

Education and Culture Committee

Outdoor Learning

Submission from National Trust for Scotland

Submission to Scottish Government

Outdoor Learning & Interpretation in the National Trust for Scotland:

The NTS creates opportunities for people to engage with the heritage of our sites through multi-layered interpretation and direct activities linked to the Curriculum for Excellence. We carry out environmental learning across our outdoor properties, pond dipping, hunting minibests, etc. but exploring the link between the museum and its environment is particularly rich and rewarding in terms of the way the landscape can be used to enhance the creative learning experience and shed light on the heritage we are conserving and making accessible

The following represents a snapshot of some of our recent activity:

Culloden Battlefield and Visitor Centre

- Outdoor learning is fundamental to the formal and informal programming at Culloden battlefield and visitor centre. The context given by walking on the field itself enhances understanding and gives visitors an appreciation of the scale of the battle itself. We deliver School programs to primary and secondary school students, daily public tours of the field, and customised tours to special interest groups such as the military.
- We have found that taking young people outside often allows the kids with the challenging behaviours to shine. This might be stereotypical, but it is the boys that seem to get most excited about being outdoors.
- We also provide multi-layered interpretation to the site: The battlefield guide, new benches installed around the surrounding landscape are a light touch form of outdoor learning provision, info panels and leaflets.

David Livingstone Centre, Blantyre

- At the David Livingstone Centre we use the landscape around the birthplace museum to experientially interpret a historical event (ie Livingstone's African missions). During 2013 Toto Tales reinterpreted our site to encourage school children to imagine the Scottish landscape as an African landscape (for example our

wild meadow became a savannah of the Mabotsa tribe, the River Clyde became the River Zambezi and the weir became the Mosi Oa Tunya otherwise known as the Victoria Falls). The actors brought the landscape to life by portraying a range of different African characters guiding the expedition party along the way. This immersive experience was further enhanced by each pupil being dressed in African clothing and being given mandazis (doughnuts) to fuel their journey. The expedition finished in the final room of the museum where the expedition party could pay their respects to Livingstone. Thus the performance managed to incorporate both the outdoors and the museum environment.

- It is hoped this creative reimagining of the outdoor site will inform the future development of the DLC in order for us to take the elements of the traditional museum-based Livingstone narrative out into the landscape in order to create a more exciting and immersive learning experience.

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Ayr

- We use the landscape around the Birthplace museum to support creative learning and also reinforce a better understanding of literature and language - eg with Burns where we support Scots language work by using plants and birds that are in Burns' poetry - giving a dimension to understanding language and literature that is outdoors and experiential (taste it, smell it, walk around in it).

New digital technologies

We are developing apps which help people explore the outdoors by themselves, for example:

- A new Ben Lomond App,
- And a forthcoming app for Crathes Castle in Aberdeenshire which is directly targeting 8-12 year olds and has augmented reality game features.

Consulting young people

- We recently carried out a project to interpret the pond at The Pineapple where we have Great Crested Newts. We involved the local school, engaging kids as young consultants in actively thinking about/influencing their own community and environment. The teachers seemed most keen on this aspect of it - that the kids were being asked what they thought and had a real role to play. The outcome was new permanent installation at the site incorporating the designs of some of the school children as well as a greater sense of ownership, involvement and understanding amongst these young people of their local environment.

Challenges associated with outdoor learning:

- Transportation costs
- Young people not being dressed for the weather. No coats, hats, gloves - sometimes this is because they are too cool for coats but might be a socioeconomic issue too.

Resource Requirements:

- Continued financial support of museum and ranger services to provide professional staff to deliver outdoor learning and to provide appropriate facilities and equipment
- Subsidised transport to enable schools to access outdoor learning opportunities
- A one stop website where schools can see what outdoor learning opportunities exist across Scotland
- Continued professional development for teachers to enable them to realise the potential of outdoor learning and have an understanding of the risks and benefits