



New campaign challenges Scottish councils to include young people in climate crisis decision-making

For immediate release: Monday 18th November 2019

Youth campaigners today (Monday) have launched a call to Scottish councils to ensure that young people play a meaningful role in making important decisions about how to tackle the current environmental crisis.

The #IWill4Nature climate campaign asks each of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities to pledge to host a special Environment Committee in 2020 where young people and local politicians can work together on policy to reduce waste and pollution at local level. The campaign will run throughout the Year of Coasts and Waters 2020.

The #IWill Scotland Youth Ambassadors also unveiled a new Scottish youth tartan - 'PowerOfYouth' - to celebrate the strength and power of young people's voices. The colours for the tartan were chosen by the #IWill activists to reflect the colours of Scotland's natural heritage.

The ambassadors were supported by Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, who are also making climate change the focus of their campaigning.

Speaking at the launch, #IWill Scotland Youth Ambassador, Abby Lang, 19, said:

"The future of our planet hangs in the balance. Young people across the world have banded together to call for government action in addressing climate change and safeguarding nature. It is vital our youth voice is represented."

Another youth activist, Charlotte Donaldson, also 19, believes politicians need young people to be part of the solution if they serious about protecting our environment:

"I feel it's important for young passionate people to have a voice in environmental decision platforms as young people have skills and creativity to provide an invaluable perspective that policy makers sometimes lack."

YouthLink Scotland's Jenni Snell, Co-ordinator of #IWill added: "Young people's voices have without doubt been the loudest in speaking up for the future of our planet. It should go without saying that those same voices are included in Scotland's future environmental decisions. Through #IWill4Nature young people are calling on all of society to meaningfully listen to their voices and support them to take action."

John Muir Trust in Scotland support the calls, Toby Clark, Scotland Manager said:

“We’ve been inspired by the nature crisis and climate emergency leadership demonstrated by young people. Since 1997 hundreds of thousands of people from all backgrounds have been encouraged to enjoy, connect with and care for our natural environment through achieving a John Muir Award. However, involvement with Year of Young People 2018 and #iwill4nature youth social action campaigns has motivated us to listen to and include young people’s voices much more in managing and repairing natural systems.”

Stuart the Turtle, the longest serving member of staff for the Marine Conservation Society, was also on hand at Newhaven Harbour to lend support. He had this message:

“From Shetland to Solway, visiting community halls to featuring on the First Minister’s Instagram, I have spent my many years increasing ocean literacy across Scotland. During my time I have witnessed the young people of Scotland’s commitment and enthusiasm for saving my big blue home, but they need a platform to share their views and solutions. Local Authorities have a fantastic opportunity to include young people in their activities, who will bring with them new ideas and a passion and urgency to solve the biodiversity crisis.”

Recent statistics from the Scottish Household Survey show that the greatest increase in concern around climate change and the environment is among adults aged 16-24, rising from 38% in 2013 to 67% in 2018.

Ends

For media enquiries and further information please contact Sarah Paterson, Communications and Public Affairs Manager at YouthLink Scotland on 07804 603762 or 0131 313 2488 and at spaterson@youthlinkscotland.org

Further information

What is the #iwill Scotland campaign?

Young people have the energy, skills and ideas to change their communities and society for the better. However, too many young people, particularly from less affluent backgrounds, fail to have their voices heard or capacity to make a difference recognised.

All young people should be supported and empowered to be active and engaged citizens. That's why the #iwill campaign, comprised of over 900 organisations from across the UK, aims to make participation in social action – such as volunteering, campaigning or fundraising - the norm for young people aged 10 to 20.

When young people take part in social action, everyone benefits. Young people do because they build their skills, character and wellbeing; and communities do, because they are healthier, more cohesive and more integrated.

#iwill4nature

Connecting young people with the environment Young people are passionate about the environment. In their communities, young people want to feel safe and proud of spaces in which they spend time and socialise with family and friends. On a global level, young people are worried about environmental challenges that threaten their future.

Results from the National Youth Social Action survey show that there is a strong appetite from young people to engage in environmental social action, particularly to protect animals and wildlife. By utilising their talents, entrepreneurialism and creativity, young people can and should be a key part of the solution to environmental threats.

We want organisations to understand and champion the vital role that young people can play in supporting and improving the environment, and to embed youth social action into their work and long-term strategies.