Is your community group active within the **Strangford and Lecale AONB** or the **Mourne Gullion Strangford Geopark**? If so, we have an exciting opportunity for you!

The **AONB and Geopark Ambassadors training scheme** is designed to equip local community representatives with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to deliver inspiring environmental outreach projects in their own communities.

Through a mix of **face-to-face workshops and online learning**, your group will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the rich natural and cultural heritage of our landscapes.
- Explore the history, biodiversity, and unique features of the AONB and Geopark.
- Take part in hands-on activities that bring learning to life.
- Learn practical ways to share this knowledge and inspire others in their local area.
- Get support to develop your own outreach project

This is a fantastic chance to become a **AONB & Geopark Community,** helping to connect people with the beauty and importance of our local environment, while supporting your group's own projects and initiatives.

Why take part:

- A **6-day blended in-person training**.
- Further **zoom sessions** aimed at equipping you with the skills to deliver your own AONB and Geopark workshops.
- Further equipment or training to the value of **£1,500** (agreed with Geopark staff) help deliver your community outreach.
- Access to a **network** of like-minded peers.
- Toolkits, and **mentoring** support.
- Once your workshops are successfully delivered, your community will get a dedicated page on our website highlighting your area as an **AONB & Geopark Community**

What is expected of you?

- Each community group must have two representatives at each event
- Representatives must commit to delivering six workshops back in their community (support will be given to develop the workshops)

This programme is **free of charge**. All we ask from you is a commitment to attend the whole programme.

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Programme timeline	Date	Location
Introduction Session	Wednesday 30th September 7pm-8pm	Zoom
"Taking notice" - supporting nature wellbeing through outdoor education.	Friday 9th October 10am-4pm	Castlewellan Forest Park
Strangford & Lecale Tour – Bus tour exploring the natural heritage highlights of the AONB.	Wednesday 14th October 10am – 4pm	Meeting point Downpatrick
Ring of Gullion – Bus tour exploring the natural heritage highlights of the AONB.	Wednesday 21st October 10am-4pm	Meeting point Newry
Social Media for Community Groups – Get the most out of you social media channels to reach the most people.	Wednesday 28th October 10am-4pm	Newcastle, Co Down
Introduction to Organic Gardening Principles – Learn from an expert organic gardener on matters such as soil health and encourage a wildlife.	Friday 6th November 10am-4pm	Saintfield
First aid – Emergency outdoor first aid to support your group	Wednesday 11th November 9am-4pm	Newcastle, Co Down
Project ideas meetings	Tuesday 17th November or Wednesday 18th November	Downpatrick or Bessbrook
Winter lecture series – Topics include using canva and social media, how to set up a community garden, funding opportunities leave no trace and biodiversity recording.	Thursday evenings between Dec – Feb	Zoom
Project Delivery	Jan – March	Your locations

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

Selection criteria

- Preference is given to groups located within either Strangford and Lecale AONB or the Ring of Gullion AONB
- Those groups who can commit to all of the training sessions.
- Groups who commit to delivering at least 6 outreach sessions within their community.
- Once the first three criteria have been applied then groups are chosen at random.

*This scheme is open to all community groups in the Strangford and Lecale AONB who meet the selection criteria, regardless of which council area they are in.

Applications close 5pm Thursday 24th September

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