

## Ayrshire College

### Best Newcomer

## Award winning partnership in the Great Outdoors

### Section 1 About the project

#### Summary

Ayrshire College students celebrated the successful collaboration between East Ayrshire Countryside Services team and the College's Environmental Management course by winning the John Muir Award. The partnership between the College and Countryside services has built on last year's success. Students have benefitted from experiencing practical, outdoor activities that are environmentally sound and of benefit to the wider community.

#### Project partners

East Ayrshire Leisure Trust and Countryside Services

### Section 2 The results

#### The problem

Land in the lagoon area of Dean Castle Country Park was being eroded and was not accessible by all on foot.

#### The approach

Environmental Management students spent several weeks constructing a boardwalk across the lagoon area, as part of their course. Working in all weathers enhanced the experience of working in this environment, adopting the John Muir methodology. This encourages people of all backgrounds to connect, enjoy and care for wild places through a structured scheme which promotes educational, social and personal development, getting people involved with the conservation of wild places.

#### Our goals

The project concentrated on:

- Discovery – of the biodiversity of the environment worked on.
- Exploration – of the lagoon area to ensure students gained a good understanding of landscape management.
- Conservation – the boardwalk was constructed from recycled wood from the park and will ensure that the natural habitat will be conserved.



Ayrshire College

#### Profile

- 14,000 students
- 800 staff
- Urban and rural campuses
- 8 campuses

# Finalist's case study

## Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Land erosion	Boardwalk and platform built
Access to area	Boardwalk and platform built
Partnership working	Successful collaboration

## Performance and results

The partnership between the College and Countryside Services has built on last year's success. Students have benefitted from experiencing practical, outdoor activities that are environmentally sound and of benefit to the wider community.

The main areas that have been beneficial outcomes of the project are:

**Environmental** – access is very important in the site, boardwalks control footfall and allow people into an area which would otherwise have been inaccessible, ensuring minimum damage to vegetation and the area. The trees felled in the park were used in the building of the boardwalk and platforms, encouraging sustainable forest management.

**Social** – access improvements for all abilities and visitors to the park are encouraged to enjoy benefits of the whole site. The collaborative work is a real benefit to the students. The Environmental management course has had an extremely high success rate with 90% of students moving on to either university or continuing their studies at Scotland's Rural College.

The partnership established between Ayrshire College, East Ayrshire Leisure and Dean Castle Country Park is set to continue next year. The work has introduced ideas, approaches and techniques for environmental management at an individual, organisational and community level. The course combines conventional with innovative approaches to environmental management with emphasis on making positive changes to the wider community.

## Section 3 The future

### Lessons learned

The project was very much a partnership between Ayrshire College, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust and Dean Castle Country Park. Due to the success of the project, the Environmental Management course is running again this year and the students will once again be working in collaboration with these partners, where there will be ongoing projects over the academic year.

The work has introduced ideas, approaches and techniques for environmental management at an individual, organizational and community level. The course combines conventional with innovative approaches to environmental management, with emphasis on making positive changes to the wider community.



# Finalist's case study

## Sharing our project

The project was shared in various ways, providing as much publicity as possible. A press release about the project and the John Muir award winners was published widely, from the College website, social media sites, to being published in the local media.

## What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

'The commitment and dedication of the students is outstanding. Winning is a celebration of recognising their hard work, and nurturing excellent partnership working with employers and partners. Winning this prestigious award highlights the opportunities to develop skills through work placements, and at the same time, promote environmental awareness and sustainability in the curriculum.' Heather Dunk, Principal Ayrshire College.

## Further information

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