

## P06 Outdoor & Woodland Learning



### Project Overview:

The Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) project encouraged education about the area's natural environment in order to nurture a legacy of understanding and respect. It was the central access point for all school activities associated with the Landscape Partnership projects delivery.

The aims of this project were to:

- Work with schools in, and associated with, the CALLP project area to deliver and facilitate outdoor learning sessions on a regular basis.
- Demonstrate the broad range of themes which can be taught outdoors.
- Work closely with schools and teaching staff to assist with training and development to ensure that the project will have a largely self-sustaining legacy.

**Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:** Culang Community Woodland Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust

**Project Location:** Coigach and Assynt

**Project dates:** 1st September 2016 to 30th September 2021

## Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Outdoor learning post	1	1	2 posts on a job share basis – 1 x 0.3 FTE and 1 x 0.2 FTE posts
School pupils will attend sessions during each year of the project	310	690	Average of 690 individual engagements each year of the project
Pre School pupils will attend sessions each year of the project	30	117	Average of 117 individual engagements each year of the project
90% of School children engaged with project	90%	90%	90% of school year groups from ages 3-18 have engaged with the project
School will have achieved at least one JMA.	310	318	318 school pupils have undertaken structured programmes developed in conjunction with the local schools for the OWL project: P7 John Muir Award transition programme, Island Explorer Programme, Hill to Grill Programme, Clachtoll Broch Heritage Hero Award (Historic Scotland).
Members of staff from Highland Council schools have attended an outdoor learning training session	60	56	Reduced attendance due to covid restrictions

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Sites developed for each school within walking distance	5	8	3 sites Achiltibuie, 5 sites Lochinver
Sites developed within Culag Woods	5	5	
Guide to local outdoor learning sites and activities	1	2	Coigach & Assynt Guide, and Culag Woods Guide in hardcopies deposited with schools
1 bushcraft business	1	1	1 business feasibility study completed
Volunteer days	58	4.2	

## Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

	1. The key features of the Coigach and Assynt Landscape will better understood and restored with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained.
	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped.
Y	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage. <i>Hill to Grill programme raised awareness of sustainability issues and the way in which working in land management can benefit the local and wider environment.</i>
	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community.
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. <i>Regular outdoor learning sessions introduced and reconnected young people and individual school staff to their local environment from the perspectives of getting involved with hands on conservation activities.</i>
	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites.
Y	7. Local groups and individuals understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset. <i>Teaching staff and outdoor leaders trained in delivery of outdoor learning sessions enabling continuation of outdoor learning in local schools.</i>
	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.

## Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of CALLP?

### New Learning Ideas for Rural Schools

There are two main achievements that deserve a mention here, they are the development and delivery of the Hill to Grill programme and the Ullapool ASG P7 transition programme. Both of these involved several organisations and individuals who all played their part in the programmes and without who these would not have been delivered successfully. Hill to Grill is innovative in that school pupils get hands on with how food gets from the hillside to the table. The programme put them directly in touch with those who do this for a living and gave the pupils a chance to ask questions and find out how they feel about meat and how it is produced. The P7 programme although utilising an existing programme as a framework (the John Muir Award) was creative in linking pupils through sharing of wild places they know to give them a better understanding of each other prior to entering High School.

## What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of Coigach and Assynt?

The Outdoor and Woodland Learning Project was focussed on involving young people directly with all aspects of the landscape that they live in. The main objectives were to encourage education about the area's natural environment thereby creating a legacy of understanding and respect for the local landscape and the aspects that comprise it. There are many articles that link understanding of environment with value and care. The following quote has been adapted from the speech made by Baba Diome, the Senegalese poet / ecologist / environmentalist, in 1968 to the general assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature:

***"In the end, we will conserve only what we love,  
we will love only what we value,  
and we will value only that we have come to appreciate through experience".***

The project programmes and sessions were built around fostering respect and care for the local landscape and all the aspects that comprise it. Some examples in ways this was done include:

- Built heritage was looked at as part of the Heritage Hero Award, linked to the Clachtoll Broch Project.
- Forest culture heritage and how the natural world was utilised for survival and resilience of local people featured in regular sessions where pupils learnt about shelters, foraging for food and responsible fire lighting.
- Natural heritage featured very strongly in all learning, notably in the Hill to Grill programme and where specific species were studied for example badgers at Achiltibuie Primary school sessions.

## What difference has this project made to People?

Whilst the main aim was to provide rich outdoor learning experiences for all ages of Nursery and School pupils in the local area, the involvement of school staff in the sessions, programmes and training was key to the success of the project both during and beyond the delivery period. In providing

accredited and informal training for both school and project staff, employability of these individuals has been enhanced. This in turn assists with retaining the population in the area.

**Accredited training:** Woodland Activity Leader Training, Forest School Leader training (Level 3), Mountain Leader qualification, Hill and Moorland qualification, Outdoor First Aid training, Youth Mindfulness course leader training.

**Informal training:** Outdoor learning CPD day for Scourie School staff, Outdoor learning CPD day for North West Sutherland Schools staff, Lost Words and Literacy in the Woods CPD for West Coast OWL group.

The following is a link to a blog article written by one of the teachers who participated in the WALT course: [Woodland Activity Leader training blog post](#)

Lost Words and Literacy in the Woods CPD with West Coast OWL group. Feedback: "I absolutely loved the CPD session and spoke about it on our inservice day with the other teachers, who also enjoyed learning about it. The session was broken down and explained very well and I would feel comfortable teaching the same lessons myself with a group. Kat had some great ideas and I really liked the differentiation and additional activities that you could do." and facebook link: [\(6\) West Coast OWL – Posts | Facebook](#)

Outdoor Learning – Sea and Woods CPD with North West Sutherland Schools. Feedback: "Thanks so much for today. I got so many new ideas and it seemed that everyone else really enjoyed it too!" and Facebook link: [\(5\) Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape – Posts | Facebook](#)

## Useful Links

[CALLP website - Outdoor and Woodland Learning Project pages](https://www.coigach-assynt.org/project/outdoor-and-woodland-learning/) <https://www.coigach-assynt.org/project/outdoor-and-woodland-learning/>

[OWL project Learning Zone resources](https://www.coigach-assynt.org/learning-zone/) <https://www.coigach-assynt.org/learning-zone/>

[The OWL Project, Bringing Learning to Life](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLCLykCB-nk) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLCLykCB-nk>

[Press and Journal Outdoor Learning article](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/early-years/3431320/outdoor-learning-why-schools-are-breaking-out-of-the-classroom-and-into-the-real-world/?utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3H0i-SLHkbFksHBKSRR7NW-9F5vIsj9n0K4HcMQGyN6935ISjxYfuBUOc) [https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/early-years/3431320/outdoor-learning-why-schools-are-breaking-out-of-the-classroom-and-into-the-real-world/?utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3H0i-SLHkbFksHBKSRR7NW-9F5vIsj9n0K4HcMQGyN6935ISjxYfuBUOc](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/education/early-years/3431320/outdoor-learning-why-schools-are-breaking-out-of-the-classroom-and-into-the-real-world/?utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3H0i-SLHkbFksHBKSRR7NW-9F5vIsj9n0K4HcMQGyN6935ISjxYfuBUOc)

[Scottish Land and Estates - Hill to Grill article](https://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/helping-it-happen/case-studies/hill-grill-education) <https://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/helping-it-happen/case-studies/hill-grill-education>

[Woodland Activity Leader training blog post](https://www.coigach-assynt.org/2021/09/woodland-activity-leader-training-walt-august-2021/) <https://www.coigach-assynt.org/2021/09/woodland-activity-leader-training-walt-august-2021/>

[\(6\) West Coast OWL – Posts | Facebook](#)

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FWestCoastOWL%2Fposts%2F320392813157413&data=04%7C01%7Cfsaywell%40coigach-assynt.org%7Cc88e5b31c4f94bd416bc08d9826449fc%7C5fc8a0d78388456cbf60606549738b4a%7C0%7C0%7C637684189503793891%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=WzpLDbxclKnDsqrRgBzRZAoloQ1z1CNag2eWxhurqCg%3D&reserved=0>

[\(5\) Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape – Posts | Facebook](#)

<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fcoiga>

chassynt%2Fposts%2F3101960433357068&data=04%7C01%7Cfsaywell%40coigach-assynt.org%7Cc88e5b31c4f94bd416bc08d9826449fc%7C5fc8a0d78388456cbf60606549738b4a%7C0%7C0%7C637684189503803857%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=9isVvyVW8sGB6KaTe9IzPJ4J6OaP8pALU0nL8d%2F3PB4%3D&reserved=0

## Future Plans and Legacy

The project has gathered resources both in terms of equipment and activity plans. The activity plans form a learning resources library accessible through the CALLP website [OWL project Learning Zone resources](#).

The equipment resources are available to local schools for use in all outdoor learning in the future. Part of the project was to look into the feasibility of establishing a nature connection enterprise to subsidise/support the continuation of outdoor learning provision in the local schools. A feasibility study was undertaken and the conclusion was that:

*there is potential to establish an enterprise which enables visitors and residents to connect more deeply with Coigach and Assynt. (Through looking in detail at potential income) it is unlikely that this enterprise would fulfil its intended purpose of subsidising the provision of outdoor learning to local schools. However, it is likely to be a worthwhile venture in its own right, as every opportunity to connect people with nature – so that they value it and care for it – is needed at this crucial time for the environment.*

The report will be used to feed into the development of a new project which will include working with local schools to maintain their outdoor learning provision but also will expand provision to include providing nature connection experiences for visitors and locals out with the school environment.

## Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Being able to bring together local individuals and organisations to deliver project aims meant that a wealth of expertise and experience was available to the project.
2. Having 5 years of delivery enabled the project to become embedded in the local schools.
3. Having staff members with prior links to schools was of great benefit in development of relationship between the project and schools.

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Impact of covid restrictions.
2. Gathering media permissions from parents/carers and pupils was time consuming as not all returned forms.
3. Difficult to find match funding for a five year project.

## Funding Partners



and with generous support from the KMF Maxwell Stuart Charitable Trust

## Photographic Evidence



Woodland Activity Leader Training © Victoria Campen/Scottish Wildlife Trust



John Muir Award – Quinag walk © Katrina Martin/Scottish Wildlife Trust



Artist in residence workshop © Katrina Martin/Scottish Wildlife Trust



Hill to Grill larder day © Fiona Saywell/Scottish Wildlife Trust

List of annexes to report in attached file

Annex 1: OWL school session log

Annex 2: OWL Legacy Feasibility Study Report

Annex 3: Equipment Library Equipment List

Annex 4: CPD training delivered through the OWL project

## Annex 1: OWL school session log

## Annex 2: OWL Legacy Feasibility Study Report

Download at <https://www.coigach-assynt.org/learning-zone/>

## Annex 3: Equipment Library Equipment List

## Annex 4: CPD training delivered through the OWL project

CPD training delivered through the OWL project				
Event	Location	Date	Number of participants	Type of participant
Outdoor First Aid Course	Lochinver	24/07/2018	6	Teachers and Outdoor learning leaders
Outdoor Learning CPD event	Isle of Lewis	12/02/2019	5	Galson Estate Trust staff
Scourie Primary School CPD	Scourie Lodge woodland	05/03/2019	6	Scourie Primary school teachers, nursery teacher and staff
Scourie Primary School CPD	Scourie Primary School	19/03/2019	6	Scourie Primary school teachers, nursery teacher and staff
Outdoor First Aid Course	Ullapool	29/05/2019	1	Teacher
Woodland Activity Leader Training Course	Lochinver	04/10/2019	7	Teachers and Outdoor learning leaders
Woodland Activity Leader Training Course	Findhorn	07/08/2021	3	Teachers and Outdoor learning leaders
West Coast OWL group CPD	Kyle of Lochalsh	25/08/2021	6	Teachers from Plockton ASG
North West Sutherland Schools CPD	Scourie beach and lodge woodland	14/09/2021	11	Teachers from North West Sutherland ASG
Outdoor First Aid Course	Achiltibuie	25/09/2021	5	Teachers and Outdoor learning leaders
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>56</b>	