



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) & Geopark Youth Rangers 2026

(Covering the Ring of Gullion and Strangford & Lecale AONB).

Letter to Potential Youth Ranger

17th December 2025

Dear Potential Youth Ranger,

Thank you for expressing an interest in being a part of the AONB & Geopark Youth Ranger Programme. With this letter you will find some more detailed information about the scheme,

- A letter for your parents
- Photography Consent form
- Youth Ranger Activity schedule
- Wild Youth Award and Youth Leaders Programme
- The Youth Rangers Code of Conduct
- Privacy Notice
- Our selection criteria

The AONB Youth Rangers is aimed at 14-17-year-olds from the Strangford and Lecale and Ring of Gullion Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The programme is five days long for each area, commencing on the 7th February in the Strangford and Lecale AONB and 15th February 2026 in the Ring of Gullion AONB and. Each day you will have the opportunity to learn an outdoor skill and get hands on with some practical environmental conservation work. This programme will give you an insight into what is involved in working in the outdoors, whether it be in Outdoor Education or Environmental Management. You must come in clothes suitable for working and exploring outdoors in the winter (including hats, gloves, waterproof jackets and trousers) and sturdy footwear (preferably walking boots) with a complete change of dry clothing essential. There is every possibility we will get cold and wet; a packed lunch and snacks for throughout the day are also required, and plenty of drinking water; please bring along all your necessary medicines e.g., inhalers/EpiPen's etc.

Not only is this programme a great opportunity for you to get some practical experience and learn about looking after the environment, but it is also a good way to get out and about in the AONBs. There will be an opportunity to visit the other AONB during your programme.

In return, we expect all Youth Rangers to participate as fully as possible in the activities, to contribute to the efforts of the team and to adhere to our code of conduct. To learn more

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about the type of activities you will be taking part in please have a look at the enclosed schedule. We would hope you will be able to commit to all the Ranger Days, it is only a short programme.

If you decide that this programme is for you, please make sure that your parent/carer reads the information in this pack and signs the application form to give their consent. Please submit your applications by 5pm on Friday 16th January 2026.

If you have any queries about the AONB Youth Rangers, please do not hesitate to contact us using the details below. Please note that you must be 14 or older by the start of the course and under 18 for the duration of the programme. Please also note that places are limited. If applications exceed the places available, we may implement a selection process, details of which are attached.

Programme Dates: -

The Youth Ranger Programme will be held on the following dates from 10am – 4pm:

Workshop	Strangford & Lecale AONB	Ring of Gullion AONB
Induction and bushcraft	Saturday 7 th Feb	Sunday 15 th Feb
Mountain biking and nature volunteering	Sunday 22 nd Feb	
First aid awareness	Sunday 8 th March	Saturday 7 th March
Hill walking at Slieve Gullion	Saturday 28 th March	
Canoeing on Strangford Lough	Friday 10 th April	

Applicants must be available to attend all 5 sessions for their chosen programme.

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

Yours sincerely,

Judith Hassard

Therese Hamill

Amy Dixon

Judith Hassard

&

Therese Hamill

&

Amy Dixon

AONB & Geopark

AONB & Geopark

AONB & Geopark

AONB Officer

AONB Officer

Volunteer and Outreach Officer

(Strangford & Lecale)

(Ring of Gullion)

Tel: 07548159835

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Letter to Parent Guardian/ Carer

Dear Parent/Carer/Guardian,

Your child has expressed an interest in participating in the Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB & Geopark Youth Ranger Programme. With this letter you will find more details about the scheme:

- A letter to prospective Youth Ranger participants
- Photography Consent form
- Youth Ranger Activity schedule
- The Youth Rangers Code of Conduct
- Privacy Notice
- Our selection criteria

Please read this information carefully and decide if you are happy for your child to apply to be one of the Ring of Gullion **or** Strangford and Lecale AONB Youth Rangers. Please check all the information on the online application form, by submitting the form you are providing your consent for your child to take part in **Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB & Geopark Youth Ranger Programme 2026**.

The programme is five days long for each area, commencing on the 7th February in the Strangford and Lecale AONB and 15th February 2026 in the Ring of Gullion AONB and. Please see enclosed Youth Ranger Activity Schedule for scheduled activity dates. The Youth Rangers need to be at the designated drop-off points, in each AONB by 10am and collected by 4pm each day, unless otherwise stated. Staff will not be available to supervise children before or after these times. Drop off locations to be confirmed. The programme is part funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Environment Fund, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The participants must come in clothes suitable for working and exploring outdoors in the winter (including hats, gloves, waterproof jackets and trousers) and sturdy footwear (preferably walking boots) with a complete change of dry clothing essential. There is every possibility we will get cold and wet! A packed lunch and snacks for throughout the day are also required, and plenty of drinking water; please bring along all necessary medicines e.g. inhalers/EpiPen's etc.

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We will provide any equipment required for specific activities or tasks. Please see the Activity Schedule for the range of activities, which are covered. We hope you will agree that this scheme is a great opportunity for young people to get some practical conservation experience, whilst learning valuable life skills, such as first aid, teamwork and navigation skills. It is also an excellent opportunity for them to explore the AONBs during the weekends and contribute something to its conservation. In return, we would expect all Youth Rangers to participate as fully as possible in the activities, to contribute to the efforts of the team and to adhere to our code of conduct.

Life Adventure Co., www.onegreatadventure.com/ have been appointed by Newry Mourne and Down District Council to provide this programme of activities. All staff working on the programme are fully trained in the activities they are providing, are qualified first aiders and abide by child protection policies and codes of conduct.

Please note that your child must be 14 or older by the start of the course and under 18 for the duration of the programme.

Places are limited on this scheme, so please ensure your child's application is submitted before the closing date of **5pm 9th January 2026**.

We may have to use a selection process if applications exceed the places available. Preference will be given to applicants resident in the Ring of Gullion or Strangford and Lecale AONB, those who can attend all 5 of the activity days and those which are new to the programme.

If you have any queries about the Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB & Geopark Youth Rangers Programme, please do not hesitate to contact us, using the details below.

If you decide that this programme is suitable for your child, please check that the form is fully completed, including the medical information and signed. A digital signature is acceptable.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Hassard

Therese Hamill

Amy Dixon

Judith Hassard

&

Therese Hamill

&

Amy Dixon

AONB & Geopark

AONB & Geopark

AONB & Geopark

AONB Officer

AONB Officer

Volunteer and Outreach Officer

(Strangford & Lecale) (Ring of Gullion)

Tel: 07548159835

Judith.hassard@nmandd.org

[NMDDC Revised Equality Scheme April 2020](#)

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NMDDC Safeguarding Policy Feb 2020

Activities included

Induction day - Get to know your group leaders and fellow Youth Rangers through fun games, challenges and bushcraft. Practical conservation work in the afternoon learning about the work of the AONB and Geopark team.

First aid awareness - Learn how to deal with conscious and unconscious patients, bleeding, broken bones and minor illnesses. This is a recognised first aid qualification. It is useful to have when out exploring and it looks great on a CV. You will also get the opportunity to take part in some practical conservation.

Mountain biking and practical conservation. The groups will work together to clear invasive scrub in the beautiful Castlewellan Forest Park. And as a reward for their hard work they will have the opportunity to tackle some of the mountain bike trails.

Hill walking in the Ring of Gullion - (a day where the Strangford and Lecale and Ring of Gullion Youth Rangers meet up. Transport provided). Exploring Slieve Gullion Mountain learning about its habitats, archaeology, legends and geology. You'll also have an opportunity to learn about how we look after the mountain, learning map reading and navigation skills and taking part in a litter pick.

Canoeing on Strangford Lough (a day where the Strangford and Lecale and Ring of Gullion Youth Rangers meet up. Transport provided). Exploring Strangford Lough on the water, about its habitats, wildlife, and geology; also taking part in a litter pick

Wild Youth Award

In partnership with Ulster Wildlife, all participants now have the opportunity to gain a Silver [Wild Youth Award](#). This award recognises how individuals connect, learn about or help nature and wildlife. To qualify for this award participants have to have completed ALL five sessions of the Youth Ranger Programme (at least 24 hrs).



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Code of Conduct for Youth Rangers

At all times participants taking part in the AONB & Geopark Youth Ranger Programme must act with appropriate and respectful behaviour.

Youth Rangers should:

- Take responsibility for their own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment

Youth Rangers should also:

- Participate fully with activities
- Work as part of a team and support the aims of the team

Youth Rangers should never:

- Engage in physical or suggestive games of horseplay
- Display any forms of bullying behaviour
- Use vulgar or abusive language, or language of a sexual nature including innuendo.
- Abuse equipment or facilities. Any wilful, negligent or deliberate damage to property must be paid for by the person who caused it.
- conduct themselves in a manner that offends, annoys or cause distress to others or members of staff. This includes any behaviour that involves racism, sexism, sectarianism or bullying.
- Use personal electronic devices e.g., cameras, mobile phones to take photographs and videos of other participants or staff.

When young people choose to engage in behaviours that are unacceptable the following will be used:

Yellow and Red Card System

1. Before a card is given a staff member will speak to the young person giving the young person an opportunity to change their behaviour/s.
2. If the unacceptable behaviour continues a yellow card will be issued and the Senior Leader will be informed. At this stage the parent or legal guardian will be contacted.
3. A red card will be given if there is no improvement in behaviour.

Once the red card is issued the following will take place:

- The young people will be informed that a red card has been issued.
- The parent or legal guardian will be contacted and informed of their behaviour and asked to meet with the leader-in-charge to decide the way forward.
- In extreme cases this may result in time off from future session/s.

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The participants will be given a thorough briefing on the Code of Behaviour; this is also provided in written form in the information supplied to participants.

The following are examples of unacceptable behaviours:

- Not following instructions from staff
- Swearing
- Making personal statements that upsets others
- Misusing the equipment
- Use of personal electronic devices and or mobile phones to take photos or videos
- Leaving the activity without permission

Through continued co-operation from parents/legal guardians and young people the Council staff are committed to creating a safe environment and positive learning experiences for all young people.

By completing the registration documentation parents or legal guardians are accepting this agreement.

Suspensions and Exclusions of Children

Persistent unacceptable behaviour from a child will result in the following: Suspension.

- Only in the event of an extremely serious or dangerous incident will a child be suspended from a scheme/activity with immediate effect. In such circumstances, the child's parent/guardian will be contacted and may be asked to collect their child.
- After an immediate suspension has taken place, the Manager/Senior Leader will arrange a meeting with the child concerned and their parents to discuss the incident and decide if/when it will be possible for them to return to the scheme/activity.
- Suspensions should be consistent, fair and proportionate to the behaviour concerned. In setting such a sanction, consideration is given to the child's age and maturity. Any other relevant information about the child and their situation will also be considered.
- Managers/Senior Leaders should always keep parents informed about behaviour

Staff* includes all elected members, employees, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers, hirers of facilities or contracted services.

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Selection criteria for Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB Youth Ranger Programme 2025

Q1. Why is your chosen AONB important to you? – 50% weighting

Q2. Why are you interested in becoming a Youth Ranger? – 50% weighting

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, can attend all 5 days of the programme in that area and those new to the programme.

One of the marks in the table below will be awarded to each question and converted to the % weighting that is assigned to the question.

Mark	Description
5	Excellent response that demonstrates a full understanding of the question with excellent level of detail.
4	Good response that demonstrates an understanding of the question.
3	Acceptable response that demonstrates a level of understanding but with limited detail to provide a higher score.
2	Unacceptable response that failed to provide detailed information in response to the question.
1	Poor response with a lack of relevant information
0	Applicants response did not provide any relevant information

The successful candidate(s) will be selected based on the advised criteria contained within this document.

Further upon selection, NMDDC reserves the right to cancel or amend this programme at short notice, for example due to public health concerns caused by a pandemic.

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Privacy Notice

8th December 2025

Key contact details

Name: Amy Dixon

Downshire Civic Centre

Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road

Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

DL: 03301374586 | E – amy.dixon@nmandd.org | M - 07741 784961

The type of personal information we collect.

We currently collect and process the following information:

Parent/Carer/Guardian: First name, Last name, Email, Address, City, Post Code, Mobile Phone No.,

Participant: First name, Last name, Email, Address, Post Code, Gender, allergies, medical conditions or recent injuries

How we get your personal information and why we collect it

Most of the personal information we process is provided to us directly by you for one of the following reasons:

- register your child on the Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale AONB Youth Ranger Programme 2026
- For purposes of selection to the programme, should the number of applicants exceed the number of available places on the programme. Please see the Selection Criteria for further details.
- To ensure your child's safe participation in the AONB Youth Ranger Programme
- Contact details of parent/carer/guardian will be kept and used in case of emergency for the duration of the activity programme.
- To register your child for the Ulster Wildlife Wild Youth Award.
- To provide information/application opportunities to your child for progression to Youth Ranger Leader Scheme and/or AONB & Geopark Youth Forum.
- Contact details of parent/carer/guardian will be kept and used in case of emergency for the duration of the activity programme.

We may share this information with activity provider Life Adventure Co. who will deliver the AONB Youth Ranger Programme on behalf of Newry Mourne and Down District Council; and Ulster Wildlife who will award the Wild Youth Certificate.

Under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the lawful bases we rely on for processing this information are:

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(a) Your consent. You are able to remove your consent at any time. You can do this by contacting amy.dixon@nmandd.org

How we store your personal information

Your information is securely stored electronically in password protected files. We keep your personal information for six years. We will then dispose of this information securely as per council retention and disposal policy.

Your data protection rights.

Under data protection law, you have rights including:

Your right of access - You have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information.

Your right to rectification - You have the right to ask us to rectify personal information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete.

Your right to erasure - You have the right to ask us to erase your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to restriction of processing - You have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to object to processing - You have the right to object to the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.

Your right to data portability - You have the right to ask that we transfer the personal information you gave us to another organisation, or to you, in certain circumstances.

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. If you make a request, we have one month to respond to you.

Please contact us if you wish to make a request (see contact details on footer of first page).

How to complain

If you have any concerns about our use of your personal information, you can make a complaint to us (see contact details on footer of first page).

You can also complain to the ICO if you are unhappy with how we have used your data. The ICO's contact details are as follows:

- ICO website: www.ico.org.uk
- ICO self-service portal: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>
- Helpline: 0303 123 1114

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