



# Action for Conservation

## Background and context

Just 21% of children in the UK have an adequate level of connection to nature. As children and young people lose this link and spend less time in nature they are more at risk of depression and obesity and they are less likely to fight to protect the natural world as adults. With a global decline of 60% in wildlife population sizes since 1970 and 56% of UK species in decline, we simply cannot afford to lose a generation of volunteers, supporters and professionals. Action for Conservation (AFC) is a UK charity using pioneering approaches to inspire and empower young people from diverse backgrounds, between the ages of 12 and 18, to become the next generation of nature conservationists.

To us, being a "conservationist" doesn't just mean following a career as a field biologist or as a campaigner. We believe that a passion for conservation can flow through anyone's life, whatever their day-job. We want to inspire today's young people to a long-term belief in the wonder of the natural world, which will shape their dreams and actions however their life turns out.

## Vision

That every young person in the UK is moved and empowered to protect the natural world.

## Mission

To bring the magic of nature into young people's lives, inspiring a youth movement committed to conservation and to the earth.

## Values

Diversity, Wonder, Hope, Action, Change



# **ACTION**

## **FOR CONSERVATION**

### **Core areas of work:**

#### **WildED School Workshop Programme**

We are passionate about bringing nature into the lives of all young people, regardless of circumstance. Our WildED school workshop programme targets young people from diverse backgrounds living in more disadvantaged urban areas; we work with secondary schools in which an average of 49% of pupils are in receipt of pupil premium. Through inspiring workshops over a whole term, led by young conservation professionals working in the field, we support students in delivering local environmental projects that positively impact biodiversity, increase connection to nature and build soft skills. Final Dragons' Den style events bring competing school teams together to battle it out under the watchful eye of our panel of experts and TV personalities like Lucy Cooke and Patrick Aryee. Since the organisation was founded four years ago, we have reached over 2,500 young people through our workshops. This year we will work with 900 young people directly, over three-month stretches, in schools in the South West, South East and North West, and thousands more will be affected and influenced by student projects. Next year we will scale this up to engage directly with 1,800 young people across these three priority areas. We are actively forging relationships with other environmental NGOs, such as the National Trust, to enable students to participate in and contribute to local initiatives within their communities.

#### **Residential Camps**

Our Residential Conservation Camps allow us to give smaller groups, from a mixture of backgrounds, transformational experiences in nature and work in more depth to build the youth environmental leaders of the future. Participants are selected through a competition advertised in schools across the country and the camps are currently hosted at National Trust sites in National Parks across the country. Over 38% of participants self identify as Visible Minority Ethnic, a statistic we are really proud of. During camps, participants connect with nature through a mixture of mindfulness activities, games, natural history walks and hands on conservation work with rangers and develop the skills to take action locally in



workshops delivered by arts and theatre professionals and volunteers from The Gaia Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF, Blue Marine Foundation and many more.

### **Ambassador Programme**

Following our camps, all participating young people join our Ambassador Programme and are supported in embedding the transformational camp experience in their day-to-day lives through mentoring, events and training sessions that empower them to lead change in their own communities and become powerful youth voices for nature. With our support, Ambassadors have created environmental songs and then performed at festivals, written to their council about local issues, hosted youth conferences, given school talks to thousands of peers, fed into Government research on volunteering and produced films on plastic pollution that have opened an international conference on ocean pollution and been viewed over 160,000 times on twitter, among many other actions.

### **Penpont Project**

In July 2019, we launched the largest youth-led nature restoration project of its kind in the world in an effort to reverse devastating ecological breakdown and create a global gold-standard for youth-led environmental action. Taking place on a 2,000-acre upland estate in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales, the pioneering 'Penpont Project' will be run by a Youth Leadership Group of twenty 12-17-year-olds from diverse backgrounds. Under their management, the project will restore habitats and ecosystems and explore innovative farming and forestry approaches to provide a healthy support system for people, biodiversity and agriculture. The Youth Leader Group will work in collaboration with tenant farmers, landowners, academics and local stakeholders to create a world-leading example of how young people's passion for conservation and the natural world can be harnessed to effect tangible change.

### **Systemic Change & Key Partnerships**

We are also working to create systemic change to support our engagement work on the ground, by creating space for young people to share their voice and drive a



national youth environment movement that is ambitious and inclusive. In particular, we aim to increase our impact by working with sector partners to scale up our work to empower more young people to take action for the environment and develop opportunities for young people to make their voices heard on issues of national significance by shaping Government policy and the direction and work of environmental NGOs.