

# LASMUIGH

Issue 5, May 2024



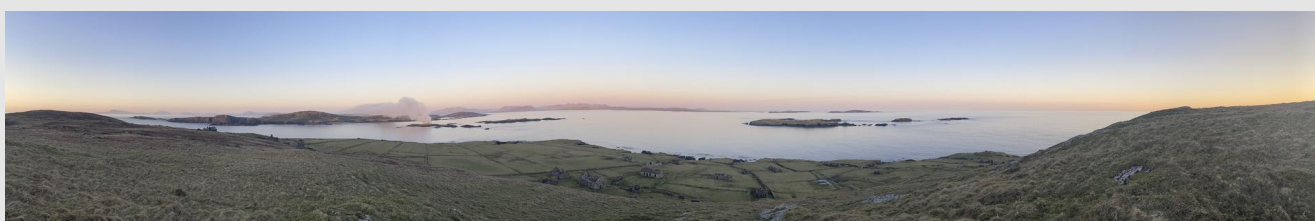
## Professional Practice Journal for the Outdoor Sector on the Island of Ireland

Inside this edition...

- *Making it real, how can sustainability and environmental and place-based education be incorporated into our outdoor practice*
- *Warming up for our surf sessions*
- *A review of the life of Dr Anton Trant*

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# | Editorial

Hello again,

Welcome to the fifth edition of Lasmuigh, the professional practice journal for the outdoor sector on the Island of Ireland. If this is the first time you have come across this journal you may wish to have a look at the earlier editions on the website [www.Lasmuigh.com](http://www.Lasmuigh.com).

Our last edition, was our first Special Edition of Lasmuigh, and it marked the significant occasion of the first conference for the Outdoor Therapeutic Activity Providers Network of Ireland (OTAP). This fifth edition was not intended to have a particular focus or theme however one has emerged in the type and focus of articles that have been submitted.

The emerging theme in this issue has a focus on sustainability and on incorporating the environment and place into our outdoor learning plans. In this light, people often express a positive interest in the environment and sustainability but then struggle with how to reflect this in practice. In this edition, our contributors face up to this challenge. Noel explores sustainability and environmental education in outdoor sports through the SEE Project and presents the guidelines they have developed. John takes up the challenge of how to incorporate environmental education into our daily practice, whilst Aoife weaves an engaging story of how protecting a special environmental place becomes an educational experience. Places, and the practice of encouraging connection to places and facilitating a deeper sense of belonging has become known as 'pedagogy of place'. Kevin, in his article demonstrates through two case studies what pedagogy-of-place might look like in practice.

Has talk of the environment, sustainability and place got anything to do with those of us who love our adventure sports and like to get out regularly sea kayaking or walking? Increased numbers interested in outdoor recreation impacts vulnerable environments and Gavin gives an account of the tremendous work undertaken by the Croagh Patrick Community Ambassador Programme to protect the mountain and through that activity has achieved so much more. Amy, Debbie and Tess, in their article, take up the challenge of examining what sustainability might mean to members of a kayak club and in the process they have produced a set of inspiring and beautifully colourful guidelines. Ecosystems and our impact on them continues as a theme and in his article Alex reflects on his undergraduate research and considers the impact of hunting on an ecosystem. From looking after the environment to looking after yourself; if we are going to continue enjoying and benefiting from our excursions into the great outdoors we will need to remain injury free. Paulina and John present an important contribution on how to warm up properly in the sport of surfing and provide us with an infographic on how to undertake the warm up. In Lasmuigh we have a commitment to promoting creative expression regarding our experiences in the outdoors and our considerations of the issues we face and to this end we have included a range of poetry in this edition that we hope brings you enjoyment and insight.

Finally in this issue we have a review of the extraordinarily full life of Dr. Anton Trant whose many innovations shaped outdoor education within schools and whose educational programmes went on to influence many who still work in the outdoor education sector today.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue,  
Stephen Hannon  
15 May 2024

This note is to acknowledge that the printing of this journal has been financed by ATU Mayo in return for advertising.

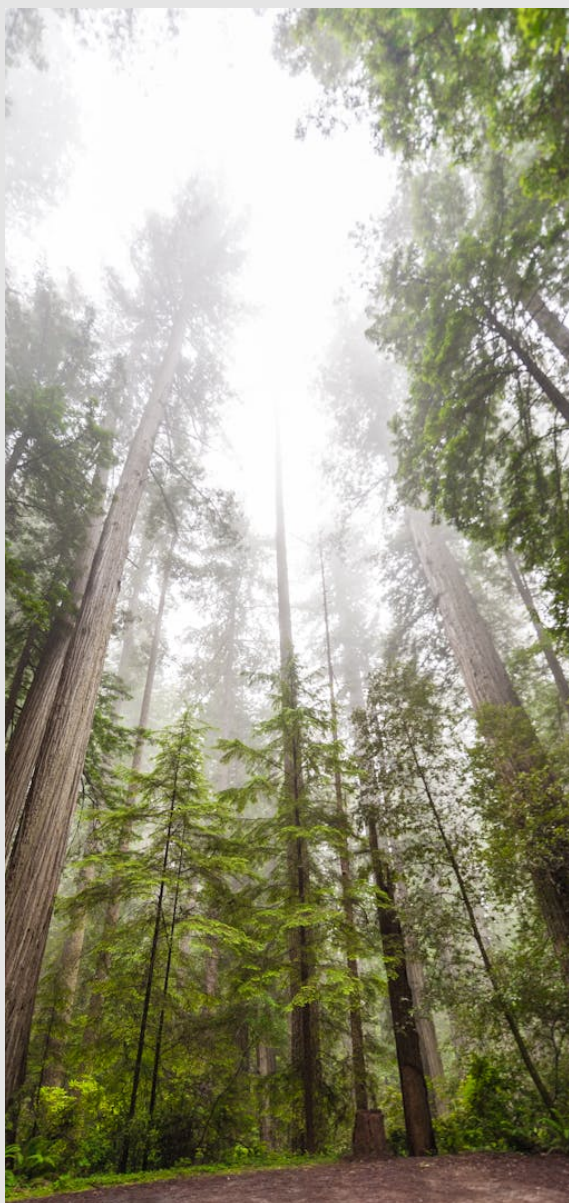


# Lasmuigh - Our Values

## What is Lasmuigh?

Lasmuigh is a professional practice journal that aims to both inform and reflect the field of outdoor education on the island of Ireland by reporting on and sharing good practice in Irish outdoor education. The publication serves as a commitment to the ongoing development of practice, to sharing ideas and innovations, and to promoting an awareness of Irish and international research on outdoor practice. Lasmuigh seeks to engage with and be inclusive of all those who share the outdoor setting for experiences be they recreational, developmental, educational, or therapeutic.

**“Lasmuigh seeks to engage with and be inclusive of all those who share the outdoor setting for experiences be they recreational, developmental, educational, or therapeutic.”**



## Values

We thought it was important to outline what we are about in terms of our values and what we are hoping to promote through this publication.

- Our values in Lasmuigh are rooted in exploring encounters in nature that facilitate empathy and connection, which inspire engagement, challenge existing assumptions, and foster activism that is beneficial to nature and society.
- These values are borne out of a respect for and understanding of our interconnectedness and dependence on nature.
- These values encourage a shift away from an emphasis on the economic and unsustainable benefits humans derive from engagement with nature and a move towards a more eco-centric view of the world.
- Lasmuigh values place and outdoor experiences that interrogate our sense of place and sense of connection to place. It seems important for an outdoor journal that is based in Ireland to value the power of place and the deep connections it can bring.
- Lasmuigh values making meaningful outdoor experiences available to all.
- Finally, Lasmuigh values critical reflection to develop understanding and improve practice.

# Call for Submissions

## What are our aims?

### Lasmuigh aims to:

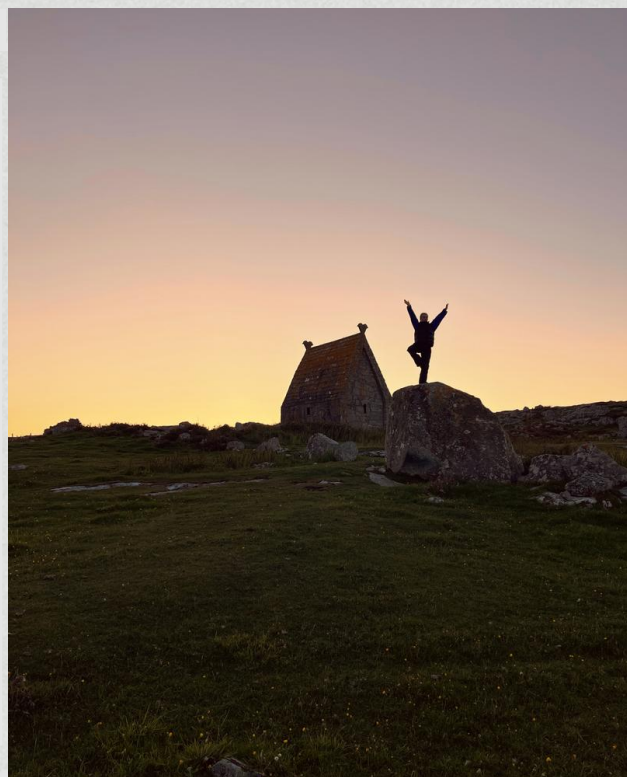
1. Provide a means of communicating good practice for those who share the outdoor setting for their work.
2. Explore how outdoor practice can be place-based in an Irish context by sharing programme examples that celebrate place.
3. Provide a platform for Irish Outdoor Education research that will publicise an evidence base for practice in all areas of outdoor practice.
4. Create opportunities for connection and discussion between those who work in the increasingly rich and diverse outdoor sector in Ireland and beyond.



[lasmuighjournal@gmail.com](mailto:lasmuighjournal@gmail.com)

<https://lasmuigh.com>

[Lasmuigh Podcast](#)



In keeping with our values at Lasmuigh we aspire to publish content that engages with the broad range of those who work in the outdoor sector and encourage submissions ranging from ideas for practice to submissions that seek to expand the evidence base for outdoor interventions. In keeping with the inclusive values of Lasmuigh artwork, poetry and book reviews related to the outdoor sector are also encouraged. There is more detailed guidance available for potential contributors [here](#) and advice on the types submissions [here](#).

Lasmuigh will be published twice each year, in the Spring and in the Autumn. If you are interested in submitting to Lasmuigh here are an abridged version of our submission guidance:

- We recommend 2/4 images per submission.
- Recommended word count – 1000 - 2000 words.
- Please include personal bio – 50 words.
- Submissions for the sixth edition should reach the editors by 1st October 2024.
- The next edition will go live in mid-November.

### There are many different ways to become involved in this publication

- Submit a book review, poem or artwork.
- Submit an article on some research you have conducted.
- Submit a story of your professional journey.
- Submit an account of a project or an example of good practice that you are responsible for.
- Apply to be a member of the editorial board.
- Send in ideas for the further development of the publication.

**"we aspire to publish content that engages with the broad range of those who work in the outdoor sector"**

What does the word **Lasmuigh** mean?

The word means on the outside or outdoors or without. We chose the word for the title of this publication because we thought it was inclusive of the broad outdoor sector and also as an acknowledgement that the publication is based on the island of Ireland.

Want to know how to pronounce *Lasmuigh*?  
Check this link [here](#)

# Introducing the Editorial Panel of Lasmuigh, The Professional Practice Journal

The Editorial Panel of Lasmuigh is intended to be widely representative of the outdoor sector on the Island of Ireland. The publication has grown organically over the last five issues and the role of those on the panel has evolved and developed. Under a proposed new editorial structure we will be redefining the role of the panel members to create a number of subject area specific sub-editors. We are also seeking to develop a list of people that the editorial panel can call on to review articles for the journal. If you are interested in helping review articles please contact us at [lasmuighjournal@gmail.com](mailto:lasmuighjournal@gmail.com). Shirley Gleeson has stepped down from the Editorial Panel and we would like to take the opportunity to thank her for her positive contribution at an important stage in the development of Lasmuigh. It was significant to have someone of Shirley's knowledge and experience on the panel and her stepping down means we have space on the Editorial Panel for someone with a particular interest in the therapeutic application of the outdoors. Please contact us if you are interested in joining the Editorial Panel. Finally we would like to welcome Róisín Curtin from the [Connemara Adventure Programme](#) on board at Lasmuigh to complete a work placement.



*Stephen Hannon lectures on the BA in Outdoor & Environmental Education and the MSc in Outdoor Education, Sustainability and Well Being at the Mayo Campus of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU). Stephen lectures in the areas of experiential learning, expeditionary education and facilitation. He has a particular interest in place-based pedagogy as a way of making outdoor practice responsive to where it is located and as a means of engaging people with their own local environment.*

*Dr John Pierce has been a lecturer in the department of Health & Leisure Studies at Munster Technological University for over ten years. He lectures in outdoor learning across three different degree programmes. He has also spent a lot of his career training adventure sports practitioners and instructors.*



*Ciara Munnely is the outdoor recreation manager in Outdoors unit in Sport Ireland. She is currently leading on national projects with significant impact including the development of a National Digital Database, National Trails Register and Trails Development. She is also involved in the working group developing the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, working closely with various Government Departments and stakeholders. Ciara is an avid horse rider and has completed up to Grand Prix level in Show jumping. She also played rugby for a number of years and gained a cap playing for Leinster. In recent years, she has gained a broader appreciation of the outdoors and has travelled all over Ireland hillwalking and trying out new outdoor activities.*

*Robin Greg based in Ulster University is a Lecturer in Outdoor Adventure and Coaching. Robin is Course Director for the BSc (Hons) Outdoor Adventure programme based at Ulster's Coleraine campus and run-in partnership with Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. Robin is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a British Canoe Union National Trainer and is happiest when surfing.*



*Emer Carton is an adventure sports enthusiast and has been a participant and instructor in sailing, windsurfing, rock climbing and kayaking at various stages since 2008. She has graduated from Colaiste Dhulaigh with a HND in Adventure Education, and from Chichester University with a BA Honours Degree in Adventure Education and Facilitation. More recently she has completed the Sport Ireland Instructor Developer Training and is completing a diploma in Life and Executive Coaching & Mentoring. Emer is based in Kerry and a member of Kerry Canoe Club. Her passion is for helping underrepresented groups of people to gain access to adventure sports. Her current professional role is as the Diversity and Inclusion Manager and Women in Sport Lead with Canoeing Ireland, helping to make paddle sports accessible to all.*



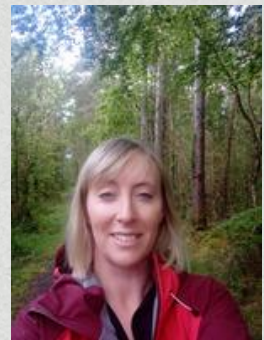
*Mike McClure works for Sport Northern Ireland with a remit for developing outdoor sports in the North and is based at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. His background is in Environmental Science and he worked in the field of outdoor and environmental education for over 20 years. Mike is also currently the chairman of the European Network of Outdoor Sports (ENOS) and has been involved in a range of pan-European Projects. He is passionate about engaging people with nature and communicating about the importance of ecosystem services, nature-based solutions for sustainability and restoration of biodiversity.*

*Dr Sarah O'Malley is an EU Projects Officer with Limerick City and County Council, Ireland. The projects focus on implementing nature based solutions and developing green infrastructure in urban/city areas. She has lectured and worked in the areas of outdoor learning, (dis)connection with nature, environmental sociology, education, disability and inclusion. She has published on these subjects. In her spare time, she is by, in, or on the sea!*



*Dr Cormac Doran is the Head of the Graduate Studies Office (Assistant Academic Secretary) at Trinity College Dublin. He has been involved in outdoor learning for over 25 years as a lecturer, youth worker, researcher, instructor and consultant. His previous role was leading a research centre between Ireland and Canada which followed roles as a Head of Department in TU Dublin as well as lecturing in various institutions in Ireland and internationally. Cormac's main research areas are in higher education theory and practice, community, youth and the outdoors and he is consistently looking at ways to create new knowledge for those who venture outside.*

*Mairéad Cluskey is a lecturer on the BA (Hons) in Outdoor Education and other programmes in the Department of Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences on the Mayo Campus of the Atlantic Technological University. Prior to her role in ATU, Mairéad worked as a professional Community and Youth Worker and lectured in TU Dublin in the areas of Youth Work, Community Development, Management, Research, Child Protection, Child Development and Family Support. Mairéad has a particular interest in the professional formation of students in value-based professions, to support an engagement with people and planet that is concerned with positive social change.*



*Karol Quinn works as the Learning and Evaluation Programme Manager with a responsibility for the quality of Adventure Journeys with Gaisce, The Irish President's Award. He has worked in Outdoor Education for over twenty years as both a volunteer and a professional youth worker with Scouting Ireland. He has been involved in a number initiatives such as the Dublin Mountains Initiative for the development of the Dublin Mountain as a recreational space. His passion is working with young people to develop hill walking and backwoods skills.*

# Outdoor Education Matters in Ireland

## *Looking back on the Life of Dr. Anton Trant*

By Stephen Hannon

I was nervous as I drove to interview Dr. Anton Trant, a man who could be described as the 'Father of Irish Outdoor Education'. The interview was part of a study I was doing into the early evolution of Irish outdoor education. Nervous because the last time I had met Anton had been forty years earlier and I was in trouble. I was on a ten-day scout kayaking trip down the Shannon and Anton had joined this ambitious expedition to support his brother Shaun Trant who was my scout leader. One particular evening, when our expedition had reached Carrick-on-Shannon, two scouting friends and I decided to skive off at night to see the wonderful band, the Phantom Orchestra in a pub. Anton was tasked with finding the disgraced miscreants and with bringing them back to camp. Everyone, including Anton, was disappointed in us, and we felt it. Even as a youngster I got a strong sense of a man with clear values, and a quiet conviction.

Years later, I hoped he would not recall this incident which I tried to replay in a more favourable light in my head. When the door of his Blessington home was opened, all fear subsided. If he did recall the incident, it was never mentioned. He was a kind and very thoughtful man to interview, who considered each question carefully before responding. Two hours later I drove away with a head and notebook full of insights and inspired by the clarity and passion with which Anton had spoken.

This memory came back to me, on the 2nd of November last, when I heard that Anton Trant had died. I immediately went hunting for my notebook and interview transcripts. On finding them, I was again transported back to Anton's study in Blessington, the cups of hot tea, the multitude of ideas, the passion for a comprehensive egalitarian education and the conviction that outdoor learning had an important role to play in society. That interview ranged over many topics however here I'd like focus on Anton's contribution to outdoor education and in particular his programmes in Ballyfermot Vocational School, the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), and the development of a Diploma in Outdoor Education. I have peppered this article with some of Anton's words from the interview to give a sense of his thinking and the times in which he lived.

Early on in the interview Anton says of his involvement in outdoor education, "I was kind of surprised when I look at my own background that it was one of the things I did, where did I get that?". He was born on the Erris Peninsula Co. Mayo in 1933 where his father worked as a lighthouse keeper. Later in the interview he jokingly mused that it might have been his upbringing in the west that started his interest in the outdoors, before dismissing this thought as 'overly romantic'. He left Erris to complete a BA in History. On graduation he spoke about 'never really wanting to be a teacher initially' however with work scarce he emigrated to London, teaching there from 1957 to 1961 with a further year teaching in Malta. He returned to UCD to do a H. Dip and MA in History, graduating with 1st class honours and he seemed destined for a career in the University. He had, however, graduated into a period of great change in Irish education. Minister of Education Donogh O Malley introduced free second level education and later Minister Paddy Hillery introduced many initiatives such as the Institutes of Technology.



To Anton it appeared that it was an 'opening up of the system' and he remarked that

*"The general principles of comprehensive egalitarian education looked like they were coming in....I was very impressed with all of this, I was very taken by egalitarianism and education as being one of the ways you could level the playing field..."*

At this time Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) were to the fore of the move towards progressive reform and had a gentleman's agreement with the Department of Education to have its own experiment with comprehensive education. This experiment resulted in two comprehensive secondary schools, one of which became known as Ballyfermot Vocational School. Anton, who had been teaching part-time in Ringsend, Dublin, was appointed to the role of principal in Ballyfermot, Dublin, in 1966 at the age of just 33. As principal in Ballyfermot, he introduced a highly innovative and probably the first extensive programme of outdoor education within an Irish school. Anton connected with the values and intent of the newly emerging egalitarian, comprehensive education and he saw that outdoor education could create the atmosphere in which this type of education could flourish. His brief was to experiment with the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of Dublin City children. As part of this experiment students, were brought on outings to places of educational interest such as historical sites in country areas and at the same time introduced to hiking.

*"... all of a sudden, I began to experiment and pull ideas together -...and one of those was outdoor education, I'd read the stuff, Outward Bound, I was given the chance to experiment, and I had the local education authority fully behind me, they did extraordinary things, they let me virtually staff the place myself".*

When considering his reasons for developing an outdoor education programme in the school he spoke with a deep conviction, saying

*"I was aware of the problem of trying to keep a large school; a large anything, humane, and that you had to break it down into small units...I had to make the school into a living community and I realised instinctively that outdoor education would be very, very good there...the more you got young people out of the place, for teacher and students, the better it would be... because there is always a tension in schools."*





Anton with his brother-in-law, Paddy Byrne, sailing a GP14 in Aramin, Courtown

Anton saw the potential of outdoor education to reach beyond the potential of traditional education and engage with students. With outdoor education, Anton maintains, you get a completely different set of relationships between students and teachers. From 1966-70 he continued to develop the outdoor education programme at Ballyfermot to consist of hill walking, hostelling, navigation, and field studies. Interestingly this school, now known as Kylemore College, still maintains a vibrant outdoor education programme and has its own outdoor education teacher, Alan Mulligan.

Anton believed outdoor education to be anything that could be taught outdoors and in Ballyfermot teachers of all subjects found there was something to be gained from bringing their education out of doors. These outdoor education programmes were very successful and other schools in the area were invited to take part. Anton's ability to innovate and drive change in education was noted and in 1973 Anton Trant was appointed Director to the newly formed Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). Here, outdoor education became one of three innovative projects and over a short period of time Anton developed a programme of outdoor education and field studies that had been rolled out to 14 schools with the numbers increasing all of the time.

The drive to innovate continued and Anton engaged with Paddy O' Leary, a pioneering Irish Mountaineer and Director of Tiglin, the National Outdoor Training Centre. The fruit of this engagement was the Diploma in Outdoor Education. In 1986 the course received full Diploma validation through the College of Marketing and Design, which was part of the then Dublin Institute of Technology.

This Diploma programme was hugely impactful as each cohort began to create ideas and energised the further development of outdoor education in Ireland. On the 20th of February 1987 the City of Dublin VEC under Anton's direction organised a conference on the theme of *"The Place of Outdoor Education in the Curriculum"*. This was very significant because it was the first formal gathering of those interested in outdoor education in Ireland. That same year saw the formation of the Outdoor Education Association of Ireland (OEAI) and the ripple effect continued with more activity and development for outdoor education.

When you pause to consider the extent of Anton's contribution to outdoor education in Ireland it is impressive. From his work in Ballyfermot Vocational School in the 60's, his innovative work in the CDU in the 70's, the implementation of the Diploma in Outdoor Education in the 80's, his outdoor education programmes with peripheral groups in the 90's; his work has spanned across four decades and laid a foundation for much of what was to follow. What were the motivations behind these innovations? Anton spoke passionately in the interview about how public service was very important to him and how *'he wanted to feel that he was helping, through teaching, to form something of his country'*. He describes how his was the first generation growing up in an independent Ireland and he described a desire he felt about *'wanting to make our own way'*. Anton embodied the importance of educational leadership; he felt outdoor education *'needed support and guidance from leaders and not just permission'*. For Anton, *'the most attractive aspect of outdoor education was its emphasis on the adventurous journey and the powerful metaphor which this provides for our journey through life'*. He believed that outdoor education in a very real way can give us the *'mindset, the courage, and the willingness to undertake these kinds of journeys, not only in the rugged outdoors but also in the circumstances of our daily lives'*.

Anton's ideas, initiatives and structures became the bedrock on which Irish outdoor education developed. Whilst his initiatives were many and varied there is a thread running through them all on the importance of values, relationships, and egalitarianism. This was the overriding sense I recall as I drove back west having interviewed Anton. Reflecting now on that interview, I consider his influence to be of importance at a national level but also as a personal influence on my own work. His quiet conviction towards the end of the interview was infectious saying he believed the importance of outdoor education to be more and more relevant than ever and how he was still *'blown away by the possibilities of outdoor education'* and felt *'its need is even more clear now'*.

There is so much more to be said regarding Anton's involvement in peace and reconciliation initiatives in Northern Ireland, his directing of the European Community Environmental Education Network, and his work to combat early school leaving and his work with marginalised groups. Space doesn't allow for much more so I would like to leave the remaining words to Anton. In a talk he gave in March 1995 he describes how outdoor education seemed to have *'unleashed a great fund of energy and enjoyment'* in people's lives. He continued *"People seem, as a result, to feel better about themselves. They seem energised and renewed, even liberated – and surely this is what education is all about; making people feel light-hearted and free"*.

# A case study of Place-Based Education exercises within the curriculum

## About the Author

Kevin O'Callaghan is the coordinator of the New MSc in Outdoor Education, Sustainability and Well-being on the ATU's Mayo Campus. Kevin has over 30 years' experience in the outdoors ranging from education out of doors with young people and geoscientist to adventure sports curriculum design and provision. Kevin's main passion is journeying in landscapes preferably for more than a weekend.



## Introduction

This paper presents two case studies that reflect some of the work around place-based education (PBE) on ATU Mayo Campus, that we use to incorporate aspects of Education for Sustainability into our programmes. From the outset there is tacit agreement that the term 'sustainability' is contested, which challenges people's understanding and interpretation of what is meant by 'Education for Sustainability' (EfS). For the purposes of this paper we will adopt the definition outlined in the first Irish National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development which aims to ensure that "... education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the 'what'), the key dispositions and skills (the 'how') and the values (the 'why') that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future" (Department of Education and Skills, 2014).

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) goes on to emphasize "... the need for ESD to be an agent for positive change and therefore viewed as being proactive and transformational," (Department of Education and Skills, 2014). Since 2014 the term 'Education for Sustainable Development' is more commonly referred to as Education for Sustainability (EfS) and this term is adopted here.

## Educational Framework

Delivering or trying to incorporate EfS, in addition to, or on top of an existing curriculum can be challenging, particularly when transformational change is the aspiration. This is a significant challenge for educators but particularly pertinent, as it emphasizes the significant role that we as educators need to play in helping society transition. Fortunately, there are many others who have worked, lobbied and tried to influence and implement practice that is EfS and chief among these is Stephen Sterling.

Sterling (2001) argues that authentic education is rooted in place and tradition. Other educators such as Sobel (2008), Orr (1994), Nolet (2016), Armon, Scoffham, & Armon (2020) all identify the radical change required to transform what we do in education and to change our utilitarian view of nature and focus on indigeneity. The key to this is community and place.

Looking at the sustainability agenda the values we need to be promoting include resilience, adaptability and co-operation. Within the various ETB (Education & Training Board) syllabi there is reference to transversal skills. Sterling encourages us to engage in real education as it encourages, participation, activism, and results in spontaneity. The experiential nature of outdoor education (OE) enables the adoption of place-based education (PBE) approaches that can facilitate and initiate some of the transformative changes that will be required.

Sometimes working outside in nature, it is possible to observe students starting to connect the dots and reflect. You witness their encounter with an educational experience that is completely different than the systematic information transfer that has come to dominate most of what educators are now involved in. It enables engagement with people on many levels and that's especially important because like Sterling we believe the aim of "...education is to engage people who are capable of thinking critically living with passion, energy and purpose".

## Other Influences

Other writers who have influenced us in this approach include Sobel, Dewey, Robinson, Lovelock, Cornell and Redbanks. What we surmise that is key and pivotal to these writers, is an innate connection and love for place and consequently we have adopted a bias to place-based approaches. Working and coming from the field of OE, one can understand and empathise with what David Orr writes about sustainability educators: *Educators who promote sustainability education work against the educational grain and are perceived as non-conformists to be merely tolerated*, (Orr 2017) cited in (Armon, Introduction, 2020).

Within educational institutions, going outside the norms of what everyone else is at, is seen as being abnormal or different, so if one is comfortable and has been in position for a while then you are tolerated, otherwise you are perceived as ... (insert your own term)!

## The Case Studies

A case study approach was adopted to highlight how place-based approaches can be used to promote and engage in EfS. On the Outdoor education programmes on ATU's Mayo campus we were invested in place before we ourselves knew what PBE really was. What I better warn about in advance, is that these case studies will be different and won't be to some people's liking. Many are trying to align with specific learning outcomes and other more normalized approaches about venue, location, class duration and other standard criteria that we have become conditioned to accept, and consequently you may have to evolve and adapt some outside-the-box approaches and thinking to replicate these.

### Case Study 1: The Outdoor Classroom



The outdoor classroom involved constructing an outdoor living classroom in the grounds of the college. This involved the harvesting of the willow (offsite), transportation and weaving / tying and construction of a living classroom. There was much discussion in advance about use and access. It was designed and built by students with staff input over an academic year.

The design phase began in semester 1 in 2015 and a scale model was built by a social studies student and the construction itself began in February of Semester 2. The classroom was finished at the end of the semester. Stage one of the construction was building the pillars that would form the "A-frames" of the structure. This was done by banding together lengths of Willow in one direction and inverting the same amount in the opposite direction to create stability. Once six pillars had been constructed the task of erecting the A frames began. Measurements were taken so that the frames were equally spaced and holes measuring approximately 60cm were dug. The task of lifting the A-frames into place required many students working in unison. Once the first A frame was up it was simply a case of repeating the process, without dislodging some of the other A-frames!



Once the pillars were in place the task of roofing the structure began. It had been our intention to weave a living willow roof, however this was not practical as time constraints, growth rates and pending student exams prevented us from doing so. We decided to construct a wooden frame within the structure and covered it with wooden cladding.

Finishing the structure gave the students a sense of completion. By the end of April 2016, less than three months later, the willow had begun to grow.

As much of the construction was done with 2 different student groups there was as with any project the novelty phase, the tedious phase and finishing phase.

Key pieces to the success of this project were:

1. To get the student involved in the design phase.
2. To see the structure completed.

Upon completion we did think and wonder if it was worth it as it took time and energy, however this perspective changed very rapidly.



### Some Learning

- At graduation that year, I noted that students were showing their family and friends what they had been involved in and what they had constructed.
- Many went on to construct something similar, though smaller, in their future workplaces.
- The structure provided a very useful and adaptable space for some practical work and was favoured by many as a venue. The practice of boiling a kettle and having tea or coffee during experiential classes became the norm for some staff.
- It also became a community resource and was used by local schools and other groups.
- We were involved in some service learning, and this proved an invaluable focus for the outside groups when inside accommodation was at a premium within the building.
- We had funding from Healthy Ireland for parent / toddler outdoor play days and the Living Classroom was the focus of these events, and subsequently an outdoor play area involving natural material also evolved.

Covid-19 meant the demise of the initial structure as it became a focus for anti-social behaviours. It was cut down, however as it was a living classroom it has grown back, and we are now able to begin bending the willow again into a new construction.

Linking to the standard curriculum required some adaptation and getting the students to reflect upon their experience for undertaking differing aspects of the project. The primary beneficial outcomes of this project were, what would be traditionally referred to as the hidden and informal curriculum, but the other positive outcome was the addressing of 'education for sustainability'.

### Case Study 2: A stream walk

This exercise arose out of readings around place and place-based pedagogies. There is a stream that flows into a lake opposite the university. Most if not all students have crossed this while going to or from the sports complex or walking in the park. Within this exercise a simple question is posed, 'Is this stream natural or man-made?', to aid progress I will often add, 'or beautified'? This usually helps in nudging the discussion one way or the other. Inevitably, to solve the issue an exploration ensues and a walk to investigate the contested question gets underway. Quickly (approx. 45 minutes) the answer is revealed. It is a man-made construction with the canalised river entering a tunnel. Interestingly once the question is answered, the group usually chooses to go on and explore further. When we emerge from the stream, many don't know where they are, though we are only 120m from the university boundary and some may be residing less than 400m away.

The beauty of this exercise is that it engages all who go, and like all good education it has the potential to be transformative. The inevitable questions are:

- Where does this lead to?
- Why are there pipes leading into the stream and what is in them?
- Is that allowed or legal?

But the most beautiful aspect for me is the excitement during the exercise. The other exploration that is possible is around values, which can be an interesting topic as many do not often consider this in Efs, yet it is one of the items identified in the DoES definition of Efs.



### Some Learning

- Almost all students have gone on and completed some research around the drainage.
- Many returned to explore the river in its entirety.
- Many were disgusted at the river's state and went back to clean it out and remove litter. Now they take bags and other cutters to remove obstructions.
- It facilitates an awakening and connection to an issue locally. This compares to issues they have studied in the media or elsewhere.

While this exercise can be undertaken within a two-hour class (due to its proximity to the university), the framing of the learning journey can have different outcomes.



Sometimes there is anger within the group at the state of the water course and this may lead to direct activism. This activism may manifest itself in different forms ranging from taking direct action to address the littering and pollution, protesting at the local authority's offices, to lobbying local councillors to address the pollution within the stream. Other times it is a sense of discovery and awe at the magic and diversity of the venue. The diversity is both in the differing environments and constructions within the water course.

### Conclusions

ATU's PBE approaches have been evolving over the decades. PBE practice has become refined and responded to differing influences and topics, but the essence and key is to garner involvement and engagement from the students. Armon articulates this succinctly when she notes:

*"What differentiates comprehensive sustainability education is educator's openness not only to cognitive aspects of developing with acting in an ecological consciousness but also to the sensory, imaginative, aesthetic, intuitive and spiritual facets that inform thought and action regarding environmental challenges"* (2020, p2).

One of the main learnings in adopting PBE approaches is how readily PBE can facilitate education for sustainability. Inevitably there is a direct engagement with the environment and that can lead to knowledge and other learning explorations. There is always engagement and this in many cases initiates further engagement which is often with others outside the student's normal sphere. It can be empowering when this additional engagement leads to some form of activism. Significantly these PBE case studies have resulted in some interesting exploration and discussion of values, resulting in plans for further activism and hinting at the transformative potential of the experiences.



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# Incorporating Environmental Education into Daily Practice(s): A Basic Guide

John Pierce

## About the Author

Dr. John Pierce has been a lecturer in the department of Health & Leisure Studies at Munster Technological University for over ten years. He lectures in outdoor learning across three different degree programmes. He has also spent a lot of his career training adventure sports practitioners and instructors.

With the “accelerating climate and ecological emergency” (Slevin, 2023, p. 61), and the marginalisation of environmental education in schools (O’Malley & Pierce, 2023), outdoor and environmental practitioners can play a key role in environmental education in Ireland. While a nationally agreed and co-ordinated approach might not be on the horizon, concerted local efforts could be beneficial to groups attending outdoor learning experiences across the country. This article provides an overview of some of the work students on the [B.A. in Outdoor Learning at Munster Technological University](#) undertook as part of their recent module in Environmental Education Outdoors. It should be possible, with a little work, for practitioners around the nation to adapt and adopt these (or similar) tasks into their own practice(s) and promote more environmental awareness and knowledge in groups engaging in outdoor learning experiences.

This module was designed to help prepare students to design and deliver environmental education programmes outdoors. Over a six-week blended programme (some face-to-face and some online content) the students engaged in classes and practical fieldtrips that developed their understanding of the theories underpinning environmental education as well as furthering their knowledge of a number of different habitats, mainly coastal and woodland.

## Reusable Resources

One of the outputs from this module was that the students were split into groups and tasked with developing simple reusable resources in the form of YouTube videos. The videos provide a starting place for interested practitioners to be able to easily incorporate elements of environmental education into everyday learning experiences with groups. Contained in these videos are useful material on flora and fauna, along with environmental education teaching models. Some further links are provided to support practitioners in sourcing more information about the specific topic. A playlist of all four videos is available [here](#)



The first video in the playlist, [Flow Learning and Water](#), explains Cornell’s Flow Learning model and provides an example session focused on learning more about water. Video number two, [Mermaid’s Purse Search](#), introduces mermaid’s purses, the egg cases of sharks, skates, and rays and how you might go about finding and identifying them on the beaches around the coast. The third video, [Introduction to Beach or Woodland Biodiversity](#), provides basic instructions and resources to run an introductory session on biodiversity in a beach or woodland habitat. Finally, [Going on a Bug Hunt!](#) presents a simple instructional video on how to organise a bug hunt in the woods and then record any findings with the [National Biodiversity Data Centre](#).

The B.A. in Outdoor Learning is a two-year, part-time programme for a Level 7 degree and is open for applications for September. It is also possible to choose one or more specific modules that interest you and only study those ones. To apply, you would need to have either a QQI Level 6 award in a related area, or have worked in the outdoors for a minimum of 24 months and fill in the RPL form.

If you are interested in completing the B.A. in Outdoor Learning, more information, including application forms, is available on the webpage [here](#).

If you have any specific questions, you can email [admissionskerry@mtu.ie](mailto:admissionskerry@mtu.ie).

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# Poetry Pillar Competition continues to inspire with this year's theme of 'Climate Action'.

ATU Mayo Campus contributed to the National Poetry Day Celebrations on Thursday, 25th April 2024 by announcing the prize winners of the 3rd Annual Poetry Pillar Competition. The Transition Year Competition winning entry titled 'Shifting Seasons' by Sophie Pilbrow, Mount Saint Michael, Claremorris and the ATU winner Sharon McNamara, Mayo Campus with her entry 'Misplaced Guilt' both have their poems displayed on the Poetry Pillar as part of an ongoing installation in the ATU Mayo Sanctuary Garden. Anne Donnelly said "...the judging panel really enjoyed reading this year's entries on the theme of Climate Action. The standard of entries was very high and it proved to be a difficult task to pick the winners. Well done to all who entered".

On the day, renowned poet Geraldine Mitchell recited some of her own poetry and emphasised the significance of poetry and the arts in people lives in the promotion of well-being. Geraldine also presented prizes to Aine Quigg, St. Josephs Castlebar, with her entry 'A dream of old reality' and Isabelle Kelly, Mount Saint Michael, Claremorris with her entry 'Whispers from our Earth' receiving second and third prize respectively. The ATU second prize winner, Maria Lavin, ATU Sligo with her poem 'Life on earth', and Angelika Matyjaczky-Zoltex, ATU Mayo Campus with the poem 'The Invisible Nature' brought the proceedings to an end.

A collaborative approach between the Green Campus, ATU Galway Mayo, the ATU Centre for Sustainability, ATU School Liaison Team, Students Union and the ATU Library Mayo made the competition possible. Dr. Deirdre Garvey, Head of Department, Environmental Humanities and Social Sciences stated that "It is a pleasure to link with local schools, the TY co-ordinators and their students in such a creative way around important topics during Green Week...a special thank you the organiser and the judging panel who generously gave the time and expertise to the competition." It is intended to run the competition again for the academic year 2024/25. The theme and competition details will be circulated to schools at a later date, and the Poetry Pillar team look forward to reading your entries next year.

## TY Winning Entry



### Shifting Seasons

Around the world, whispers weave  
 A tale of futures yet to conceive.  
 Once, gentle zephyrs, now fierce heats call  
 Nature's symphony, a universal thrall.  
 Seas surge high, embracing with might,  
 Old norms dissolve in the fading light.  
 Yet within the chaos, a beacon's glow,  
 Hope's ethereal dance, a sight to bestow.

Hand in hand we dance the unknown,  
 Across the canvas where dreams are sewn.  
 In tomorrow's embrace, our power unfurled,  
 To shape a destiny, in a limitless world.

by Sophie Pilbrow  
 Mount St. Michael, Claremorris, Co. Mayo

## ATU Student Winning Entry

### Misplaced Guilt

A feeling of guilt that can't be cured  
 For brining my children into a world  
 Of greed and destruction, filled with people obsessed  
 With themselves and their fortunes and not what is best  
 For the poor, for the planet, for the wildlands we burn  
 For the future we dreamed when it's our children's turn.  
 Big wigs with big bank accounts and even bigger private jets,  
 Big suits with big companies, they're not satisfied yet.  
 While the small folk recycle and suck paper straws  
 Left soggy like our hope for the passing of laws  
 That might change the destruction and the inevitable blitz  
 Of all that was beautiful and not ours to begin with.  
 A feeling of guilt that should be felt by the wealthy,  
 By the powerful, by the politicians and the ones who are stealthy  
 Enough to profit from a world far from healing  
 But no, it's not them, I'm the one with this feeling.

by Sharon McNamara, ATU Mayo



Photos: Top left (L-R) Dr Deirdre Garvey and Geraldine Mitchell presenting Sophie Pilbrow with her prize at the 'Poetry Pillar'. Bottom right (L-R) Dr Deirdre Garvey and Geraldine Mitchell presenting Sharon McNamara with her prize at the 'Poetry Pillar'.

## TY Prize Winners

### *A Dream of an Old Reality*

The dappled sunlight rests on the crisp leaves.  
Branches lie empty on the damp, mossy trees.  
A fox's speckled belly brushes the acorns that dress the forest floor.

The forest is almost silent, as if it's behind a closed door.  
The soil is soft underfoot.  
A squirrel creeps down a trunk in search of a nut.  
Autumn is here but something colder, lies near.

The year is 2080 now and a leaf falls to the ground.  
This time it's burning and blazing and there's not an animal to be found.

by Aine Quigg  
St. Joseph's, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

### *Whispers from our Earth*

The lively creatures that once danced and roamed,  
Now find their own homes forever disowned,  
As habitats were destroyed and disappear,  
Their futures blurred with doubt and fear.

In lands where once the rivers flowed,  
And meadows stretched where wildflowers sowed,  
The lakes, once lifelines, now run dry,  
Their murmurs silenced, beneath the sky  
There lies a place, now touched by change,  
A tale of sorrow, a landscape estranged,  
For in the heart of every land,  
There beats a hope, a guiding hand,  
To turn the tide, to rearrange,  
And reclaim what's lost to climate change.

by Isabelle Kelly  
Mount St. Michael, Claremorris, Co. Mayo

## ATU Student Prize Winners

### *The invisible nature'*

The invisible hand sways the azure of the sky,  
Enveloping space in the fluffy clouds  
Like a landscape painted with an unreal brush.

The sun rustles, sobs echoed by the nature's lament,  
The wind holds the Earth's tears in its embrace as the forests weep loudly.  
The waters stir with a poignant force, and the Mountains sigh to the wild blue.

Hear the cries of despair, nations,  
Tread carefully, leaving no traces behind.  
May the mother Earth heal her scars.

United in strength, sow the seeds of hope.  
Let the battle for the goodness, purify the land and sky.  
Unblemished heritage of nations.

When, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, hope is reborn,  
The help of united hearts will come to silence the weeping of Mother Earth.  
A wave will flow into pure spaces.

Love newly sown,  
Will blossom with the breath of the wind,  
Like a diamond cutting through the impure canvas.

Let us repay our debt of gratitude,  
To our Earth, our home, therefore let us offer her climate actions,  
Let us care for Mother Earth and trouble her no more.

by Angelika Matyjaszczy -Zlotex  
ATU Mayo

### *Life on Earth*

The warnings were there  
For everyone to see  
But we waited to care  
'Til Earth fell to its knee

Human mistakes and our greed  
Have caused much of this mess  
Collective action's what we need  
To make change a success

So stop pointing the finger  
And forget who's to blame  
Don't hang about, don't linger  
Don't dwell on the shame

If we all work together  
To heal the damage we've done  
We'll all help to weather  
The crisis for everyone

by Maria Lavin  
ATU Sligo



Photo: Group photo of Dr Deirdre Garvey, Geraldine Mitchell and Poetry Pillar coordinator Dr. Sheila McArdle with all prize winners.





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To assist you in providing your insights, we have prepared a short consultation survey, which you can access here: <https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/VuhJbvPA>

We plan to launch the document at the Outdoor Sports Euro meet in Lecco, Italy in September 2024.

This event is a great opportunity for networking, sharing ideas and hearing about a range of innovative initiatives in outdoor sports developments, so we would really appreciate you sharing information on the Euro meet as well.

Registration for this event is open and early bird bookings receive a significant discount before the 31st March.

If you have any questions or if you require further clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me.

We appreciate your commitment to this initiative and look forward to receiving your valuable feedback.

Best wishes

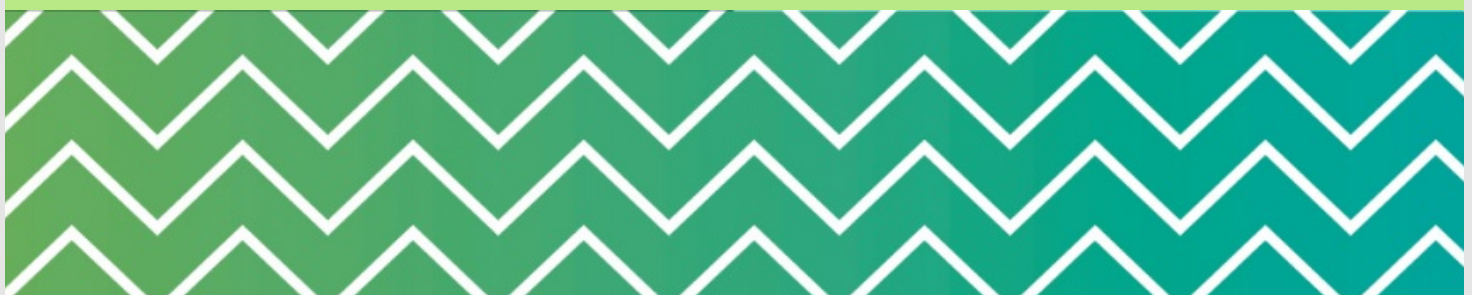
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# Exploring The Hunter's Role As Ireland's Apex Predator



## Alex Ginevic

### About the author - A Professional Journey

Alex is a recent graduate of BA (Hons) in Outdoor Education, ATU Mayo. He has instructorships in a range of fields from land and water. His experience varies from working with companies such as Center Parcs to working with organisations which offer a more personalised approach such as Mayo Adventure Experience. He is currently working with Foróige as a Youth Integration Support Worker.

### Introduction

This article is based on my reflection and personal experiences after completing a dissertation on this topic during my 4th year in Outdoor Education at Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Mayo in 2023. The title of my dissertation was "An Exploration of Hunting as a Mechanism for Conservation in Ireland". The focus of the dissertation was to explore how hunting could contribute to conservation. I proposed that through hunting/culling, the hunters would perform a similar role that an apex predator would, controlling the population of the animals, which is integral to the ecosystem (Williams, 2023). The research participants in my study largely agreed with this position.

I think this is an important topic for outdoor educators in Ireland as there is no natural apex predator (King, 2018). An apex predator is the animal that is on top of the food chain. Wolves are the most recent recorded apex predator in Ireland and they haven't been around for almost 500 years (Brophy, 2019). This then brings up the question, how are populations of deer to be controlled if there is no animal to hunt them? People who morally object to hunting will say to just leave the deer alone. This will then cause an issue with overpopulation which in turn will spill out of the forests and onto the roads/residential estates which in turn will cause accidents (Jones, 2019). When there are too many deer in an area the ecosystem isn't able to handle them all, new trees struggle to grow which in turn affects other animals such as birds nesting or otters borrowing (Cote, Rooney, Tremblay, Dussault, & Waller, 2004)

I suggest that it is the humans duty to look after the wellbeing of animals. Be it for religious reasons, ecocentric or even anthropocentric, however one may look at it. We are conscious beings that can understand right from wrong and we can weigh up decisions which affect the overall outcome. I believe that this puts us in a position of responsibility to look after what is around us.

### Human Intervention

As stated previously Ireland lost its apex predator the wolf about 500 years ago, this was due to big scale deforestation and over hunting. The same story applies to the lynx which has been extinct for about 1300 years (Mac an tSithigh, 2022). These two animals would hunt deer, foxes, hares, birds and rodents. This would keep the population of said prey at a balanced level for the ecosystem to work at a normal level.

Yellowstone National Park in Western United States of America is one of the most prominent examples of what happens when there is no apex predator in the area. The deer population was out of control which meant they didn't have enough food making the majority of them weak and sick. When the wolf was reintroduced it brought the deer population down to a healthy level. This in turn meant that more young trees could grow, because the trees were able to grow beavers were able to make dams and because of dams being made, new ponds were formed and this in turn brought back a fish species that wasn't seen in this area in a long time (Farquhar, 2023).

As seen from the above example the apex predator is integral to a healthy ecosystem (Williams, 2023). I suggest that Irelands ecosystem is in danger of getting damaged if preventive measures aren't taken. Conservation is a buzzword that has been thrown around quite a bit lately but hunting can be used as a tool for this cause. It has been used in the past and it is being used in some countries now. There are negative perceptions surrounding hunting, with it being viewed as a blood sport, inhumane or immoral (Byrd, Lee, & Olynk Widmar, 2017). I feel these are all misinterpretations of what hunting is, and I suggest that it can be used effectively as a conservation tool. Animals hunt for their dinner and some people do the same. There are ethical ways of hunting and the majority of hunters abide by these rules because they want to as it is the right thing and because of repercussions such as fines and jail time.

### A Hunter's Mind

For my research I carried out a survey on people in the hunting community and people who work in national parks. The survey consisted of questions relating to hunting and their opinions/views on it and whether or not they participate in it. There were 56 responses to the survey all of which provided insight on this topic.

A majority of respondents stated that they hunt to control the population of the animals around them and for food. This shows that the hunters in our community have the capacity or potential function to fill the void of the apex predator. This type of feedback correlates with a lot of the research from around the world from countries that also don't have a natural predator and rely on their hunters to maintain the populations of its animals (Wapner, 2017; Brown, et al., 2000).

When it comes to population control it isn't an arbitrary figure that we as humans made up because we feel comfortable with it. There is a natural level at which animals should exist at in order to maintain a balanced ecosystem (Maier, 2018). Many of the respondents said they hunt in order to maintain a balanced ecosystem. This suggests they aren't just mindlessly hunting animals, they care about what is around them because if they didn't then there wouldn't be anywhere or anything to hunt.

More than half the respondents said that hunting is part of their culture be it because of where they grew up or because of how they were raised. This shows that this activity in which they engage in isn't just something they do without caring about. It has been passed down to them from previous generations. They stated that they hunt to provide food for themselves and their families. They would make the argument that hunting for food is more humane than buying from a shop where it came from a slaughterhouse.

## Conclusion

Hunting isn't a necessary evil, it is a way of life for many people all around the world. It has been the way humans lived for lifetimes and it is how many people get their food nowadays. There is also an argument that using the hunted animal for food is the more sustainable way to live, as you are keeping the population under control and you are not letting it go to waste. This is seen from history and from the hunters that were surveyed. A majority of them care about the environment and they try to engage in conservation (Loveridge, Reynolds, & Milner-Gulland, 2006).

As outdoor educators we know that the best way to have someone look after their surroundings is by having a personal connection with the environment. Hunters who participated in my research did express to have a connection with the environment, they want to be able to keep hunting so they will abide by the laws/regulations. They want what is best and that is why they want to participate by controlling the population of animals.

I believe that Irelands forests are too small to sustain the ever-growing population of deer never mind the proposition of reintroducing a predator like the lynx. The UK is currently going through a program where they have reintroduced a lynx into the wild and it has positive results (Kirkland, 2021). Unlike the UK we have much less forestry and the Lynx wouldn't be able to have a comfortable life here. This is why hunters need to fill that void and take up the role of said predator. There is a gap in the research relating to hunting in Ireland and this article's purpose is to be a starting point for this discussion.

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# Earth Leaders Save Red Rock



## Aoife Cannon

### About the author

Aoife is happiest in the outdoors with others – cycling, kayaking, swimming, roller blading, hiking or just enjoying nature. She started a Masters in Outdoor Environmental and Sustainability Education at the University of Edinburgh, as a mature student, after being stuck indoors working through Covid. Thanks to her part time job at the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) managing its education programme she's able to juggle work with study. The slow travel option allows for plenty of study time – many an assignment has been finished on the train, ferry and bus to Edinburgh. Before the end of her college days, she hopes to get to Scotland under her own steam – by bike and maybe even kayak. In 2019, Aoife and a few neighbours set up a community group "Baldoyle Wild Town". Although formally known as Baldoyle Tidy Towns they felt this didn't reflect their work – re-wilding and climate action. They are the proud recipients of the Tidy Towns Tree Award in 2022 for planting a tree for every resident in Baldoyle (over 6,000 trees!) and the Climate Action Award in 2023 for their seagrass restoration project in Baldoyle estuary. Aoife hopes you enjoy this contribution to Lasmuigh. It was written as an assignment for her course.

### It's 1989...

It's 1989, I'm in my rented room in a flat in Madrid which I share with a Spaniard and a Mexican. I'm homesick, struggling with both the language and living away from home in a foreign city on my own. Letters from home are such a welcome relief and I can't wait to open this one. I flop on my bed and start reading. The usual news from mom: dad's working hard though fitting in a bit of golf, the garden is keeping her busy and Ginny is still going for the postman. Then an update about Save Red Rock, a local environmental campaign she's involved in. I read on.....

*'We couldn't believe it; the bulldozer was in the Red Rock fields just beside the woods starting to dig. Stella's neighbour Sean parked his car in front of the gate blocking the bulldozer from getting out. That finally got the attention of the Council. We've hardly stopped since, it's been a flurry of meetings with Councillors, writing objections and getting petitions signed – as you can imagine, lots of cups of tea!'*

Thirty-two years later, I consider what I've learnt about transformational leaders 'they value individuals and build positive relationships' (Smith, H., & Penney, D. 2010). Back to mom's letter.....

*'I was up at Red Rock the other day, marvelling at the wilderness and feeling like I could be in the west of Ireland, yet just a few miles from Dublin city. Aoife, you know how I feel about this place – granny bringing us here on school holidays back in the 1950's, coming here with you as children – if we lose Red Rock to the developers, it's gone forever. Our campaign feels relentless at times, yet I'm determined to save it for my grandchildren and future generations.'*

I'm transported back to this stunning place and feel a mix of homesickness and anger. The realisation that Red Rock "where pillows of smooth, shining metamorphosed limestone, glowing pink in the sun, shelved into the sea" (Fewer, 1998) on the edge of Dublin Bay – our playground growing up – could be gone made me deeply sad. Yet a wave of relief flooded through me knowing mom and others were doing something about it.

It's now 2022, and I discover a Forest School has been started in Red Rock woods. I'm curious and figure this would be an ideal place to do my placement for college. I've taken leave of absence from work to study part time while also caring for mom who has dementia. Elisa, the teacher who started Growing Roots Forest School<sup>1</sup>, and I arrange to meet. We chat and immediately I sense her spirituality: her deep connection to children and nature. She welcomes me as a volunteer and within a week I'm immersed in the woods. Encouraged by Elisa, the children show me where the best blackberries are and I'm introduced to Sally, their favourite tree. They delight in telling me the Irish word for willow is Saileach and I recall what Smith *et al.* (2010) say about extraordinary leaders demonstrating a commitment to the experience as a collaborative learning journey.

One evening as we're finishing up and walking back towards the road, I remark on the furrows in the field showing where the bulldozers had started. Elisa was shocked, she didn't know about the developers' plan to build 44 houses at Red Rock many years earlier. She quizzed me about it – How was it saved? When? Who was in the group? When we reached the road, she turned to me with intent "How can the children thank this group? Without them, we would have no forest." It strikes me as very thoughtful and I reflect how this aligns with spiritual leadership, demonstrating a sense of commitment to a greater purpose (Smith *et al.*, 2010).



*Image of an old postcard showing the cliffs at Red Rock circa 1950s*

And so, three weeks later a motley crew of four older people and I meet Elisa at the entrance to the Red Rock fields. It's a beautiful, sunny autumnal morning and the children are already in the forest with Briana and Amaya, their leaders. They've invited the Save Red Rock group up to the woods and have a special message for them.

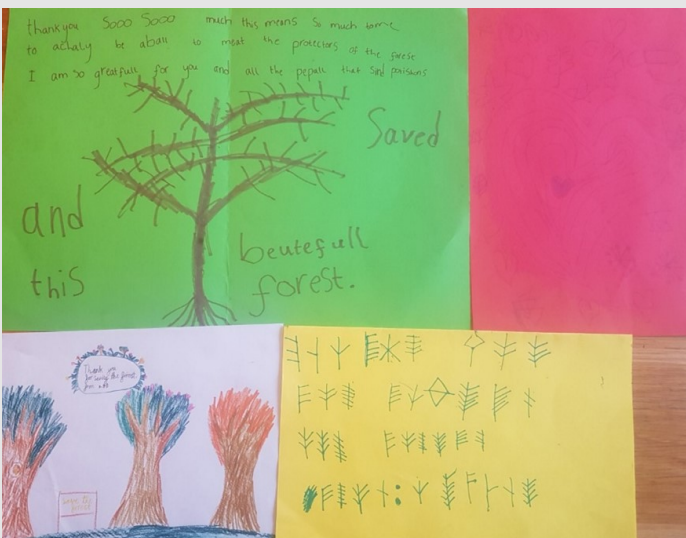
Elisa is laden down with bags, in her hands and on her back. I offer to help and wonder what's in them. On we go through Red Rock fields and once we reach the woods we hear chatter, laughter and feet crunching on leaves. The children are coming to meet us, fascinated by the visitors but at the same time shy. They turn and show us the way to camp. Some of the contents Elisa was carrying are revealed – camping chairs for the older people and flasks of tea, cordial and hot chocolate: how thoughtful. I remember what Smith (2021) says about leaders being aware of the natural environment in a practical way - Elisa demonstrates this perfectly, making sure the older people are comfortable. Stella, Jacqueline and Anita (my mum) settle into the chairs. Mick being a bit younger than the women stands behind them, almost in a protective way. The rest of us sit on the ground or tree stumps in campfire style and the storytelling begins. "What happened then was one day we saw a great big bulldozer out in the field..." started Stella. "Oh, wow" said Elisa.

"Yes, we thought gosh, this was not the place to build a row of houses. In those days if it wasn't dangerous, it was grand" continued Stella. "It was before the planning act had arrived. The developer who had permission from years back had started work. So what we did, we got after all the local Councillors, you know.....rang them, gave them coffee, a lot of attention. At this stage this area was all controlled by Dublin City Corporation, the City didn't understand this kind of thing. We persuaded these Councillors to cancel, remove his planning permission and stop the bulldozers and stop everything."

"It was a great battle" adds Jacqueline.

Although the children sat quietly, some playing with pinecones and needles, others digging in the muck, I wondered was it all going over their heads. But they were hooked. Grace pipes up "That's a great idea" on hearing about the car blocking the gate.

And on hearing that the Council were persuaded to give the lands over to the public, Ben gives a thumbs up. We all listen to how the Save Red Rock group over a period of almost 12 years fought to keep the lands free from development.



Cards made by the children and presented to the Save Red Rock group



Pictured are the Save Red Rock group, Growing Roots Forest School leaders and the children

Mick tells of the difficulties "it wasn't plain sailing the developers tried everything.....bribing us saying they wouldn't knock down the trees if they got permission for 6 houses, erecting barbed wire fences preventing a right of way for walkers. That got everybody up in arms, anyone who walked the hill knew you couldn't do this on legal rights of way. And it led to a huge protest march on the hill, almost 1,000 people and many others signing affidavits. The developer sued and the day before the court, he took the fence down, went into the court and said, "Your honour, I've taken down the fence". They displayed a key element of spiritual leaders (Smith, 2021) by paying close attention and being aware of others thereby helping in their decision making and approaching conflict situations, of which there were many.

Finally, on 16th May 2000 Red Rock and other areas in Howth and Sutton were awarded a Special Amenity Area Order<sup>2</sup> from the Minister of the Environment. This order is provided only to areas of exceptional interest from the point of view of natural, built and cultural heritage and provides a high level of protection.

Mick, being younger than the three women in the group and coming to the campaign later on, compliments them. "But I have to say Jacqueline, Stella and Anita, these three stalwart women, I mean these women are the reason you are sitting here".

What comes to mind is what Smith mentions about the most recent literature emphasising 'feminist, ethical and ecological leadership theories' (2021) and I realise that these women were ahead of their time. Moreover, their actions are such a good example of what Sepie (2017) says about 'empathy, altruism and cooperation being key survival traits for our species'.

Mick's generosity is noted by Stella, who refers to him taking up the baton while they temporarily stand down for a while. It reminds me of what Smith says that 'the most identifying feature [of transformational leadership] was that when the leader was no longer present, individual and collective leadership growth continues' (2021).

Elisa invites the children to mark the occasion by presenting the visitors with homemade cards. Each child is encouraged to explain their special message. One has even written in Ogham, an old Celtic language, and translates it as: thank you for saving the forest.

I consider what Smith says apropos of leadership needing to be about who you are, how you relate to the world, and being able to quickly respond to complex problems with kindness (Smith, 2021). It's no mean feat bringing together children as young as four and people as old as 82 in the woods late in the autumn after a week of heavy rain. Elisa took on this challenge knowing the enormous benefits that would emerge for all involved, demonstrating impressive *Earth Leadership* (Smith, 2021). She recognized that this story could be inspiring to the children in her care and could help them 'become their full potential selves and make their world a better place' (Doetzel, 2018).

### Notes

- 1 Growing Roots Forest School [www.growingroots.camp](http://www.growingroots.camp)
- 2 The Minister for the Environment in Ireland can designate Special Area Amenity Orders (SAAO) for areas of exceptional interest from the point of view of natural, built and cultural heritage. In 1999 Fingal County Council recognised the exceptional character of Howth (including Red Rock fields and woods) by making the Howth Special Area Amenity Order covering an area of 547 hectares. The order was confirmed by the Minister for the Environment on 16th May 2000

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# Upcoming outdoor events

- April**
  - Consultation process for the European Declaration for Trails, a comprehensive document resulting from the collaborative efforts of various organisations <https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/VuhJbvPA>
- August**
  - Her Outdoors Week- 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of August
- September**
  - National Trails Conference: 31<sup>st</sup> August to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, Leitrim
  - European Week of Sport : 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of September

Please let us know about upcoming events so we can share them with Lasmuigh readers! here and on [Lasmuigh.com](http://Lasmuigh.com)

# Sustainability and Environmental Education in Outdoor Sports

Dr. Noel Doyle

Project Coordinator, Leave No Trace



## About the author



Noel's primary role in Leave No Trace Ireland revolves around the coordination of an Erasmus + Project called the Sustainability and Environmental Education in Outdoor Sports and Recreation (SEE) Project. This project aims to provide good pedagogical methodologies that will increase the competencies in sustainability and environmental education of multipliers in the field of outdoor sport and ensure that the impacts of such activities are minimised and mitigated. Noel is a highly motivated researcher with an extensive background of academic knowledge spanning environmental science, tourism, social science, outdoor recreation, psychology, communication, innovation and creative thinking. Noel believes in constantly increasing his range of knowledge across disciplines to best achieve his research objectives and is dedicated to collaboration with others to best facilitate social change.

The connection between outdoor sports and nature is an obvious one. Since the pandemic, more people have been drawn to the outdoors. However, just because activities are practised outdoors does not mean that they are done in harmony with nature. The growth of outdoor sports in Ireland, as indicated by the new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, is a testament to this growing trend.



This growth of outdoor sports is also reflected in the Eurobarometer's findings on sports and physical activities across the European Union (European Commission, 2018). For some outdoor sports practitioners, there is a gap between being out in and enjoying nature, and looking after our shared natural heritage.

Led by Leave No Trace Ireland, The 'SEE' project wants to look at challenges of outdoor sports across Europe and train outdoor sports trainers in good practice to allow increased participation so that more people can enjoy the recognised benefits of the outdoors. They aim to foster a sense of responsibility and impart vital skills to outdoor sports leaders, trainers, and guides (Collins and Carson, 2017).

## Objectives of the SEE Project

- Delve deeper into the balance between outdoor sports and the conservation of nature and protected areas.
- Investigate instances where outdoor sports activities are restricted or prohibited to understand the reasons behind such decisions at a European level.
- Gauge the presence and structure of leadership training frameworks for diverse outdoor sports across Europe.
- Determine the extent of integration of environmental sustainability curricula in the leadership training programmes across Europe.
- Explore exemplary practices from countries outside the EU concerning environmental education in outdoor sports leadership programs.

## Protected Areas and Outdoor Sports

There is no doubt that outdoor sports offer many benefits to people of all ages. It allows for positive contact with nature, socialisation, and mental and physical well-being. Outdoor sports can often be supporters of conservation efforts, but how can we manage these better to ensure outdoor sports are more sustainable and that the impacts of such activities are minimised and mitigated?

To answer that question, the SEE project is an extensive collaboration with partners from across Europe that wants to explore together the topic of sustainability and environmental education. The project began in January 2021 and is funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus + Sports programme. It ran until December 2023.



## The Project

To practice outdoor sports in Protected Areas in harmony with nature, we need trainers of outdoor sports themselves to have sound environmental and sustainability training, knowledge and skills. The SEE project takes on a multi-disciplinary approach to the development and application of training needs. The approach ensures that it is both robust and deliverable in a practical manner for grassroots outdoor sports. In its initial stage, the project examined the challenges facing increased participation of outdoor sport across Europe. With this data, a toolkit, which emphasises educational and environmental good practise, was developed. This toolkit underwent rigorous testing and evaluation throughout Europe, and the results are being disseminated across social media platforms, including the creation of a SEE project website

The heart of our project lies in the exchange programme. We journeyed across diverse terrains to discover best practices:

- Mountain activities in Serbia with the Tara Mountaineering Club
- Watersports in Portugal guided by Surf Club Viana
- Winter sports in Sweden through Folkungaland
- Trail sports, inclusive of special needs initiatives, in France with IMBA Europe & CREPS
- Community and cultural practices in Ireland, led by Leave No Trace Ireland & EUROPARC Federation

Each visit revealed unique, nation-specific approaches to melding sports and sustainability. With insights from over 100 experts, from scholars to sport enthusiasts, we've crafted a toolkit to ensure that outdoor sports champion both enjoyment and environmental responsibility.

## Key Learnings

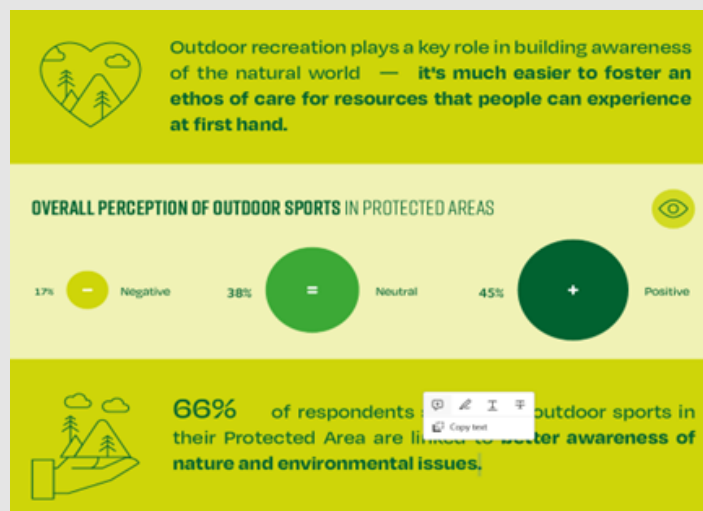
From talks with European experts during our exchange programmes, the SEE project uncovered key ways to weave environmental education into outdoor sports:

- **Touch the Heart and Mind:** Make environmental lessons hit home emotionally and mentally so they stick (Tilbury, 2004).
- **Go Beyond the Basics:** Blend environmental learning with leadership training for well-rounded results.
- **Stay Flexible:** Plans are great, but also be ready to seize teachable moments in nature.
- **Guide, Don't Just Teach:** Make learning hands-on, letting participants have a say.
- **Encourage Deep Thinking:** Push for self-reflection and challenging old ways of thinking (Sterling, 2001).
- **Walk the Talk:** Lead by example. Show what sustainable actions look like.
- **Build Bonds:** Create strong ties with local communities and environmental groups for richer lessons.

As for our results, check out the [SEE Project's website](#). We've detailed findings for 26 outdoor sports and a range of other reports on the state of environmental education of Outdoor Sports across Europe. Look out for our in-depth toolkit, premiering at the International Learning Symposium in November 2023, with online access soon after.

The collaborative and multi-disciplinary approach is ensured through 10 partners from 9 EU countries:

- Ø Leave No Trace Ireland
- Ø Technical University Munich
- Ø Sport Northern Ireland
- Ø National Resource Centre for Expertise and Sport Performance
- Ø The National Institute for Physical Education in Catalonia
- Ø International Mountain Biking Association Europe
- Ø Mountaineering Association Tara
- Ø Surf Clube de Viana
- Ø Folkungaland
- Ø EUROPARC Federation.





# Learning to listen to the earths' song, our paddling journey and code

Amy Walsh, Debbie Heaphy and Tess Glanville  
West Cork Kayak Club



## About the authors

*This code has been created by members of West Cork Kayak Club. Compiled and edited by Amy Walsh and Debbie Heaphy. Illustrations by Tess Glanville. IT by Pa Conway. Amy Walsh is a member of West Cork Kayak Club and currently undertaking an MSc in Outdoor Education, Sustainability and Wellness in Atlantic Technical University, Mayo. Amy's area of interest is Inclusion paddling, Wellness using blue spaces and getting "Special Populations" on the water. Debbie Heaphy is a member of West Cork Kayak Club and a volunteer with the WCKC Special Olympics Group. Debbie is an Independent Environmental Scientist who has worked in sustainability, environmental science and environmental conservation for many years. Tess Glanville is an artist who studied Fine Art at The Crawford College of Art and Design. Tess is a member of West Cork Kayak Club and can be found between West Cork and Happy Valley in the UK.*

**This article provides a brief overview of a project undertaken with West Cork Kayak Club to try and play our part in addressing environmental issues.**

We keep hearing the word 'sustainable', but do we ever stop to ask what it means?

In its most literal term, it means "the capacity to endure". For humans, it's about our long-term wellness which depends on the wellbeing of the natural world and the responsible use of natural resources. Systems around us need to remain productive, diverse, and adaptable. Water, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon are distributed through our ecosystems and have sustained life for millions of years. As the earth's population has increased, natural ecosystems have declined and others degraded. Nature's natural balance and cycles are altering and changing more rapidly because of our actions as humans.

The global conversation on environment, climate change and sustainability can be daunting, negative and overwhelming. We increasingly hear about national and international policies such as the Sustainable Development Goals, The Sport for Nature Framework, and the Citizens Assembly for Biodiversity loss. Often the importance, meaning and interpretation of these policies is not explained or supported. Let us explain some of these simply.

### Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were developed in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. The goals are: "A Shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for the people and the planet, now and into the future".

The goals provide us with a platform and a framework to direct our actions and frame our sustainable future. You will increasingly see the coloured SDG logos in the future associated with activities, the following are related to our kayaking activity.

SDGS 3, 11, 14, 15 and 13 relate to good health, community, protecting life on land, life below water and climate action. In relation to SDG 3 which is good health, the neuropsychological benefits of kayaking are well known in relation to our mental health and depression. An important aspect of building sustainable communities is good health and wellbeing.

### The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity loss

The Citizens' Assembly published its report last year (March 2023) and noted that our water quality is declining with 50% of freshwater systems in poor and deteriorating condition. In June 2023, the EPA's water quality monitoring of Irish waters supported this assessment (EPA, 2023). The assembly recommends a "call to action". Recommendations include support for community groups to maintain standards and work on projects to improve water systems. As a community group, our members need to connect with the river, and understand the extent of the problem and become engaged citizens.

### The Sport for Nature Framework

...brings together sports federations, clubs and events to champion nature and contribute to its protection and restoration (Nature, 2022). "The Sport for Nature" key principles focus on sport being dependant on nature as without a healthy planet, there is no playground for sport.

We are asked to:

- Understand our interactions with nature.
- Take actions to reduce negative impacts.
- Avoid damage to Species and habitats, restore ecosystems.
- Create sustainable supply chains.
- Educate and inspire wider sporting communities to take action for nature.

The main objectives of our code have been to bring these policy threads into practice at the planning stage of all trips and events and in our own individual paddling behaviours.

As a community, by developing our code we are putting global and national policies and initiatives into practice. It appears likely that funding and grants will be based on evidence of the development of innovations to put policy into practice.

As kayakers we are immersed in the issues surrounding sustainability. Instinctively because we are on the water, we have a connection to nature. Our connection with nature is important, over and above nature contact, for promoting wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours (Liu, 2022). Nature connection means that when we are connected to a place we innately want to protect it. If we as water users, don't appreciate the resource or know it from a deep place, how can we affect change in others?

### Our Paddling Journey and Our Code.

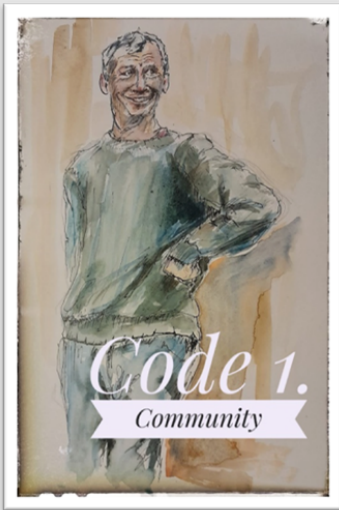
With the members of West Cork Kayak Club, we embarked on a project to understand what sustainability meant to us. We aimed to increase the connection to where we live with the hope of promoting wellbeing and start a discussion around sustainable paddling and conscious decision making.

We wanted to simplify the subject, incorporate it into daily practice by giving members something tangible that they could do. Something small, achievable, and easily noticeable. A bottom-up approach, community focused and community led. Over a period of three months, we devised a 10-point code based upon our club and community values. Our paddler Sustainability Code is as much about ownership looking inwards at our actions and our impact looking outward on our local environment.

The code is based on what we identified as our community values. Values are personal factors based on instincts, drives and traits and determine your priorities. Our values translated and dictated our actions. What are your values? As an individual what is your guiding value?

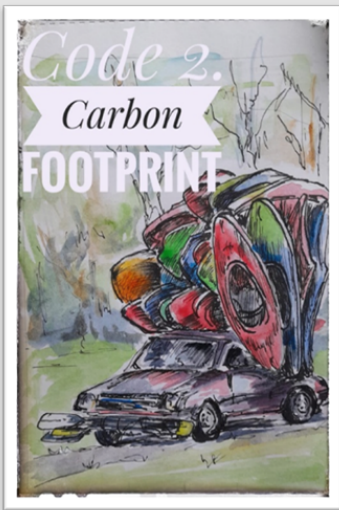


Our values and what guides our club are:



**Code 1: Community**

As a community we are stronger.  
 We act as one.  
 We can make change.  
 Volunteer, smile, say Hello.  
 Ask yourself,  
 'What can I do for my community?'



**Code 2: Carbon Footprint**

Think before you trip plan!  
 Is there a closer trip?  
 Can you carpool?  
 Can you do an out and back paddle?  
 Can you do your weekly shop en route?  
 Are you carrying surplus stuff in your car?



**Code 3: Be mindful of nature**

Kayaking allows us a ducks' view of the world. When we kayak, we journey through many habitats that are inaccessible to others. We are encroaching on a habitat that isn't our own.

Be sure to behave in a way that is respectful of our place in another animals environment e.g. follow IWDG guidelines for interactions with whales and dolphins

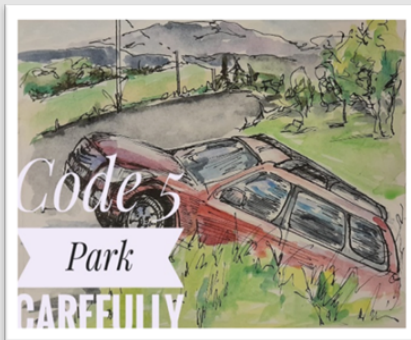


Our values and what guides our club are:



**Code 4: Protect Property**

Your smile, your footprint, your care, your consideration, your parking, your trace – will all determine whether you and other users get to continue to gain access to waterways. Lead by example.



**Code 5: Park carefully**

Our trip begins in the car park! Ask the following questions: Are you blocking a property? Are you blocking emergency vehicle access? Can you park in a better spot further away and walk?



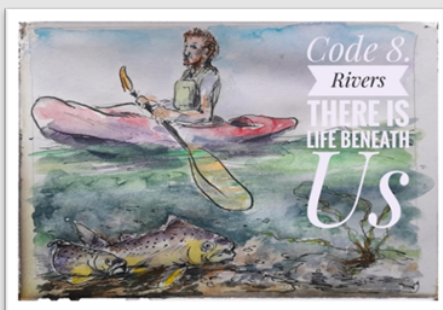
**Code 6: Biosecurity**

Lets protect our native species It's everybody's problem! It's not just for river or lake paddlers. Inform yourself, know the potential biosecurity risks of the area you are paddling. Clean and dry you gear. Empty all the water out of your boat before you leave the river, slip or beach. It's a habit we need to adopt.



**Code 7: Look before you launch**

Use the moments before you. Launch or when just on the water to appreciate where you are! Look around you at the trees, stones, sky, water, and wildlife, Listen to the noises around you. Allow yourself to connect to where you are. How lucky are we that we get to kayak? Pause and appreciate where you are.



**Code 8: There is life beneath us!**

Why don't you make "floaty boaty" your entry method of choice? When you drag your boat you leave microplastics behind. Time your rockhopping better. Be aware of gravel beds. What chemicals do you use to clean? Reduce waste as waste we produce ends up in oceans.



**Code 9: Recycle**

Do you need to upgrade your gear? Can you sell on your old gear? Be conscious of your purchasing Look at labels in products you wash your gear in. Pass on equipment you have not used in a long time



**Code 10: Leave only ripples**

Leave an environment as you find it or better.  
 Pick up rubbish- 3 for the Sea  
 Report water issues you may see that concern you.  
 Fill in surveys on Jellyfish, whale and dolphin sightings and invasive species.  
 Let your joy and love for our water and the environment ripple from you and inspire others to act. Be nature’s voice.



**What can you do?**

By developing your own connectedness to nature as part of your paddling you will become more aware of the environment around you. The most important thing you can do is really connect with nature when you are out. The time you spend isn’t what’s important, it’s the connection you make in that time.

**Stop and immerse yourself!**

Look at developing your own values about where and how you paddle. Perhaps develop your own paddling sustainability code. This will allow you and your community to decide as a collective how to respond to local issues. Firstly, Identify the issues that you think are at stake locally, i.e., biosecurity, no carpooling, unconscious purchasing then secondly identify how behaviors can be modified for the benefit of the whole ecosystem and our future generations of paddlers. We copy what we see people do!



**What can you do?**

1. Find a “Sit Spot”. This involves sitting in the same spot every day for 5 minutes. Over time you will be surprised at daily changes. This helps you get to know local wildlife, shows you what is on your doorstep and helps relax and calm the mind.
2. Look at the horizon and then at a tiny piece of nature- a leaf or a small flower, look to the horizon again. Notice nature at a micro and macro level.
3. **5,4,3,2,1.** This helps you connect to nature around you. It draws all your senses to the abundance of activity around us that we may not notice during our busy days!
  - Look for five things. Have a focus: white, blue or pink.
  - Feel four things. Observe the difference in textures.
  - Listen for three sounds. Are the noises close or far away? High pitch or deep and low.
  - Smell two scents. Take a deep breath through your nose.
  - Taste one thing. Stick out your tongue. Taste the wind, is there salt or river taste on your lips?
4. Embrace the new dawn...have adventures...connect with nature...celebrate sunsets ...a new horizon awaits.

### Suggested reading and podcasts

Books: suggested reading

- Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- An Irish Rainforest by Eoghan Daltun
- The Turning Tide by Jon Gower
- Thirty Two Words for Fields by Manchan Magan
- Radical Transformational Leadership by Monica Sharma

Podcasts: suggested listening on your journeys

- The Plodcast: Voices of the countryside
- The Irish Life and Lore podcast.
- Irish Farmers Journal Podcast: Agriculture news and rural affairs
- The Adventure podcast: Exploration, Travel and gear
- The possibility Project: Sarah Knight for more thought-provoking content.
- Paddling the Blue podcast.



### Conclusion

Think of the analogy of a river forming from drops coming together to “join one another, strength in unity”, mirroring the formation of us as ISKA paddlers. Our use of waterways, for our pastime and pleasure means that our local river or sea can be taken for granted, “we do not have an absolute right to use and abuse the water... the water belongs to itself”(Maracle, 2017).

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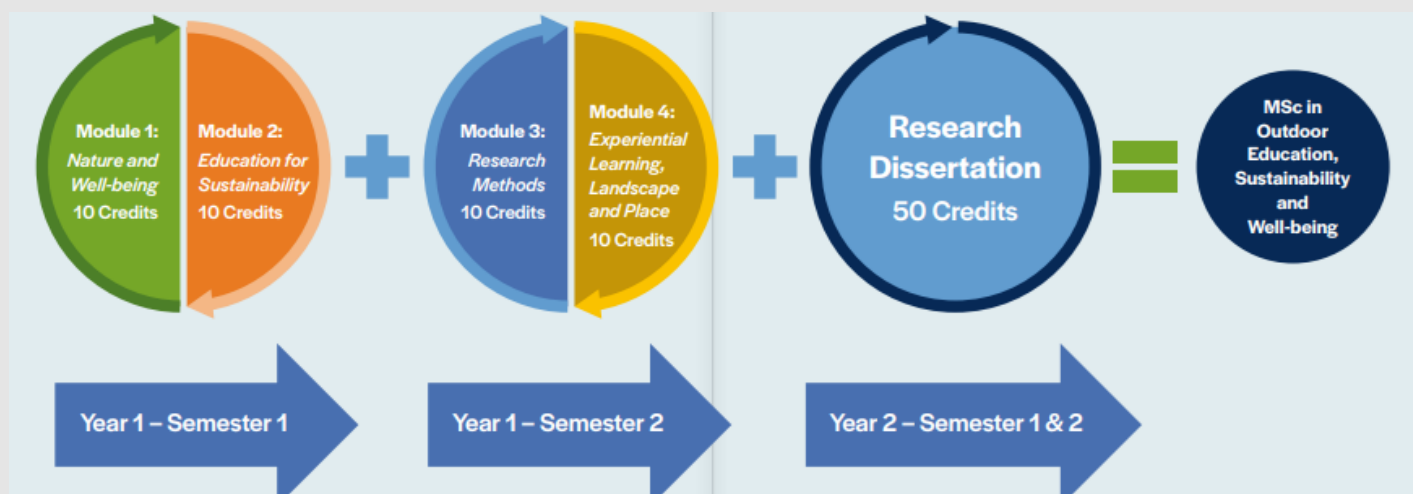
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# Croagh Patrick Community Ambassador Programme



**Gavin Beetlestone**  
Education Officer, Leave No Trace

## About the author

*Gavin has been delivering educational experiences for Leave No Trace as part of his career in Outdoor Education for more than ten years. He has delivered training across 3 continents at varying levels for schools, corporates and trainers. He holds an Undergrad and Masters Degree in Outdoor Education and has focused much of his career on curriculum development with an aim to bring to life the most innovative methodologies to deliver meaningful and impactful learning experiences, and is excited about the opportunities to continue that work with Leave No Trace Ireland.*

## Introduction

Nature has always been a source of inspiration, solace, and wonder for people. However, with increasing visitor number and environmental challenges happening in the Irish uplands, there is a growing need for individuals who are committed to the conservation and preservation of our natural landscapes in Ireland. Voluntary outdoor ambassador community programmes have emerged as a powerful way to engage people in the protection of our environment. One such programme, "The Croagh Patrick Community Ambassador Programme" is making a significant impact by fostering a sense of stewardship and creating a community of passionate environmentalists in Mayo.

The Croagh Patrick community ambassador programme is designed to empower behavioural change and develop low impact outdoor recreation skills, connect local people with their local nature while promoting environmental awareness and conservation in the community. This new programme brought together individuals of all ages and backgrounds who share a love for the outdoors and a commitment to preserving the natural heritage of Croagh Patrick for future generations.

Funded by The Heritage Council's Stewardship Fund, the ambassador programme is the first of its kind on Croagh Patrick and is a collaborative effort of the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group, Leave No Trace Ireland, Mayo County Council and the Murrisk Development Association.

Following the recruitment and training of 12 local volunteer ambassadors in the summer of 2022, the Croagh Patrick Ambassador Programme was officially launched in November 2022. Over 120,000 people climb Croagh Patrick annually, and the ambassadors were on the mountain for over 150 days since the programme started to engage with visitors about care and protection for Croagh Patrick. They also shared the incredible work of the path restoration project on the mountain developed by the Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project's path team, led by Matt McConway.

## The Ambassadors

The foundation of the programme lay in the hands of 12 dedicated ambassadors. A new educational training programme provided guidance on the most effective means for the volunteers to engage with visitors, on how to impart the Leave No Trace ethos on the mountain and an understanding of the Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project which is currently underway. Their presence, in large during the weekend and holidays, enabled the Ambassadors to inspire visitors to Croagh Patrick to appreciate the importance of preserving the mountain's distinct natural, cultural and religious heritage through sustainable use.



However, the success of the programme was largely the result of committed, hardworking ambassadors who found meaning and intrinsic value in being stewards for the culturally significant mountain. It was clear to see the commitment of those few starters, most notably in the fact many of them far exceeded their expected number of contact days, and by the seemingly pure joyous experience they had engaging with the visitors of the space.

Here are what some of the ambassadors have said themselves of their time as ambassadors of Croagh Patrick...

*“The ambassador role has given me such happiness to be able to talk to people about the love I have for the mountain and most people are generally interested in my stories” – David Walsh, Ambassador*

*“The work we have to do blends in so well with the mountain, the people that climb it and the work that has been done on the path. In all my time climbing the mountain over 35 years, I now notice that no matter who is climbing, there is a sense of peace and calmness to them. Some are struggling with the climbing but still they are happy to be there, rain or shine... My personal favourite part so far has been interacting with families with their permission, using mini magnifying glasses which I give to the kids to find as much life -plant/animal and involving the parents by getting them to take photos... This is more to create awareness with the parents than the kids. The kids are so excited about discovering things that the parents are more inclined to listen to what we, the Ambassadors, have to say.” - Louise Rodgers, Ambassador*



**Programme success**



As noted, the programme success was measured by the commitment and performance of the community ambassadors. Their commitment and enthusiasm for the role and engagement with the public is a testament to the power of the mountain and connection between the people who experience it. However, the success did manage to extend beyond the subjective, unconscious bias of those responsible for its success.

In February 2023, the Croagh Patrick Ambassador Programme was winner of the Eco-Group of the Year category at the annual Outsider Awards 2022, organised by Outsider Magazine and its sponsors. This award recognises the environmental efforts taken by a community group to improve its region and to promote environmental practices and messaging. *Ged Dowling (Pictured below)*, one of volunteer ambassadors, was delighted to accept the award on behalf of the ambassador team and had the following words regarding the programme...

*“Thank you to the Outsider and Clean Coasts for this fantastic award. Being part of the programme has been so rewarding in itself, and we have engaged with some incredible people on the mountain. Each person has their own motivations to climb the Reek and want to do their best to protect it while they’re making their way to the summit. Visitors have been really receptive to the messages we’re sharing with them; to use and enjoy the new path, to be considerate of the mountain’s landowners, and to Love This Place and Leave No Trace on Croagh Patrick”.*

Leave No Trace Ireland’s CEO, *Maura Kiely* said the award was a testament to the contribution of the ambassador team. She noted...

*“This well-deserved award recognises the steadfast efforts of the Croagh Patrick Community Ambassadors. In a short space of time, the ambassadors have made a really positive impact, both on Croagh Patrick and in the local community in Murrisk with the local groups. They have been instrumental in raising awareness of protecting the mountain’s ecosystem to both new and local visitors, all by positively engaging with mountain users and sharing the simple actions that they can take to protect the mountain. Congratulations to the whole Ambassador Programme team on this amazing accomplishment”.*

**Where to next?**

The current programme is currently being reviewed and updated to reflect some of the key learnings from the community and the ambassadors. The programme will continue to grow and expand and support the Path Restoration Project and the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders forum. The joint effort from varied stakeholders from this project really made this a collaborative success and something that felt like a true community initiative.

With such a successful pilot, there is a huge opportunity to look at this model as a foundation for other special areas of Ireland to engage community groups in the preservation and protection of their local areas of special heritage and significance within the Irish landscape.



Where and how to do this are still questions to be answered, but of the programme success Martin Keating from the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group had this to say...

*"The Volunteer Croagh Patrick Ambassadors have been invaluable in their contribution so far, to ensure sustainable access to Croagh Patrick. They directly contribute to providing a high-quality experience for all visitors, sharing their local knowledge, and helping to ensure that the achievements of the Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project will be sustained into the future. I congratulate the ambassadors on this achievement and look forward to their continued work in the year ahead".*

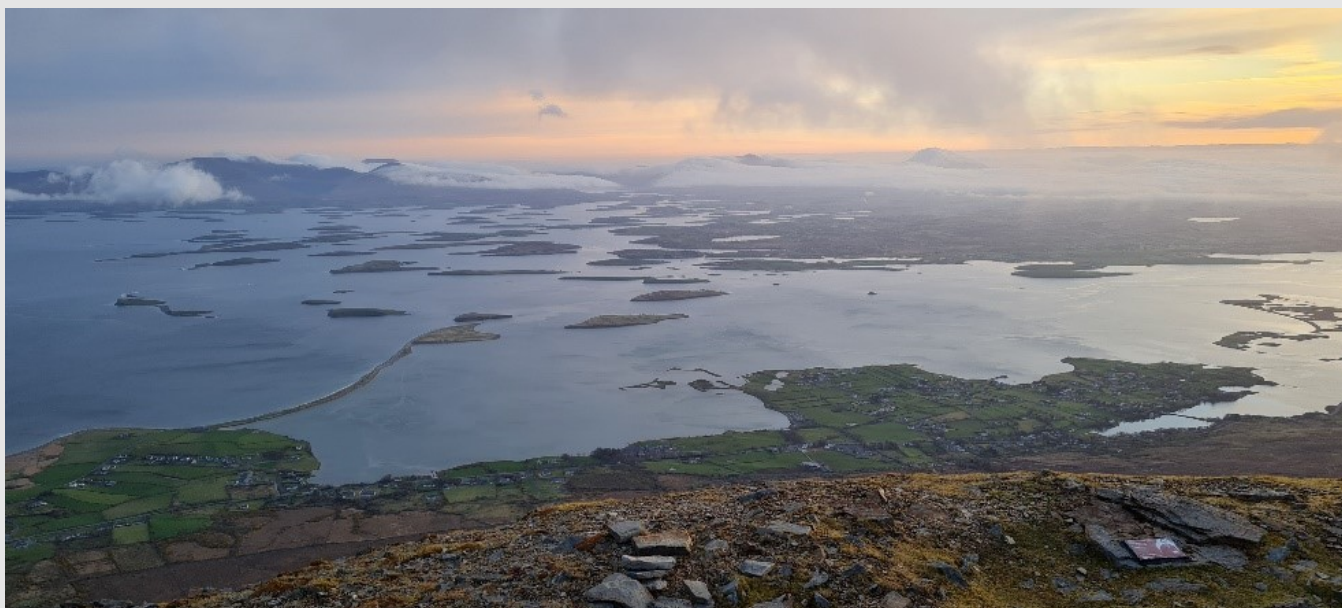
It is certainly a view to the future at this stage, but as with many whom climb "The Reek", time is needed to stop and appreciate the magic and beauty of the present moment. That comes here in the form of special notes of praise and value to all our ambassadors and partners who helped manifest this project and all its success.

**Firstly, A huge appreciation and thanks must go out to all the hardworking ambassadors...**

Audrey Elliott; Aleksandra Motyl; Annin Muldowney; Dr Benjamin Thébaudeau; Cathleen Fergus; Dave Walsh; Ged Dowlin; Kieran Reilly; Louise Killeen; Maeve Dolan; Stephen Kiely; Seoirse Swanton.

**Finally, a note of thanks to all the groups and agencies that contributed along the way...**

Murrisk Development Association; Croagh Patrick Archaeological Society; Trail path restoration group; Local Councillors; Failte Ireland; Clew Bay Tourism Network under Failte Ireland; National Parks & Wildlife Service; Department of Rural and Community Development; Mayo County Council; Climate Regional Action Office (CARO); Leave No Trace Ireland; Mountaineering Ireland; Irish Uplands Forum; Dark Sky Ireland; Mayo Mountain Rescue; Mourne Heritage.



## Lasmuigh Podcast



The Lasmuigh Podcast has been created to sit alongside the journal in highlighting and sharing research and good practice across the Island of Ireland. Three Podcasts have been created.

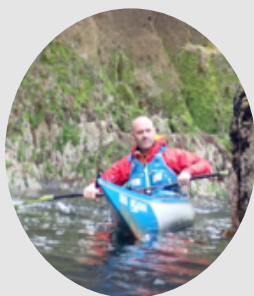
1. Interview with Dr Suzanne Kennedy regarding her research on sea kayaking expeditions and connection to the other than human world.
2. Group discussion with members of the new Outdoor Therapeutic Activity Providers Network.
3. From Entrancement to Enchantment. Discussion with Dr Mark Garavan starting as a discussion of education for sustainability and ending up with something much wider.

# The Importance of Being Warm – Injury Prevention and Improved Performance in Surfing

Paulina Gruszka and John Pierce

## About the authors

Paulina Gruszka is a qualified personal trainer with a B.A. in Health, Sport, and Exercise from the Department of Health and Leisure Studies at Munster Technological University. She works as a personal trainer in Kinetic Health and Fitness in Tralee and is an enthusiastic trainer with a strong sense of purpose who helps individuals achieve their fitness goals.



Dr. John Pierce has been a lecturer in the Department of Health & Leisure Studies at Munster Technological University for over ten years. He lectures in outdoor learning across three different degree programmes. He has also spent a lot of his career training adventure sports practitioners and instructors.



## Introduction

This article draws its inspiration from my (Paulina’s) thesis project, as part of my B.A. in Health, Sport, and Exercise in the Department of Health & Leisure Studies at Munster Technological University. The study aimed to develop an effective warm-up for intermediate surfers. I examined surfing’s background, history, and physiology, as well as the common injuries sustained by surfers. The study addressed the benefits of warming up before exercise and the RAMP warm-up protocol (explained later). Finally, I developed a warm-up, with the assistance of an expert panel, that complies with the RAMP protocol and is effective and efficient. This warm-up is shared below.

First, we outline the background of this study in terms of why it is useful and the aim of the study. Next, surf injury types are summarised before a description of the methods used to develop the warm-up are provided. Finally, the warm-up itself is presented.

It is worth noting here that this warm-up has been designed for intermediate surfers, though should be very suitable for surfers of any experience level. A good warm-up routine will greatly reduce the risk of injury, but as with any adventure activity, injury is always possible and participation is entirely at your own risk.

## Rationale and Aim

The project’s aim was to create an effective warm-up for intermediate surfers. The purpose of this article is to share the findings of this research study with the wider surfing community. While this study was focused on surfing, other adventure sports may also find this warm-up useful and can, of course, adapt it to suit their sport’s specific requirements. It is worth checking with a qualified personal trainer with some understanding of that specific sport before adapting any warm-up.

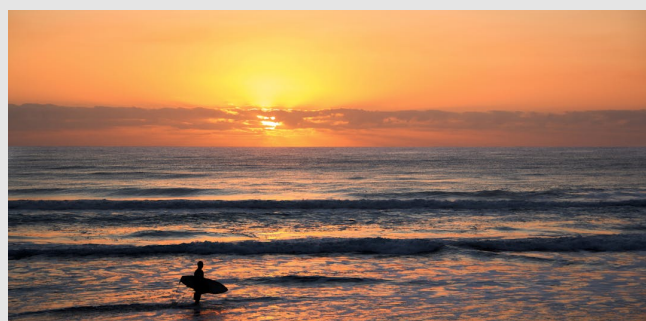
You might be wondering why it was useful to conduct a study to develop a practical surfing warm-up routine? Part of the initial phase of this study involved searching for existing warm-up routines for

surfing. Very little of note was found as the majority of current surf-related research appears to concentrate on how surfers’ psychological makeup and athletic abilities affect their performance rather than the significance of warm-up techniques for surfers.

Surfing is a highly aerobic activity, using all major muscle groups of the body (Farley et al., 2017). Your heart rate and blood flow increase as you warm up, allowing more oxygen to reach your muscles, which improves performance and reduces risks of injury (Mayo Clinic, 2021). Your nerves and muscle connections are stimulated and readied during a warm-up, which improves the efficiency of your movements (NHS Health Scotland, 2020). We present the warm-up routine in this article as one means of improving performance and reducing injury risk for surfers.

## Surf Injuries

Studying surf injury locations, types, and mechanisms can help to reduce injury occurrence and allow for a longer-term involvement in surfing. Table 1, below, provides a breakdown of injury levels from two relevant studies. The types and locations of common surfing injuries are clear from table 1. Some other points of note from Nathanson et al.’s (2002) study show that 82% of board related injuries come from the rider’s own board (fin at 35% and rail at 18% being the highest) and 18% from other rider’s boards (nose at 7% and fin at 6% being the highest). That study also highlighted that 62% of chronic injuries are strains and inflammations, 20% are infections, and 18% are due to environmental exposure (such as surfer’s ear).



	McArthur et al., 2020 (212 reports)	Nathanson et al., 2002 (1,421 respondents)
1	Head, face, and neck (33.8%)	Head/neck (37%)
2	Leg (33%)	Leg (37%)
3	Arm (16.7%)	Torso (13%)
4	Torso (10.3%)	Arm (13%)
5	Spine/back (4.5%)	

Table 1: Breakdown of Surf Injuries

It is also worth noting that older and more experienced surfers are more likely to suffer serious injury. More competent surfers are more likely to surf bigger, more challenging waves and attempt more complex manoeuvres that beginners would avoid (Nathanson et al., 2002). Implementing a properly designed, safe, and efficient warm-up, may be crucial in reducing the prevalence of injury for more extreme surfers, as well as beginner or intermediate surfers.

### Methods - How did we do it?

This section explains how the warm-up was developed and the frameworks that were used to aid in its development.

#### RAMP Protocol

There is not always enough time for instructors, coaches, and individuals to warm up effectively (Jeffreys, 2017). It can be challenging to create a warm-up that can be completed quickly while still being valuable to the participants who just want to get in the water (Jeffreys, 2017). Given that surfing requires many different body parts to function efficiently and efficiently in the water, a comprehensive warm-up may be challenging to design. This may be why coaches or instructors avoid the warm-up altogether and instead use a quick game like tag rugby or a jog beforehand and categorise that as a warm-up (author observation of surf sessions). The warm-up presented here is based on the RAMP protocol. This is a framework that maximises short-term effectiveness and offers a method by which each activity improves the next in a way that saves time and energy (Jeffreys, 2017).

The first stage (Raise) primarily affects the body's temperature. This stage also influences heart rate, blood circulation and airflow. Temperature of the individuals body increases significantly at the start of exercise, generally within 3-5 minutes of starting the warm-up (Racinais et al., 2017).

The second stage (Activate and Mobilize) is split into two phases. In addition to the working muscle activation, the individual is also performing the key areas of movement patterns performed by the muscles during the specific sport (Racinais et al., 2017). Working on movements for the specific activity is referred to as the mobilisation phase. This is done by engaging a muscle through its entire range of motion, results in the impact of stimulating all the key muscle groups that will be used during the activity (Jeffreys, 2007).

The last stage is the potentiation phase, which is principally a progressive series of tasks that improve performance in the upcoming activity (Jeffreys, 2017). The potentiation phase of the warm-up is designed to raise the level of exercise intensity to the point where individuals can undertake their session activities at their peak performance level (Jeffreys, 2007).

#### Delphi Method

The Delphi method is a qualitative research technique that enables experts to debate and form judgements on challenging subjects. This basically means that I (Paulina), as a qualified personal trainer, designed an initial draft of a warm-up and shared it with a panel of experts (more on them in the following section). This panel then commented on the draft and provided ideas for improvement. Once redesigned, the new draft was shared with the panel for further comment. This was done 3 times before a final draft of the warm-up programme was agreed by all (see Jünger et al., 2017 for more details on the Delphi method).

#### Expert Panel

Table 2, below, outlines the experience of the expert panel. With such a diverse group of experts, the study was more open to disagreements and had more viewpoints on the best way to conduct the warm-up, which added value to the final warm-up. The study was not biased towards a single surf coach or just a personal trainer because everyone had to discuss why or how to optimise a surfing warm-up that will be helpful for most people before their sessions. The expert panel were asked to give a brief explanation for their reason why they changed, added, or removed an exercise. Delphi groups that provide additional comments on these reasons are significantly more precise than those that simply state the solutions or opinions (Hallowell, 2009). The panel were anonymous to each other and communicated through the researcher - only the research team knew the identity of all panellists (Hallowell and Gambatese, 2010).

Expert 1	Experienced surf coach
Expert 2	Physiology lecturer and keen surfer
Expert 3	Personal trainer, gym owner, and keen surfer

Table 2: Expert Panellists

### The Warm Up

We have included three ways of viewing this warm-up.

1. An infographic, below, that breaks down the various stages and exercises in this warm-up routine.
2. An interactive infographic, available [here](#), that can be downloaded for use. You can click on each exercise to watch a video on how to do that specific exercise. We recommend you download it as a pdf and this can be stored on your phone.
3. You can click [here](#) to see a playlist explaining all of the exercises. We have included three ways of viewing this warm-up.

### Summary

The aim of this study was to develop an effective and efficient warm-up for surfing that could aid surfers in avoiding injury and increasing their performance levels. We hope that this will be a used and useful tool for people to further enjoy surfing.

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# Poetry by a *Sailing into Wellness* participant



Sailing Into Wellness is a national charity that believes in using the power of the sea to connect with people in an educational or therapeutic setting. They have been working with pre-established organisations for the last seven years, offering various programmes ranging from day trips on keel boats to voyages on larger vessels.

In 2023, the organization received funding from the Department of Justice’s Community Safety Innovation Fund. This funding is supporting forty participants in a two-year-long programme called New Horizon. The New Horizon programme aims to bring participants on a two-year long journey, supporting them on this educational and social sailing experience.

This programme started by introducing sailing in participant’s local areas, building rapport and trust, and then moved on to sailing larger boats further from home to challenge them all to grow with each other and work as a team.

In the second year of the programme, participants move on to further sail training, receiving qualifications on small and large boats. The outcomes to date of Sailing in Wellness programs include personal development, social/community development, education, and physical activity. For Full outcomes see an article by Tessa Kingston in Issue 4 of Lasmuigh.

The **New Horizon Programme** began in Howth in Dublin, with participants from many different organisations. Jason, a participant of the programme wrote “Giving people the ability to change the course of their life” after the second day on the water with Sailing into Wellness. Jason has asked to only use his first name and all participants mentioned in the poem have approved this poem being published.

“Giving people the ability to change the course of their life”

In Howth Marina, the waves they tame,  
 Jason, Luke, Tadgh, and Stephen, they came.  
 Paddy, Sean, Karl, and Ciaran, bold and free,  
 With instructors Paul and Leonie, setting sail on the sea.

Power boats and sails unfurled,  
 Their journey begins, their spirits twirled.  
 On the course of wellness, they embark,  
 Each wave a challenge, each wind a spark.

Through the spray and salt-kissed air,  
 They find solace, they find care.  
 In the rhythm of the tides, they find peace,  
 As the sails catch the wind's sweet release.

Together they glide, a symphony in motion,  
 Finding harmony amidst the ocean.  
 Jason, Luke, Tadgh, Stephen, Paddy, Sean, Karl, and Ciaran,  
 Sailing into wellness, their spirits awoken.

By: Jason, a participant in the New Horizon Programme



# Summit2Sea for MND.

## *A remarkable day, a remarkable man and a remarkable Legacy*



The 20th of April was a remarkable day in the outdoors in Ireland. On that day the whole of Ireland was circumnavigated and on the same day the highest mountain in each county was summited. This was all achieved with the support of 129 volunteers. Everyone was working together to raise awareness and money for research into Motor Neuron Disease (MND).

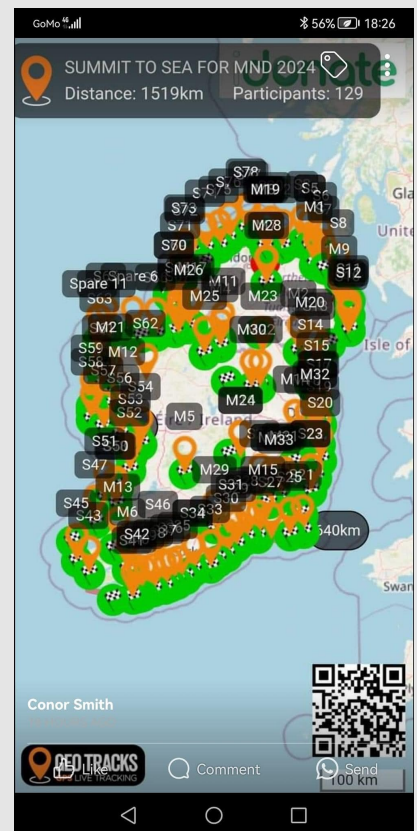
This day of sea kayaking, and of hillwalking was part of Summit 2 Sea for MND. Summit 2 Sea for MND was founded by Adrian Harkin and supported by a small team of his family and friends. The participants in this amazing day were inspired by Adrian's personal journal with MND and his determination to raise awareness and funds for research into the disease. The whole event was very well coordinated and they even managed to coordinate the weather ...resulting in the calmest and warmest day of the year to that point.

It is well worth looking at the website and social media to see some wonderful stories and photos from the day. This is the [link](#) for the charity's Facebook and here is the [link](#) for their website where you can read more about an extraordinary man and a quite extraordinary day.

Finally, in case you missed the day it is still possible to support this inspiring initiative as the fundraising is ongoing and hasn't stopped. At present there is just over €100,000 raised and it would be great to see this amount continuing to grow. It is a great cause and well worth donating to.



[www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/Summit2SeaforMND](http://www.idonate.ie/fundraiser/Summit2SeaforMND)



# Exciting times for Outdoor & Environmental Education in Ireland

1st of May is a day often associated with new beginnings and this year it marked a significant new beginning for outdoor education in Ireland with the launch of the new full-time, Level 8 BA (Hons) in Outdoor and Environmental Education (Common Entry). The Mayo Campus of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) has a long-history of almost 30 years of delivering outdoor education degree programmes to Irish and International students. This new programme builds on this experience and expertise with the outdoor education lecturing team to create an exciting new offering which has a common entry and then three named awards with which students can graduate, BA in Outdoor Education, BA in Geography and Outdoor Education and a BA in Outdoor Education with Therapeutic Applications. These award offerings reflect developments in the evolving outdoor sector and creates clear career pathways for students. The changes were brought about following a period of consultation with the sector in Ireland and are also reflective of our long-term relationships with international outdoor programmes in Western Carolina University (WCU) in America, Gavle University in Sweden and the University of South-Eastern Norway with whom we have ongoing exchanges.

Dr Deirdre Garvey, Head of the Department Environmental Humanities & Social Sciences at Atlantic Technological University (ATU) who opened proceedings at the launch of the new programme noted that *"the programme philosophy of stewardship and care for the natural world and the focus on experiential learning, place-based learning and the therapeutic benefits of the outdoors which have been distinctive to the programme, are now of increasing wider significance"*. Dr Garvey observed how the regional remit was so important to ATU and how the West-Northwest region with its *"rich natural, and social cultural heritage environment in which ATU Mayo Campus is located with its extensive natural landscape of mountains, lakes, rivers and dramatic coastline makes it particularly well suited to adventure and outdoor education and very attractive to international students"*.

The launch of the new programme was brought alive by four inspirational contributions from previous graduates of the programme who spoke with humour and conviction about the impact the programme had on them personally and professionally. Michael Kane, graduate, and Director of Outdoor Education with Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) noted that *"I can honestly say that the course and staff are exceptional, the best in their field in adventure sport, experiential education, and research. Their combined knowledge is unparalleled and presents the learner with an amazing resource and support framework"*.

Georgia MacMillan entered the course as a mature student and is the Mayo Dark Sky Development Officer with NPWS and a PhD student with the University of Galway. She gave an illustrated talk about her adventures abroad with the programme and how she gained transferrable skills that enabled her to follow her vision. She noted the environmental stewardship philosophy of the programme and noted the importance of experiencing nature first hand concluding with a quotation from Sir David Attenborough *"No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced."*

Gavin Beetlestone, also a mature student on the programme spoke amusingly about his journey from dog handler prior to the Outdoor Education course, to Department Head of a second level school in the Czech Republic. He spoke of the importance of his year-long exchange to Western Carolina and the links the course had with Outward Bound Hong Kong that enabled him work there for several years at senior management level. Now as Education Office for Leave no Trace Ireland he recalls his interest in journeys and how it became the focus of his dissertation research. Now, more than ever he values the academic and personal journey over the four years of the course at ATU Mayo Campus.

Nick Lenane, Programme Manager and Co-Founded of the Venture Out Wilderness Project, spoke about how the outdoor education programme at ATU Mayo Campus developed his academic confidence to complete two further Masters programmes and gave him a foundation of skills and understanding that enabled him work in Ireland and abroad. He noted of the that *"The practical application of theory to practice and experiential learning is what sparked in me my true passion for developing and supporting others to reach their true potential"*.

All of the speakers noted the importance and value of developing practical, interpersonal and transferable skills during their studies which have been key in facilitating their development both personally and professionally in their careers. It was noted that the launch of the new common entry award was both timely and appropriate to how the sector has been evolving. Other stakeholders at the launch included Foróige, Coillte, NPWS, Westport Estate and other ETB representatives.





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# BA (Hons) in Outdoor and Environmental Education (Common Entry)

CAO Code AU699

Learning through adventure, learning outdoors, caring for nature, caring for others

