

June 2007

Rural skills update

Welcome to the first update on rural skills in the Highlands and surrounding area.

I've been in post now for three months and it is greatly encouraging to see the enthusiasm for the Rural Skills Courses across the whole area.

Remember to get in touch if there is anything that I can do to help get the Land-based Curriculum going in your school.

Maxine Garson
School Liaison Officer - Rural Skills

Determined to Succeed
Dingwall Education Centre
Castle Street
Dingwall

Phone: 01456 450 078
Mobile: 079719 691 422
maxine.garson@highland.gov.uk

School liaison officer appointed

A Schools Liaison Officer has been appointed to support schools in Highland and the Cairngorm National Park area with the delivery of land-based vocational courses.

Maxine Garson, the new Liaison Officer, will help set up partnerships between schools, colleges and local employers in the Highlands.

Maxine's appointment is as a result of additional funding from Scottish Executive for the delivery of Rural Skills qualifications, secured by the Highland Council.

The Council has been working with Lantra and the Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA) to develop vocational opportunities for school pupils in the Park area.

Two schools in Highland have piloted the Scottish Progression Award in Rural Skills at Intermediate 2. With the introduction of the pilot phase of Skills for Work, two further schools are now piloting the Skills for Work



qualification in Rural Skills at Intermediate 1.

The Head Teachers' and Senior Management Conference in Highland on 30 November/1 December was on the themes of 'Building the Curriculum' and 'Skills for Work'. A number of additional schools are now planning to deliver Rural Skills, Skills for Work, in 2007-2008 or the following year.

If you would like to share your skills with local schools, call Maxine on 07919 691 422 or 01456 450 078, or email maxine.garson@highland.gov.uk.

National Trust Scotland success with Lochaber

by Abi Wylde,
Education and Events Ranger,
National Trust Scotland Glencoe

When the opportunity came to develop the Rural Skills for Work Programme with Lochaber High School, we at the National Trust for Scotland jumped at the chance!

We are always looking for ways to engage with secondary schools, particularly in Glencoe, so this was an excellent opportunity.

It's also great to work with young people who live in the area.

I was very nervous about being able to give the young people what they need, but it's been great! We've built fences, worked in the tree nursery and taken aspen root cuttings from



trees high up in the hills of Glencoe.

The students have worked with me, the other Rangers and the estate handyman, and so are getting a good idea of what people working for the National Trust Scotland do.

It also gives us the chance to tell people about what we do, enthuse them in their local area and give them a sense of ownership. All this plus the pupils gain a qualification at the same time – everyone wins!



Young people reap the benefits of businesses and schools working together

Glenurquhart High School in Drumnadrochit is preparing its pupils for work in land-based industries through the innovative vocational rural skills course.

The course, which follows the national Skills for Work model, is for pupils who are interested in working in the sector. It was set up by Maxine Garson, Technical Teacher at the school and Schools Liaison Officer for rural skills. It teaches them essential practical skills which will give them a head start in their careers.

The course was set up to address a growing skills shortage in the sector. "A multi-skilled workforce is essential for the long term, sustainable future of our land-based industries," says Maxine.

“ No one else can teach what these businesses and partners can offer. ”

"In our area, there are significant career opportunities in the rural sector and some of our pupils are keen to get out of school and start a career in game-keeping, forestry or farming. We should be able to offer our pupils the practical training and qualifications they need for their future."

Pupils on the course are given specific practical training and gain a working knowledge of local issues. They are then able to make informed career decisions.

The course comprises two compulsory units – Estate Maintenance and Countryside Land Use – with an additional choice of four specialised subjects covering sectors such as forestry, agriculture, horticulture, game-keeping and animal care. There is also some theory work looking at issues such as conservation, changing land-use, the outdoor access code and business management.

The school is working with local businesses to teach practical job skills to the pupils. "They undertake the specialised training and our students benefit from their expert advice and skills," says Maxine. "No one else can



teach what these businesses and partners can offer."

Students learn the skills of dry-stone dyking with Nelson Stonework, and estate management and forestry with Abriachan Forest Trust. Other partnerships are being explored; Maxine recently enrolled pupils on a lambing course delivered by SAC.

By sharing their skills and experience, they are investing in their own future by training future employees and ensuring skilled crafts are not lost.

The course is proving to be a roaring success. "A lot of our pupils have said that anything they get out of

school comes from their rural skills class," Maxine continues. "They've developed self-belief, confidence, and now have ambition to achieve goals in their work and life.

"There's been an improvement in grades in other classes, attendances and commitment to the school. They're increasingly determined to attain other educational qualifications."

More than half the schools in Highland will be delivering a Skills for Work course in session 2007-08. Many of those have elected to offer Rural Skills working with local partners.

A partnership working well...

Abriachan Forest Trust, a community initiative set up in 1998, manages 534ha of poor quality plantation, mixed native woodland and open hillside only 10 miles from Inverness.

Working with Glenurquhart High School, the project has achieved its aims of enhancing the biodiversity and landscape value of the area, ensuring continued safe public access and extending the reforestation with mixed native woodland.

Pupils have developed a variety of practical skills and achieved their learning goals out in the forest. It has also helped to stimulate community involvement and sustainable local job creation.

Abriachan Forest Trust hopes to develop partnerships in the area by offering sessions targeted at specific vocational units or learning outcomes.

This can easily be tailored to ASDAN award evidence, John Muir award, DoE, the Prince's Trust xl programme, Eco School and education for sustainability evidence, and any enterprising conservation projects in school grounds.

For further information, contact Suzann Barr: (01463) 861259

jbarrabr@aol.com

www.abriachan.org.uk

Rural Skills Partnership at Nairn Academy

The Nairn Academy Rural Skills Partnership Pilot Scheme is a collaboration between Nairn Academy teachers Jean Godden (Rector) and David Hay (Principal Teacher Guidance) with four local employers – The Windsor Hotel, Nairn Dunbar Golf Club, Green’s Nurseries and Skenepark Small Pets.

The Windsor Hotel

Rosemary Machen-Young, Proprietor of the hotel, delivered an Employability Skills programme to all the pupils involved in the scheme.

She covered topics such as job search and application, interview techniques, health and safety, communication at work and review and appraisal. This helped to prepare the pupils for the businesses and workplaces where they would attend their Rural Skills course.

The other businesses are aware of Machen-Young’s work, and develop these skills at their workplaces. Machen-Young also runs a work placement programme at her hotels.

“When I first started my work experience I was pretty shy and I didn’t like speaking to people I didn’t know. Now I am more comfortable speaking to people.”

Student

Skenepark Small Pets

Skenepark Small Pets specialises in the breeding, care of and sale of small companion mammals and birds.

Company Director, Jackie Philip, was involved in planning and discussion with school staff. She delivers the Rural Skills Animal Husbandry and Animal Handling units, showing pupils the theory behind the practice. Pupils can use SFEU support materials in their schools.

Green’s Nurseries

Green’s Nurseries is a horticultural growing business specialising in herbaceous perennial plants and annual bedding plants. The company also operates a garden centre on site.

Company Director, Donald Green, established the partnership and is responsible for delivering the Rural Skills Crop Production and Soft Landscaping units to pupils when they are at the nursery.

Green teaches the background theory to the work at the nursery, while the pupils themselves can access Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) support materials at their school.

Nairn Dunbar Golf Club

Secretary, Scott Falconer and Assistant Head Greenkeeper, Michael McInnes at the club have been instrumental in establishing the school business partnership.

Falconer paved the way for of the partnership by being involved in the planning and discussion phase. McInnes is responsible for working with the pupils when they are at the club.

The role of the club is to deliver the Rural Skills Estate Maintenance unit. This is achieved by McInnes working with pupils at a practical level on the golf course and delivering some of the background theory within a workplace context. Pupils have access to appropriate support materials to help consolidate and extend their background knowledge.

“My child feels school is more enjoyable than before.”

Parent

Nairn Academy

The school-based lead teacher, David Hay, meets the partners each week to plan forthcoming work and agree when and how that work will be assessed.

Whilst in school, the pupils work on land-based industry research projects using the school library, SFEU support materials and the internet. This is also complemented by visiting speakers and from visits to various land-based industries. The pupils also have access to Careers Scotland staff and various software packages for future career planning.

Rural Skills at Golspie

By Marcus Butler
Rural Skills Co-ordinator

This year at Golspie High School, we will be running a Skills for Work course in Rural Skills – a very exciting venture which both staff and pupils are enthusiastic about.

It’s the first time we have run the course and we have had a few issues to consider along the way. In some ways Rural Skills in our school isn’t actually very new. For many years the school offered land-based vocational opportunities through the ‘tech’. So we’ve come full circle: back to the realisation that a hands-on, practical education is the best possible start in life for many pupils.

As a school we’ve been testing the water with a number

of Skills for Work courses. These have been run largely using other centres as the main providers. But with Rural Skills we have decided to do it all ourselves! This has only been possible through the goodwill we have found from partners in the local community.

Our Rural Skills class will have the benefit of six different work placements, allowing pupils to sample a variety of land-based employment. We have created positive partnerships in the local community, mainly because the land-based sector is an important contributor to the local economy.

We have high hopes for the course. We believe it offers pupils an exciting, relevant and challenging opportunity – one which engages and motivates, and which prepares them well for later life.

Successful pilot at Kingussie

The pupils involved in the Rural Skills two year pilot project at Kingussie High School are just nearing the end of their course, and have all thoroughly enjoyed it.

They have worked with the Forestry Commission to do their estate maintenance, tree id, tree planting and beating up units, and have worked with a local self-employed dyker, Ian MacMillan, to complete their Building and Repairing Drystone Dyke unit.



For the Countryside Land Use unit, students visited Alvie Estate, and learned about the different activities that take place there.

In addition, they achieved a John Muir Award in Conservation for work done on a moorland management scheme, and they enjoyed a few days working and playing at Wolftrax at Laggan!

The present S3 class pupils have almost completed the Estate Maintenance unit and are just about to do their S3 assessments for Rural Skills. Earlier in the year they participated in a Careers Scotland Poster Design Competition, and won first prize for their category, which was about the forestry industry. They won an activity day out, which will probably be doing watersports at Loch Morlich! As the summer approaches, they are helping to create a butterfly trail at Kincaig Wildlife Park as part of their John Muir Award.

The activities of both classes were also used as the basis for Mrs Falconer submitting an entry to the Scotland's Finest Woods Award, School Category, in which they were placed 2nd in Scotland.

Eco schools teach eco skills

Some 21 out of 29 Highland secondary schools are registered to the international award scheme Eco Schools and 108 Highland schools in total are registered to the programme.

The Eco Schools programme is for young people. It encourages the whole school to work together to manage the school's estate. Those who have looked at Rural Skills will know that the school estate is a key site.

Elanor Gordon of CSV's Action 4 Sustainability project has been helping some of these schools to take forward the programme in a way that is engaging for secondary pupils. Nationally, there is now a Secondary Schools Development Officer for Eco Schools – Paul Cortopassi, who, amongst other things, is finding ways for Rural Skills and Eco Schools to be truly interlinked.

Find out more at www.ecoschoolsscotland.org, or go to www.action4sustainability.org for local information.

John Muir's environmental message

The John Muir Award is an environmental awareness scheme focused on wild places.

The educational initiative of the John Muir Trust, it seeks to promote the message that we need to experience, enjoy and care for wild places by focusing on the challenges of 'discover, explore, conserve, share'.

The Award is non-competitive and is open to individuals and groups such as schools, families, youth groups, charities, disability groups, outdoor education centres and countryside ranger services. It is easy to use alongside existing programmes and the Curriculum for Excellence, and complements the Rural Skills programme by letting pupils examine their relationship to the land and understand what attracts them to working on it.

Care, responsibility and stewardship of land is becoming more and more prevalent in the land based industries. The Award will help pupils understand the importance of protecting our environment and biodiversity for future generations. For more information check out www.johnmuiraward.org.

EVENT: Rural skills induction day

Time and place: Dingwall Auction Mart
Thursday 7th June 2007
9.30am – 3.30pm

What's it all about?

The Rural Skills Induction Day is for pupils, teachers, farmers and employers who are involved in introducing the Land-based Curriculum in the Highlands this year.

Rising demand for land-based studies in secondary schools in the region has prompted several schools to introduce the curriculum.

The event will be hosted by Maxine Garson, the newly appointed Highland Schools Liaison Officer for Rural Skills. It will allow schools, farmers and employers to share experiences and discuss how to take land-based studies forward in the Highlands.

This event will cover health and safety, practical tasks and best practice experiences from schools and partners involved in land-based studies.

Speakers include: Nairn Academy, Abriachan Forest Trust forestry commission and Cairngorm National Park Authority.