

Coldingham School John Muir Discovery Award Final Report



**Project delivered by Sea the Change
Supported by the Dr Guthrie Association**

Report compiled by Alice Fisher, Project Coordinator, March 2020



'Learning at its best: outdoors and inspiring!'

Els Nicol, Classroom Support at Coldingham School

Executive Summary

Sea the Change has been operating across communities in the Scottish Borders and North Northumberland delivering workshops, community engagement sessions and working with individuals, families, schools and local businesses, to raise awareness on the impact of single use plastics on the environment and promoting more sustainable lifestyle choices.

Sea the Change coordinating staff have undertaken the John Muir Leader Training that gives us the skills, knowledge and approaches needed for delivering and certify the John Muir Award scheme, and our delivery staff, Danielle Moore and Tor Whitehouse are both Level 3 Beach School qualified. The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places.

Sea the Change began piloting their John Muir Programme at Coldingham School in October 2019 with dramatic effect; not only have the children enjoyed spending time outdoors learning about conservation, but this programme has influenced their learning and wider engagement with topics across the curriculum.



Summary of Outcomes

- All pupils completed all elements of the four Challenges – Discover, Explore, Conserve, & Share
- Tide awareness, risk and conditions, seashore habitats and species, journey mapping, den building, scavenger hunts, rock pooling, silent walks, blindfolded sessions, poetry/ literature
- Pupils discovered John Muir and had a greater understand the importance of conservation
- Literacy skills were phenomenal – such enthusiasm and commitment towards the project

'The children are totally inspired - we are creating poetry about the lost words of the sea. Each child is developing a love of poetry and they have all created work they are very proud of. This has had a very positive impact involving family members and the community'.

Debbie Knighton, P6 & 7 teacher

Summary of Activities



Learning about the tides, conditions, and associated risks

Discover a wild place

Coldingham bay is a sandy inlet in the North Sea. It is a sheltered sandy beach at the mouth of the Buskin Burn, on the coast of the Scottish Borders. It provides different habitats for learning: a sandy beach that stretches for a kilometre, rocky shorelines at either end, grassland areas or a short walk away there is a pebble beach. This landscape provides an excellent learning opportunity, especially as the area is part of the Berwickshire Marine Reserve, the first voluntary marine protected environment in Scotland.

On Friday 25th October, a total of 23 children from classes P6 & 7 set off walking from Coldingham school through woodland and grassed areas to Coldingham Bay. Carrying their 'Journey bags', the students collected items on route to beach that were then identified and shared at end of day and kept for possible art projects.

On arrival at the beach, students discussed the beach environment and landscape, weather and tidal conditions and assessed the potential risks. The beach engages all the senses, to heighten that experience we included a blindfolding activity to ensure sounds, smells etc are highlighted and build trust amongst peers



The highlight of the session was the introduction of the book, *The Lost Words*. Students not only listened to poems about the sea, but also discussed the Lost Words of Coldingham Bay that they could associate to nature, weather, plants, and animals....



*'A huge thank you to you all.
The children are totally inspired with this topic. They are starting their own books of lost words next week.'*
Debbie Knighton, P6 & 7 teacher

Explore it

The beach is a forever changing environment and so it is a great place for exploring how the difference in weather, tides and seasons impact the habitats and animals living there. Our sessions were to be run over the autumn, winter and spring seasons which will give a great contrast and visual impact to the learners. Unfortunately, we only managed to deliver our Autumn and Winter sessions, but the contrast was still felt by the students – most noticeably the cold!!

We are very thankful to the Berwickshire Marine Reserve Ranger, who on the 3rd November 2019, helped the children working towards their Explore element of their John Muir Trust Discovery Award by leading a rock pooling session. Here they learnt about what a Voluntary Marine Reserve is, exploring the rockpools, exploring what creatures are found on the Berwickshire Coast and sharing with everyone what they found and learnt and how they can conserve this habitat.



Students spent time walking on the beach exploring different habitats along the coastline and thinking about how they could construct their own survival habitat given the limited resources provided and the items discarded on beach.

Children were able to build on their learning by thinking creatively and putting their ideas into reality. Problem solving and developing language skills, the children worked as a team to create their dens.



'I loved seeing how engaged the boys were on the beach, listening to stories and poems. Back at school they took a lead on writing poetry and delivering PowerPoint presentations on the life of John Muir.'

Els Nicol, Classroom Support at Coldingham School

Conserve it

Conserving our marine environment has been central to our John Muir Programme. A feature of all Sea the Change activity is that a litter pick happens at the end of every session with the items found discussed and ideas shared about how to conserve a wild place.

On January 31st, the British Divers Marine Reserve attended our session on the beach and talked to the children about the impact of plastic pollution to the local marine life and how to report concerns if they came across a distressed mammal. Unfortunately, due to the Corona Virus, our planned session with the local Beach Ranger from Scottish Borders Council where we would learn all about invasive species, in particular Himalayan Balsam, and how we could help to manage this within the criteria of the local area biodiversity plan had to be cancelled. We were also going to search the grasslands for non-native invasive plants pirri pirri bur that is found further up the coast in dunes. The removal of which is an ongoing but necessary task.

Linking the children to the on-going work of Sea the Change and encouraging them and their families to join in environmental campaigns that they are running is encouraged with the help of the school.



Share it

Sharing our learnings has been fantastic; at the end of each session we have been gathering in a sharing circle for informal reflections, but the teacher has also been linking the sessions within her class setting. John Muir has been researched with children making fact files on him and some children have made wonderful PowerPoint presentations (see final page)

All pupils have been completing their John Muir Handbooks and have been self-evaluating their learnings throughout the programme, with an assembly to share lost words of the beach, poems and artwork that has been completed along the way.

A gallery for parents and the local community displaying artwork, photos, poetry, and presentations was due to take place on Friday 29th May. Again, this has been cancelled due to the Corona Virus.



'The pupils loved being down at the beach developing their language. The impact on their literacy development was significant.'

Liz Wharton,
Head Teacher Coldingham School

Partnership Work within the Community

The John Muir programme has been enhanced by the partnership work with local community organisations such as the Berwickshire Marine Reserve and Scottish Borders Council. We also planned a trip to the John Muir Museum in Dunbar...next time! The St Abbs Marine Station and the Butterfly Conservation Society have also shown an interest in participating in future sessions.

Impact on Learning

Feedback from the school, support staff and volunteers who participated in the programme have been overwhelmingly positive about the impact these sessions have had, both on the staff and pupils of Coldingham School:

'It has had an excellent impact on my teaching, and I keep thinking of new learning opportunities for the class. Our school vision is to use the outdoors to enhance learning and I really feel we have all had a huge impact on each child's learning.'

Debbie Knighton, P6 & 7 teacher

Wider Impact on the Curriculum & Community

- After learning about the importance of the moon in relation to tides, the class investigated the solar system for 6 weeks and this created learning opportunities because of this
- A community artist came to visit the school children and showed them how to draw the shells from their journey bags. The children turned these drawings into Christmas calendars
- The children spent 6 weeks writing two songs for their school John Muir Award sharing event with the help of two local musicians, due to virus this could not be performed
- The John Muir Award helped the class engage and connect with John Muir's experiences as they explored the very coastline where he began his adventures.
- The sessions were further enhanced by children sharing their experiences at home and bringing local knowledge and experiences from connecting families and the wider community to their learning journeys.

'Even children with known language difficulties have been inspired to write more for school purposes and for their own pleasure.'

Liz Wharton, Head Teacher Coldingham School

Key Lessons Learnt

1. The walk from the school to the beach takes longer than the anticipated 30 minutes, especially if the pupils are completing an activity such as the 'journey bags' on the way.
2. A 'what to wear' to the beach instruction sheet from Sea the Change would help the school emphasis to families that appropriate clothing is essential.
3. Successful delivery is enhanced by wonderful teachers – Sea the Change has felt completely supported by Coldingham School and we thank you.
4. Additional costs such as transport to the beach/ John Muir museum and the final celebration event must be factored into budget.

Summary

This project has proved so popular that we are now looking to recreate this project in all Primary Schools throughout East Berwickshire.

'Using the beach as a classroom can teach us far more than we can ever learn from books.'

Debbie Knighton, P6 & 7 Teacher



John Muir Way

The John Muir Way is composed of 10 sections. Helensburgh to Balloch, Balloch to Strathblane, Strathblane to Kilsyth, Kilsyth to Falkirk, Falkirk to Linlithgow, Linlithgow to South Queensferry, South Queensferry to Edinburgh, Edinburgh to Prestonpans, Prestonpans to North Berwick and North Berwick to Dunbar.

It is 124 miles to do the whole walk, usually taking between 7-11 days to complete.

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American migration

In 1849, Muir's family immigrated to the United States, starting a farm near Portage, Wisconsin, called Fountain Lake Farm. John Muir lived and worked there for 10 years. It was designated a National Historic Landmark after they had died. Muir's father found the Church of Scotland insufficiently strict in faith and practice, which led to their immigration and the family joining a congregation of the Campbellite Restoration Movement, called the Disciples of Christ.

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The Sierra Club

John Muir was the co-founder of the Sierra Club. They were a group of people who worked together to save and protect the environment. To this day, there are over 25 million members.



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Main life

John Muir was born April 21, 1833, in Dunbar, Scotland. As early as 1874, he urged the federal government to adopt a forest conservation policy through articles published in popular periodicals.

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'As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing... I'll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.' *John Muir*

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Thank you for listening!

Hope you enjoyed my slideshow about one of the first conservationists, John Muir!