



## Abernethy Primary School

*“Biodiversity is very important because it is all living things. Our river topic was all about biodiversity because a river and its surroundings are bursting with life.”*

Sophie and Angus

The P7 class at Abernethy Primary School in the Cairngorms National Park chose to research and study the course of the River Nethy.



*“During the river topic we learned so much, but most of all we learned that being outside and sharing the experience of the river was the best thing by far. We did river dipping and found out that the river Nethy is a clean river. Every day we learnt more and more. We learned how big the river Nethy and the Spey’s catchment areas are, where the source and the mouth of the Nethy are. We learned about ‘riparian habitats’ and why they are important and how the river is like a corridor of wildlife. We learned to identify plants and trees. Overall we had a great time and lots of fun, but learnt loads!”*

Nula and Anna

The local river study provided great opportunities for active learning across many areas of the curriculum. The visits to the Explore Abernethy Centre in the village, the walks along the river bank, river dipping and organised litter pick up provided relevant and meaningful contexts for learning outdoors. The children had great fun and were motivated to carry out further research and record their findings when they returned to the classroom.

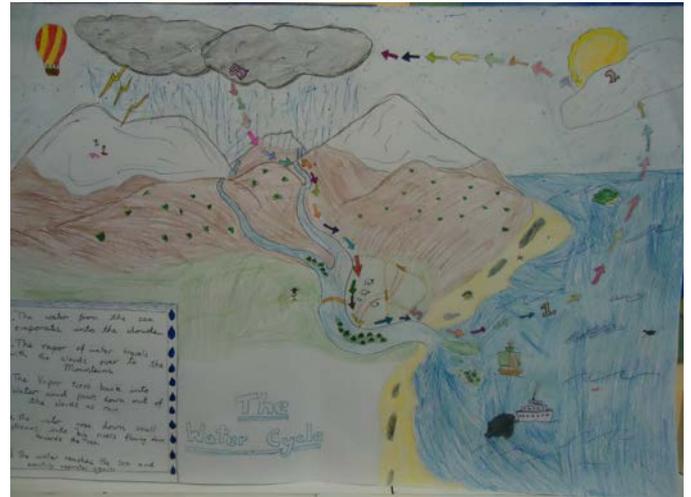
Through planned weekly visits with Mel Clouston from Explore Abernethy the children have learned about river systems and features. They studied maps to find the source of the river Nethy in the Cairngorms and discovered that the river was a tributary to the River Spey. They compared the catchment areas of the two rivers and studied graphs from the gauging stations to show the flow of the river at different times of the year. With help from Bob Laughton from the Spey Fisheries Board they learned about biodiversity, different habitats, food-webs and inter dependence. These experiences encouraged the children to appreciate their local environment and understand that they have a responsibility to look after it.

*“We found lots of colours in the woods around the river. It was amazing because you think it’s just brown and green in the woods but it’s very colourful. We mixed lots of plants together and made different smells. It is great to be outdoors and it’s very educational. We learned so much more and we had lots of fun. It was a great experience.”*

Ellie and Becky



Back in the classroom the children wrote reports, stories, poetry, water safety raps and leaflets, personal pledges and posters to display around the village, persuading others to respect their local river and not to pollute it. They surveyed parents and pupils to find out how often they visited the river and what they thought of it. They produced lovely artwork which was displayed along with their writing and photographs of their experiences at the community centre during a local event to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Thomas Telford Bridge. The river visits were also recorded as a photo story to be played for visitors to the Explore Abernethy Centre in the village.



*‘Working towards the John Muir Award offered a clear structure and focus for learning. The opportunity to get outdoors, work with others and be actively involved in their learning was exciting and much more meaningful for the children.’*

Class teacher Rhona Bootle

For further information on the Cairngorms National Park see [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk) and [Cairngorms Learning Zone](http://Cairngorms Learning Zone)

[www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)