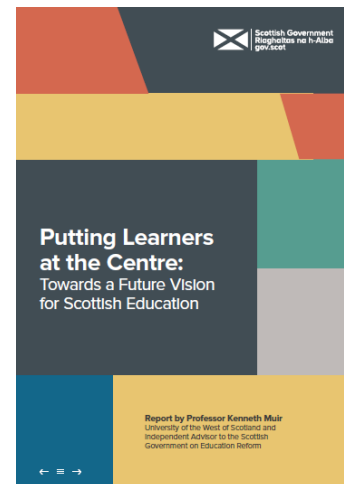
[Learning for Sustainability Childrens Parliament Report 2022 Small-1.pdf \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](#)

“If we’re not making outdoor learning, Learning for Sustainability (LfS) and climate education the default position in our curriculum and learning spaces - then we’re not listening to our children and young people. It is their curriculum and future. Their call to action is clear.” Ian Menzies

Future vision - Learning for Sustainability

The current generation of learners see climate change as one of the most significant issues facing their futures and, as such, must be recognised as a key driver influencing the future of our education system.

All efforts, whether concerned with educational recovery post-pandemic or in terms of the future vision for Scottish education, must be directed to the purposes described in Article 29 of the UNCRC.



<https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-centre-towards-future-vision-scottish-education/>

For Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators

Launched in June by Cabinet Secretary, the new action plan **'Target 2030 – A movement for people, planet and prosperity'** highlights two big key actions which are:

- **All learners in Scotland to receive LfS entitlement**
- **Every 3-18 school and setting to be sustainable by 2030**

Within this document the government have outlined they will set up a new policy workstream for outdoor learning. This work will be supported by a national working group which will report to Scottish Ministers. The Group will be challenged to pursue a range of actions to ensure that all children receive entitlements to outdoor learning in all its forms.

The **Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review** published earlier in the year has viewed early engagement with learning outdoors and LfS as 'sowing early seeds' which support and nurture young learner's interest in the world around them and may influence later subject and career choices focused on the Sector.

- 3.1 Establish a robust approach to monitoring quality of the curriculum delivery of LfS, including the quantity and quality of nature-based and outdoor learning.
- 3.2 Promote the delivery of more outdoor learning by supporting local authorities and colleges to undertake a review of their estate, to identify the potential for carbon reduction, climate change mitigation and the creation of accessible nature spaces.

There's also an action about the **Place Standard Tool** – a piece of work being led by a Senior Architect within Scottish Government. The Place Standard Tool can be a way of involving young people in the community planning process and also inform the design brief for learning settings. Education Scotland are currently looking for a couple of Local Authorities to work with them closely to develop practice in this area and to pilot new approaches so if any Local Authority would like to be involved please get in touch.

How many jobs in Scotland require outdoor skills, and to what extent are we preparing our young people for this outdoor world and workplace? Our Early Years centres do this really well but we need to make sure this is reflected across all settings and sectors.

The UK target is to create 2 million green jobs by 2030 and many of these will be outdoors and outdoor learning has got a key role to play in developing young people's skills and giving them access to these pathways.

There's also an Outdoor Residential Bill going through parliament just now led by Liz Smith MSP that might progress later this year or early next year, the proposal here is that all young people in Scotland have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education at one point in their secondary education.

Lastly, Ian mentioned the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan and noted that Education Scotland are hoping to launch a call to action around this in the coming weeks so would ask that Local Authorities and all partner organisations watch out for this. This is very much about the target of every learning setting being sustainable by 2030, so any help Local Authorities can give to meet that target and to support that movement for change would be really appreciated.

HMI Thematic Review

- how staff are building on their knowledge and skills.
- illustrations of how schools are delivering high quality outdoor learning.
- effective leadership of outdoor learning in improving outcomes for children and young people
- how outdoor learning is supporting health and wellbeing.



[Successful approaches to learning outdoors \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/publications/successful-approaches-to-learning-outdoors/)

“What we want to do is to invite people to come outside and play and to make and grow good things. It’s all about the acorns” Patrick Boxall

Outdoor Learning Hub

Perspectives on Place Making



Whole Campus is the Hub...



Patrick Boxall
Queen Margaret University

Patrick Boxall is a Lecturer in Initial Teacher Education at Queen Margaret University (QMU). The Outdoor Learning Hub at QMU is a project to develop the physical spaces for outdoor learning and activity throughout the campus. It has been in development for the past 4 years and in partnership with Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS) during the latter 2 years.

At the centre of the hub is the Wee Forest, planted in 2022 and funded by NatureScot, and within that is The Howff, which is part of the overall hub masterplan, designed by Wardell Armstrong Landscape.

Below offers six perspectives, grounded in research and practical experience, capturing the main methodology for this project and a framework for leaders on making places for outdoor learning in possible futures at other places and times.

1. Philosophy
Shared values are central to bringing people together. Through stakeholder engagement processes, QMU have engaged with people across the university, local schools, the local community, and national networks.

2. People - for QMU, our community and for Scotland
At the absolute centre is working in partnership. The project team engaged with representatives of higher and further education, such as the national network for outdoor learning and worked with third sector specialist organisations, Learning through Landscapes and Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust.

3. Place responsive
Place is the key focus. This is deeply linked to how QMU think about learning. Always analysing: What’s special about this place? What are the gifts of the places that we’re working with on campus? And what do they give us for learning, activity and being.

The beauty of QMU campus is that it is a collection of ordinary places that when you holistically look at them, become examples of many places that organisations and communities will have access to.

4. Pedagogy - inclusive and person-centred approaches
QMU’s vision for outdoor learning is holistic - it’s about developing human and eco-centred approaches to learning outdoors, about how outdoor learning can be significant in curriculum experiences, about connecting people to nature, about creativity, health, and well-being, and ultimately about contributing to an inclusive vision for social justice.

The ways in which places are developed, are intrinsically linked to how users will act in those places and the importance of policy shaping all elements of this project remains a key component of the process.

5. Policy - support national agendas
Starting with the strategic plan, the project team examined how well it linked with national policies in; education, environment, sustainability, health and well-being and how that can be supported by infrastructure. Going forward the aspiration is to build on the work they are doing so it can contribute more specifically to positive outcomes in enacting these policies.

6. Planet - about sustainability and making a place for nature
The climate crisis is so pressing it must be a key driver, any impact on the natural world should be a positive one. We should all be conscious and deliberate that local actions could have significance for the planet, especially through supporting other organisations and groups to engage in making places for outdoor learning near them- whether these are schools or in community settings.

Climate Ready School Grounds

Matt Robinson

Learning Through Landscapes

Matt Robinson is Chief Operating Officer and Scotland Director of **Learning through Landscapes** (LTL), a national School grounds charity founded by Sir David Attenborough, who is still their patron and chair of the board. Their approach is using school grounds daily for learning and play.

In Scotland there is wonderful ambition, but realistically what we need is for the practical element to be stronger, to achieve the goal that all school buildings and grounds, support; outdoor learning, learning for sustainability and can adapt for our future.

We know our school estate is incredibly mixed, from schools over 100 years old to schools that are brand new and just finding their way. Even new schools perhaps still need to be adapted to work better for how teachers and pupils would like to use them. Therefore, there's a need for post occupancy reflection to ask: How are we going to use this? Is everything perfect? Do we need to revisit what was provided?

School grounds cover a huge area they account for 14% of local authority-owned land in Scotland. However, 84% of that area is either grassland or hard surfaces, so any changes we make to these spaces are changes to a large land area, which, at present is quite poor in terms of climate, biodiversity, learning opportunity and play opportunity. We have multiple policies encouraging teachers to get outdoors for; daily play; daily outdoor learning; access to the space. Therefore, we have a duty to create spaces that the teachers, who we train, can feel more confident in, and that they use the outdoors as an opportunity for pupils to learn through action by treating the outdoors as a living laboratory.

LtL in partnership with Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS) developed the **Climate Ready School Grounds** (CRSG) project to address some

of these issues. This project centres around the key questions: What is climate education practice? What do teachers want to do? and what do the spaces need to be to support this? Including, how are we adapting these spaces for a changing climate?

Through facilitated workshops with schools the project helped identify the impacts of climate change on the school grounds, along with practical ways to mitigate them. Following a year of collaboration, this resource was developed to consider six technical areas:

- **Heat, cold and wind stress**
- **Carbon management**
- **Water management**
- **Biodiversity ecosystems**
- **Air quality**
- **Learning, play and community**

The workshops helped identify teachers, knowledge and gaps on climate education and biodiversity. It identified that outdoor spaces are difficult to prioritise, quite often being the first to be cut when budget savings are to be made. And it looked to address where changes could be made that would have positive impact on both school buildings and grounds by creatively using green infrastructure like planting and hedges to create shelter and shade.

The project addresses the technical areas from two different perspectives, for teachers and educators you can find resources, toolkits and lesson plans to use in the school and for local authorities you can find up to date policy information, case studies and research over the six technical areas.

There as many questions coming out of this project as there are answers, so there is still so much to learn and develop and change in coming years.

"We live in a Scotland where our built and natural places, supporting infrastructure, economy and societies are climate ready, adaptable and resilient to climate change"

Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024

"All school buildings, grounds and policies should support learning for sustainability"

Learning for Sustainability Action Plan

Multiple Co-Benefits

- A significant area of land
- LES & LEIP refer to LfS, Outdoor Learning and Play
- Learning for Sustainability & Climate Strategy
- Play Strategy
- Protection of buildings & learners from disruption due to climate change
- Biodiversity agenda
- Health agenda
- Just Transition
- Energy use reduction



Rewilding at Levenmouth Academy

Duncan Zuill

Levenmouth Academy

Duncan Zuill is an ASN Teacher and has worked at Levenmouth Academy since it opened in 2016. He is also the Founder and Chair of **Bats Wood**. Here he shares 10 challenges that he has faced rewilding the school campus.

1. Knowing what the school has

It can be hard for teachers to find out, but it is important before undertaking a project like this to be aware of where the school grounds start and stop.

2. Deciding what to do

Planting low maintenance bulbs such as crocuses and daffodils are a good way to start, it means something is starting while you work out the details and paperwork of a bigger project.

3. Gaining consent

Be patient enough to get consent for projects. The school, the grounds maintenance teams and the landowner are all involved. This can be a slow process it can delay the best of ideas but it will also protect the school from the worst of ideas too.

4. Creating a local organisation

This will allow you to share responsibilities of the project. Involving the wider community of the school means you can utilise a wider pool of skills to help gain funding and more local support.

5. Judging what you can get away with

You have to make considered decisions that fit with the pupils and their educational journey, some projects that have approval may only take a morning to plant and then the pupils are wanting more. Challenges like these means that teachers and pupils must carefully calculate the consequences and risks of their projects. A good approach to share with pupils is: make nothing that can be easily broken, burnt or stolen. And be aware, if it's a bad idea then we'll have to get rid of it.

6. Having the right support staff helping

It's not every Pupil Support Staff member who comes to school willing to go out into the wind and wet grass. It's a big challenge when you can't find one and with some groups of pupils, you really can't go outside without another adult.

7. Maintaining community links

Rewilding a space that both the school and community use will come with challenges and criticism as well as praise. By engaging with the community you will gain insight to any niggles that the community are having with the change in the space whilst allowing you the opportunity to share plans and ideas.

8. Creating curriculum – raising attainment, progression and projects

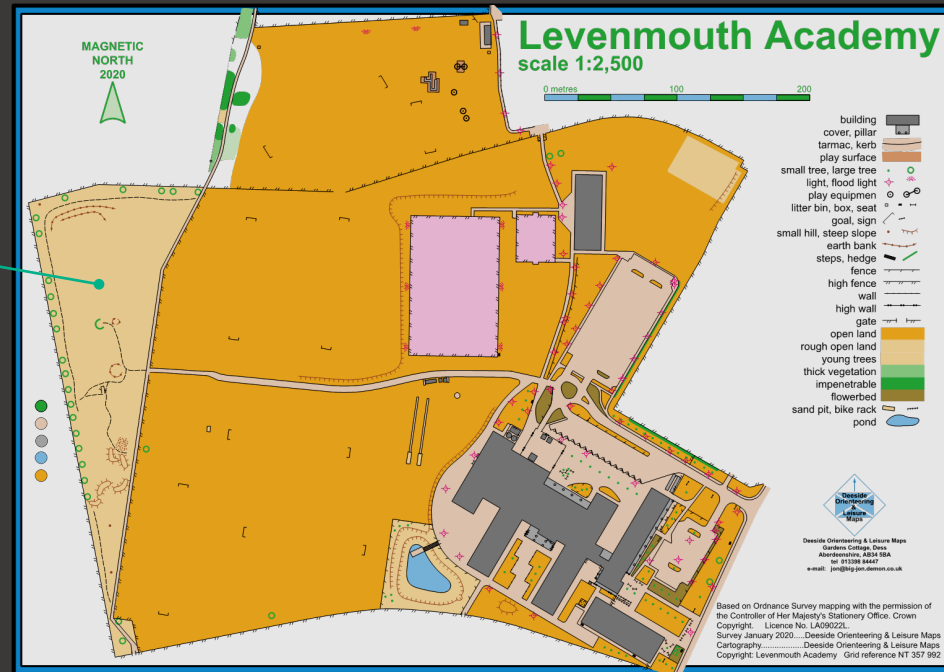
Start with the John Muir Award and move to Personal Development Awards, Forest and Outdoor Leadership awards (if you can afford them), Rural Skills, N4 and Environmental Skills N3 up to Higher. This all takes time to build up with documentation and the standards and preparation required.

9. Sustainable development

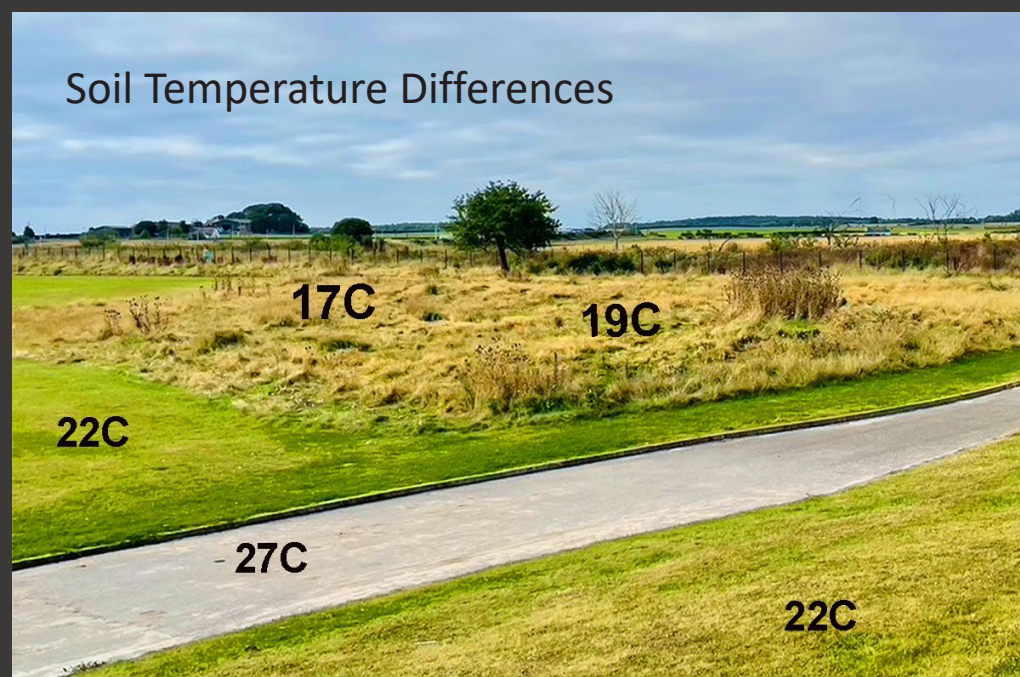
There is no faculty or department of sustainability in any high school in Scotland. This project touches the school as an institution very lightly and whilst it is great to be innovative and develop projects such as this you must be mindful of the precarious nature by having only one member of staff as the key driver of such an initiative.

10. A challenge for you

Two UK wide inspirations for school rewilding projects **Operation Future Hope** and their rewilding schools project, and **The Tree Council** who are giving away free fruit trees, as many as 60 at a time. They're both a great place to start for resources to get started out in this area.



Soil Temperature Differences



- Grass height.
- Dust capturing.
- Sound dampening.
- Wind calming.
- Carbon capture.
- Biodiversity.
- Worm count.
- Soil structure.
- Aesthetics.
- Public Safety.
- Maintenance Costs

Useful Resources & Further Support

Useful Resources

Please click for relevant links;

[Learning through Landscapes](#)

[Climate Ready School Grounds](#)

[Successful approaches to learning outdoors](#)

[Outdoor Learning Directory](#)

[Summary of Outdoor Learning Resources](#)

[Summary of Learning for Sustainability Resources](#)

[Santiago Rincón-Gallardo talking at the Scottish Learning Festival about liberating learning.](#)

[Learning for Sustainability Childrens Parliament Report 2022](#)

[Scottish Youth Climate Declaration](#)

[Children's Parliament investigates LfS](#)

[LfS: Young people and practitioner perspectives \(Dundee University\)](#)

[Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#)

[Teaching, learning, and play in the outdoors: a survey of school and pre-school provision in Scotland](#)

[Target 2030 – A movement for people, planet and prosperity](#)

[Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review Report to Scottish Ministers](#)

Place Standard Tool

[Making Places for Outdoor Learning QMU Short Course](#)

[Bats Wood](#)

[Operation Future Hope](#)

[The Tree Council](#)

[Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits](#)

Further Support

As well as a forum for Local Authorities to join together, the Shared Learning Events are designed to complement support that is available on any aspect of the LEIP, from SFT's Learning Estate Infrastructure Team and wider stakeholders as appropriate. For relevant contacts at SFT and A&DS please see below;

SFT Contacts

Stephen Long
stephen.long@scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

Sarah Burnett
sarah.burnett@scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

Steven Anderson
Steven.Anderson@scottishfuturestrust.org.uk

A&DS Contacts

Lesley Riddell Robertson
lesley@ads.org.uk

Danny Hunter
danny.hunter@ads.org.uk

SCOTTISH
FUTURES
TRUST

Architecture &
Design Scotland

Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

www.ads.org.uk

www.scottishfuturestrust.org.uk