

The Sperrins Youth Ambassador Project

Project description:

The Sperrins Youth Ambassador Project is an initiative focused on young people and the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This program invites participants to explore the rich landscape of the Sperrins and all that it has to offer. Our goal is to empower young people from the surrounding areas by providing them with new outdoor skills, education, and opportunities, while highlighting the importance of this landscape to our well-being and the need to preserve it for future generations.

Over the course of 12 months, the project will feature 10 sessions, with one session held each month (allowing for two break months). One of these sessions will be an overnight camping expedition.

Each session will focus on a different theme, including outdoor education, hill skills and navigation, water sports, agriculture, heritage, and environmental topics.

If you're passionate about the outdoors, this project is for you!

Along with other outdoor certificates that will be gained throughout this project, it is also accredited by Ulster Wild Life "Wild Youth award". The Wild Youth award provides a fantastic way to recognise and celebrate the many ways in which young people can connect with and help the natural world.

Program Delivery:

Program delivery will take place across areas of the Sperrins AONB which have been highlighted as areas of interest within the program. The project itself will be outdoors orientated and will consist of environmental, outdoor activities, agriculture and community interests. The Outdoor Partnership and the Sperrins Partnership will work with Key local providers to deliver the project.

The Project will be spanned over a 12-month period, 10 sessions, 1 per month (expect 2 resting months). One of those sessions will be an overnight expedition.

It is proposed that delivery of the 2026/27 project starts in August with an online meet and greet session. With delivery, we aim to be flexible with dates and work with participants so that our sessions do not clash with study commitments. Our first in person session is due to commence in early August.

Session 1 - Meet and Greet
5th August

Participants will have the opportunity to meet their peers and leaders for the first time. They will get an insight to the project and start to explore the world of the outdoors.

Session 2 – Hill Skills
26th August

Study map reading and good practices on the hills from what to wear things to pack and most importantly how to not get lost! Our hills also come with their own challenges, we'll be exploring access, management and the principles of leave no trace.

Session 3 – Paddle River Trip
6th September

Building on our environmental stewardship we will be taking our open top kayaks for a paddle down the Mourne river litter picking along the way.

Session 4 – Peatland Day
19th September

Peatland education finding out just how important our peatlands are and doing some restoration work installing some plastic piling dams on the black bog. Don't forget your shovel.

Session 5- Youth Heritage Project
October TBC

We will be linking in with the rural community network to look at our local heritage and start to document our own future archives

Session 6 - Outdoor First Aid
November TBC

An essential for all outdoor users! You will gain an Outdoor First Aid Certificate, learning invaluable knowledge a session not to miss!

Session 7 – Youth Heritage Project Session 2
January 2027 TBC

Continue to build and add on our Sperrins Youth Archives

Session 8 – Angling and Water Quality –
March 2027 TBC

Cast your first fly rod and learn about water quality through tackling the issues hands on by helping clear the Foyle river system. In conjunction with FROG CIC.

Session 9 – Hill side Farm Day
April 2027

Visit a working farm in the hills of the Sperrins. Exploring the positives and challenges of a hill farm, its produce and the importance of this industry.

Session 10 – Backwoods Expedition –
TBC April 2026

Spend a night wild camping linking all our bush craft and survival skills together on a team expedition in the Sperrins

Criteria:

Age and Eligibility

Age Range: Applicants must be between 14 and 17 years old at the time of application.

Residency: Applicants must be from or have strong ties to the Sperrins region or surrounding areas. Such as Omagh, Strabane, Derry/Londonderry, Coleraine, Cookstown to name a few examples.

Interest and Passion for the Outdoors

Genuine Interest in Outdoor Activities: Applicants must demonstrate a passion for outdoor activities such as hiking, nature conservation, environmental education, or outdoor leadership.

Willingness to Participate in Physical Activities: Applicants should be comfortable participating in outdoor activities in a variety of weather conditions, including hiking, exploring, and environmental stewardship.

Commitment to the Program

Availability and Attendance: Applicants must commit to attending all scheduled program sessions and activities, including outdoor trips, workshops, and training.

Engagement: Applicants should be enthusiastic about taking on the responsibility of being an ambassador, representing the program in the community, and engaging with other youth participants.

Commitment to Environmental Stewardship

Environmental Awareness: Applicants should demonstrate an understanding of or interest in protecting the natural environment. Previous involvement in environmental or sustainability-related activities is an advantage.

Respect for Nature: A willingness to follow and promote Leave No Trace principles and contribute to preserving local landscapes and wildlife.

Enrolment process:

Application Form: Complete a detailed application form, including questions about why you want to participate, your interests in outdoor activities, and how you will contribute to the program.

Shortlisting will take place after closing date and applications will be reviewed by the Sperrins Partnership, The Outdoor Partnership. Applicants will here back if they have been successful on Friday the 3rd July.

Application form link: <https://forms.office.com/e/jR0Nz1a6Nc>

Code of Conduct for participants: Participants will be asked to sign a code of conduct form once they join the program. Please refer to PARQ document.

PARQ Forms: Participants will be asked to complete a PARQ form once shortlisting has happened. Please refer to PARQ document.

Safeguarding

To ensure safeguarding of participants Field Studies Ireland have been selected as a provider delivery partner of the project along with The Outdoor Partnership & Sperrins Partnership. Leaders will have proof of access NI checks through their respected Organisations and must hold a valid Outdoor first aid certificate equivalent to a REC 2 as well as relevant safeguarding training. If a participant turns 18 during the project they must do an access NI check to ensure due diligence with safeguarding policy. It is noted that a few of the sessions will link with additional organisations. Where appropriate ratios are in place we will be able to drop one of the names leaders if the supporting organisations hold the respected first aid checks and Access NI documents through their respected organisations. The coaching ratio will not exceed national governing bodies recommended ratios.

Travel commitments:

Participants will be expected to travel to locations across the Sperrins for delivery. Where suitable travel options will be explored if guardian/parent authorise in advance.

FAQs:

1. **When will the activities take place?** The activities will take place outside of school hours, for example at the weekend and non-term time.
2. **How much does the programme cost?** We are pleased to announce that the programme is fully funded so there are no associated costs to participate.
3. **Where will the activities take place?** The activities will take place in a range of locations throughout the Sperrins. Drop off and collection locations will be shared well in advance, however given the rural nature of the area parental/ guardian access to a car would be useful.
4. **What does my child need to participate in the programme?** All necessary equipment will be provided. We do however, ask that participants are suitably dressed for changeable weather conditions. A packed lunch and water bottle will also be required.
5. **Will my child be supervised at all times?** Yes. Children will be supervised at all times. Access NI checks will be carried out for all staff, facilitators and volunteers. Strict safeguarding procedures will be obtained in all instances.
6. **What experience does my child need to participate in the programme?** No previous experience is required to participate in the programme. All we ask is that participants are committed and have a genuine interest in the outdoors.
7. **Can my child use this programme on their CV/ UCAS Application?** Yes, certainly. Participants will gain a range of transferrable skills and experience that are relevant for future employers and/ or colleges and universities. Furthermore, participants will undertake accredited training that can also be used on future CV's or applications...
8. **Will I be kept up to date with my child's progress?** Yes. Parents/ Guardians will receive regular updates. Moreover, staff can be contacted throughout the duration of the programme to discuss progress and/or any queries you may have.