

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) & Geopark Youth Leaders 2025



Welcome to Youth Leaders 2025. If you have a passion for the outdoors and nature conservation, are considering an environmental career, or want to encourage others to responsibly enjoy our precious landscapes; and are **16-24 years old** we want to hear from you!

This exciting new youth programme will mainly be delivered within the Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONBs. Please see the schedule of activities below for full details.

During the programme, which will run from July 2025 until January 2026, you will participate in a range of environmental and nature conservation themed sessions, where you will develop new personal and practical skills, allowing you to become an Environmental Youth Leader and champion for nature. Through the planned activities you will be introduced to a range of natural habitats and meet the people who are committed to protecting them. The skills you will gain are transferable skills, which you will be able to implement in your chosen career.

Additional Opportunities

By becoming an AONB & Geopark Youth Leader you will also;

- Have the opportunity to be selected to be part of the [Landscapes NI](#) Youth Panel, where you will engage with other like-minded young people from across Northern Ireland, sharing experiences and knowledge of your landscape areas. This youth panel aims to empower young people to have a voice and develop leadership skills. Two people from each AONB group will be selected to be part of this amazing opportunity.
- Complete a whopping **100 hours** connecting with nature which will mean you will receive the highest **Wild Youth Award** available, see [Wild Youth Awards | Ulster Wildlife](#) for more information. To reach this milestone you will commit to volunteer for nature conservation for approximately another 20 hours. E.g. conducting surveys or litter picks.

Thanks to funding from Action Renewables and sponsorship from [Landscapes NI](#) this programme is **free of charge**. All we ask from you is a commitment to attend the whole programme.

Please note when applying, there will be two groups of Youth Leaders, one in each AONB, you are applying to join either the Strangford and Lecale group or the Ring of Gullion group.

Applications close 5pm 30th June

Activity Overview	Strangford & Lecale	Ring of Gullion
Introduction Day - Get to know your fellow participants and become familiar with your chosen Landscape.	Tuesday 8 th July Delamont Country Park	Monday 7 th July Derrymore House
Facilitating nature-based activities for wellbeing AQA – 2-day residential training. Learn how to lead fun, safe outdoor activity sessions and get hands-on practice facilitating them. You'll also learn a bit about the research linking nature and wellness.	Monday 21 st -Tuesday 22 nd July Killbroney Centre, 1 Forestbrook Road, Newry BT34 3BT	
Introduction to survey methods - A taster day in biodiversity recording and path audits.	Tuesday 12 th August Tyrella Beach	Wednesday 13 th August Bluebell Lane 49 Tullymacreeve Rd, Mullaghbawn,
Sustainable Food – Visit a working farm which is managing to produce high quality food whilst encouraging biodiversity to thrive.	Sunday 31 st August Downpatrick area	Sunday 24 th August Newry area
Woodlands – An introduction to woodland habitats and native seed collection to grow trees for the future.	Sunday 21 st September Delamont Country Park	Saturday 27 th September Kilbroney Forest Park
Leave no Trace – Are you aware of how your actions affect wildlife? Take part in a leave no trace awareness course.	Saturday 18 th Oct Delamont Country Park	Saturday 25 th Oct Derrymore House
Orienteering – An opportunity to learn and develop navigational skills whilst traversing in a Forest Park and lowland mountain environment. Also, an introduction for carbon literacy.	Date TBC Nov (weekend) Castlewellan Forest Park	
Practical conservation day – This is your opportunity to give something back. You could be tackling invasive species or taking part in a winter bird survey.	Date TBC Jan (weekend) Ards Peninsula (exact location tbc)	Date TBC Jan (weekend) Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Let's celebrate! – Presentation of certificates and celebration.	TBC	

Please note that this schedule may be subject to change and will be dependent on weather conditions

What to expect?

- To learn about the natural environment you have to be in it! Each of our sessions will involve significant time outdoors in a range of weather conditions. We only cancel sessions if it is unsafe to be outside, not if it is raining.
- You will meet a range of people working in the Conservation sector and this is your opportunity to ask them questions. Make the most of your time by making as many contacts as possible.
- You will be expected to work as a team and adhere to the **Code of Conduct**
- Sessions will run from 10am to 4pm (with the exception of the 2-day residential)
- You will be required to arrange your own transportation to activities located within your own AONB. Transportation can be provided for any days that are scheduled outside your AONB (with the exception of the residential).

What to bring?

- Sturdy outdoor shoes/boots
- Waterproof coat and trousers
- Spare dry clothing in a waterproof bag
- Packed lunch
- Personal medication
- Small rucksack

* All safety equipment will be provided

Selection criteria

- You must be 16 – 24 years of age on 7th July 2025
- Q1. Why is your chosen AONB important to you? – 50% weighting
- Q2. Why are you interested in becoming a Youth Leader? – 50% weighting
- You must commit to attending at least 8 of the 9 workshops
- If there is a tie between candidates, then priority will be given to those living within the AONB in which they have selected to attend the Youth Ranger Programme, and who can attend all days of the programme in that area.