Belfast Hills Partnership Supporting Local Young People

Wednesday 9 September, 2020

The news is currently filled with stories of job losses, mental health issues and concerns for young people's wellbeing in the wake of Covid19 – to help counter this the Belfast Hills Partnership are offering a FREE environmental sector training programme for young people aged 18 – 24, with no experience necessary. The Trainee Ranger scheme, now in its third year, is about improving the health and wellbeing of those taking part, whilst at the same time increasing their employability skills as they take part in a range of practical conservation tasks such as tree planting, habitat management and wildlife surveys.

Focusing on young people's mental health is more important than ever in the current climate. Research by the Royal Society for Public Health found that almost three quarters of young people aged 18 – 24 are feeling more anxious about the future as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They've had to deal with a major disruption to their social relationships, education and possible employment, as schools, colleges and workplaces closed, often leading to increased feelings of stress and loneliness. However, research is increasingly supporting the view that nature can counteract these negative emotions. And it is the hope of the Belfast Hills Partnership that the Trainee Ranger Scheme can help. As always the health and wellbeing of our participants is a primary concern so all the activities are covid-19 risk assessed.

The programme is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund's Our Bright Future project, a forward-thinking social movement that's about supporting young people to lead progressive change in their communities and local environment. They're tackling environmental issues and the lack of opportunities for young people by using one problem to help another. It's about unleashing the potential of young people, so they can make a big, positive impact and become an unstoppable force for good.

Patricia Deeney, the Youth Development Officer at the Belfast Hills Partnership, said:

"With the job market the way it is, employers are expecting applicants to have a certain amount of work experience under their belt before they are even considered for a job. But how do young people get that work experience in the first place, especially in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic? We believe that the Trainee Ranger scheme can fill this void.

"By completing the 12 week programme, young people will not only increase their practical experience in the workplace, but they will also receive nationally recognised awards and gain a Lantra accreditation in the use of strimmers and brushcutters, something that will look great on their CV's!

"It has long been established that getting close to nature and the outdoors improves health and wellbeing. Our goal is to help young people to develop confidence and self-esteem by nurturing their connection to the local environment, leading to greater involvement in the Belfast Hills or to further volunteering, training or employment."

The deadline for applications is **5pm on Friday 2nd October**, with the first day of the scheme starting on Tuesday 20th October 2019 for 12 weeks. To find out more, or to apply, contact patricia.deeney@belfasthills.org
or phone the Belfast Hills Partnership office on 028 9060 3466.

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