

**'One of the four aims of the national park is to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities'**

Kate Christie

Right, the Rural Skills Day event at Glenmore Forest, the Hayfield, which took place in May this year.

Below, as well as office placements through the CNPA there is the opportunity for outdoor learning.



# NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY IS TALKING ABOUT NEXT GENERATION

**"YOUNG people are the future" is a great sound-bite often touted by politicians and businesses. It is an easy statement to grab hold of because on one hand it is a fact – young people are the next generation – but the phrase can also be used to suggest that the speaker is forward thinking, caring or dynamic.**

It is one thing to create a headline, it is quite another to hang your hat on it and actually commit to that statement – the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is an organisation which has done just that.

The CNPA is responsible for caring for the Cairngorms National Park. It was set up to ensure that the unique aspects of the Park – both the natural environment and the local communities – are looked after, sustained and enhanced for current and future generations to enjoy. With a remit like that, young people have always been on the agenda, but in 2017 the Authority went a step further and created a Youth Employment Strategy, which outlines a commitment to develop the skills of young people and create employment opportunities for them.

Kate Christie, head of organisational development explains more.

"One of the four aims of the national park is to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities – and key to that is finding work for young people. As an employer we have a duty to commit to the next generation, to identify where we can create roles and provide skills and training," she said.

"We work with schools and universities to offer a range of experiences from paid internships and apprenticeships through to work shadowing and work experience days opportunities."

The CNPA have had four apprentices under the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. These are two-year fixed-term posts offered to school

leavers and cover areas such as admin, IT or marketing.

Out of the previous apprentices one has been promoted to a permanent role in the organisation, and two have secured permanent employment locally as a result of the training and experience they received through their apprenticeships at the CNPA.

The current apprentice, Reece Musgrave, has just been shortlisted for the Highland Business Awards as Young Apprentice of the Year.

Kate added: "Some businesses may be put off by employing young people because of the time it takes to train or line manage them, but we have found that it hugely benefits the rest of the organisation and has allowed some of our existing staff to develop and enhance their own skills in supervising them."

As well as apprenticeships the CNPA also offers internships which have been a great success and clearly benefit both the individual and the organisation. However, these benefits are only apparent if the role is tightly managed, and the candidate has a clear, time-bound project to work on.

Kate said: "In 2019 we have offered four internships, these were created around specific pieces of work that we needed to deliver and has allowed us to employ enthusiastic and knowledgeable graduates. This gives us great young people to work with but also gives them valuable on the ground experience that cannot come through books and lectures."

The CNPA is not just committed to working with individuals through office placements, but also has a dedicated outdoor learning



officer, Alan Smith, who works with young people throughout the national park offering experiences through the Junior Ranger programme and the John Muir Award scheme.

Last year Alan brought together a group of young people from the Cairngorms who worked with others from across Europe to create a Youth Manifesto. The Youth Manifesto gives a voice to some of the hopes and fears that young people have for the future of their communities.

The manifesto was launched at Europarc 2018, a conference for National Parks and protected areas in Europe, where the CNPA pledged to set up a Youth Action Team to ensure that the views of the next generation are listened to on matters which concern them.

The team was launched on October 7 by Scotland's rural affairs and natural environment minister Mairi Gougeon and applications are now open for any young person aged 14-26 who would like to be a part of this innovative group.

Email [alansmith@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:alansmith@cairngorms.co.uk) for more details.

One of the aspects to come out of the Youth Manifesto is that young people do not want to move away from their communities for work. It is clear that in order to achieve economic development in our rural communities there is a need for young people to receive skills and encouragement to pursue a career in a land-based industry, whether that is in forestry, farming, tourism or wildlife. The CNPA has hosted a couple of career-specific events to make young people aware of what is on offer.

Last year the CNPA hosted the inaugural Women in Wellies event. Over 100 secondary-aged girls came for the day to listen to a range of inspiring speakers who spoke about their careers and the route they took to get there.

The Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend in May saw the second annual Rural Skills Day take place. This is an outdoor event aimed at 12-14 year olds to give them practical demonstrations and the chance to have a go at activities surrounding rural careers. Businesses and organisations from across the national park-supported the event to showcase careers such as wildlife guiding, being a bushcraft practitioner, a ranger or forestry operative.

The event was attended by over 200 pupils and sponsored by Forest Holidays, whose CEO Bruce McKendrick, said of the event: "The UK's national parks are breathtaking and have inspiring landscapes of which we should all be proud. Our generation has a responsibility to offer young people the opportunity to experience these places first-hand and it's a pleasure to observe the positive impact spending time in nature

provides. For too many young people there are practical challenges of accessing places like this and we are committed to changing that. Most young people care deeply about the world in which they live and as more and more make their voices and passions clear, it's important that we all listen and respond in meaningful ways."

It is clear then that the CNPA has young people firmly on the agenda and as an organisation they have realised the benefits that come from making

this commitment.

Kate said: "In the last six years we have seen 15 young people come through our doors, I have had a privilege to see them grow and develop into confident young adults and in return they have opened our eyes to new ideas and ways of working that we may not have explored and made valuable contributions to our business. We all have a duty to invest in the future generation and I would encourage any business or organisation to take a look at how they work



The Youth Manifesto was launched at the Europarc conference in Aviemore.

and whether they could benefit from an apprentice or intern or even get involved with their local secondary school to offer work experience."

For more information on the CNPA please visit [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)



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