

## National Park charity helps young people to experience and learn more about a key part of Scotland's outdoors

Thursday 3 August, 2023

Thanks to a grant obtained from West Dunbartonshire Council's Year of Young People Legacy Fund, the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, which is the independent conservation and heritage charity for the National Park area, has worked with local youth groups to encourage young people to experience outdoor activities whilst also learning about how to care for and appreciate the natural environment.

Over the last 12 months, the Friends have co-ordinated outdoor events for 156 young people between the ages of 9-17 from several youth groups in the West Dunbartonshire area, namely Tulloch, Y-Sort-It and Ben View. A mixture of residential stays, day trips and half-day trips were arranged with Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, West End Adventure, In Your Element, Blairvadach Outdoor Education Centre and also the Bird of Prey Centre. Activities undertaken included learning bushcraft skills, weaselling, canoeing, paddleboarding, climbing, archery and hill-walking, whilst positive practical action such as litter-picking was also incorporated into some of the events! Feedback from participants and youth leaders has been extremely positive, with the young people enjoying all activities whilst also learning about the natural environment and acquiring new skills.

The most recent two events took place on 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July at Ardroy OEC, Loch Goil and with Blairvadach OEC at Loch Lomond. Ryan Waddell, youth worker from Tulloch commented on the Blairvadach trip "the group all had a great time, we got to do great activities as well as learn about the Loch and some of its islands"

Jennifer Plunkett, Project Support Officer with the Friends commented "It has been so worthwhile and rewarding to work with local youth groups and to know that so many young people have benefitted from getting out and about in the National Park to learn about nature whilst also trying out new activities and having fun at the same time. This has only been possible with the funding received from West Dunbartonshire Council. I would like to thank everyone involved in making these trips and activities a reality".

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