

Presentation Script

Introduce myself:

I have recently completed the John Muir Award as part of this assignment. According to the John Muir Trust (n.d.) the John Muir Award encourages people from all backgrounds to connect and enjoy wild places, whilst learning about their uniqueness and helping to conserve them.

The wild place that I decided to discover was Peascroft Wood in Bilston. Bilston is an average size town, in quite a deprived area, that was once very industrialised. The site being mined about 150 years ago.

The wood is just a short walk from the town centre, and is about 9 acres in size. The woods is designated as a locally designated site of importance for nature conservation

Why did I choose Peascroft Wood?

I grew up and attended school in the shadow of the wood, so it's always been part of my environment, but in recent years I have failed to recognize it's natural beauty.

So, as part of the John Muir Award, I rediscovered Peascroft Wood, and this has been a very positive experience for me, reconnecting with this special place;

As part of the John Muir Award, I first had to discover my wild place, or rather rediscover my wild place. I undertook tasks I haven't for years, such as making daisy chains, painting and sketching for pleasure, and even writing poetry.

Then further explore the place, where I found out about the wildlife, trees, types of leaves, flowers, birds, species of bees and ladybirds, and I've even learnt about different twigs!

The next part of the John Muir Award is to undertake some conservation to protect the place.

I chose 3 conservation activities:

Firstly, I undertook litter picking, as unfortunately when I was exploring the woods, I noticed that there was quite a lot of litter.

Litter can be very harmful for wildlife, resulting in injury or even death. According to the RSPCA (2025), the RSPCA receives approximately 10 calls every day in summer, to help animals who have been harmed by litter. Keep Britain Tidy (2025) states that plastic pollution is particularly devastating for wildlife, as plastic can take hundreds of years to disappear. In 2022, the UK Government introduced a plastic packaging tax to try to reduce the amount of plastic pollution.

I joined a local social media group (Bilston Litter Pickers) and involved the children in my

class and at my Cub group with litter picking which has undoubtedly protected local wildlife and made the woods a more pleasant place to visit and enjoy.

The next conservation task that I undertook was helping birds during a heatwave to have access to water, by providing a temporary bird bath. This was a good temporary solution, but my Cubs and I have plans to provide permanent support for the birds by installing a permanent bird bath. According to the RSPB (2025), more extreme weather is as a result of climate change, and this may lead to the destruction of some habitats.

The final conservation task that I undertook was to clean up the signs around the woods that help visitors to navigate their way around the woods and to identify different trees and leaves. This proved quite difficult, as I was unable to remove most of the graffiti.

The next part of the Award was to Share my discoveries and conservation efforts to hopefully inspire others. The children in my class enjoyed getting involved with litter picking and they really enjoyed listening to the story of Stanley the plastic bag who narrowly avoided harming various animals after he was discarded, but eventually was recycled into a kite. According to the John Muir Trust (n.d.) positive experiences in nature encourage future environmentally friendly behaviour. I collated various resources to help my children explore and discover, and I've endeavored to plan activities that will facilitate awe and wonder in the natural world. The Award has been a useful reminder to me about noticing and appreciating the little things, things that I don't often notice anymore. I now find myself noticing the pattern on bark and wondering about tiny minibeasts that I haven't considered for some time.

After reflecting on my own practice I made some changes, such as endeavoring to reduce, reuse or recycle more. The Award prompted me to improve my local community, particularly Peascroft Wood, and I intend to continue this work in the future.

Completing the John Muir Award made me think about sustainability. The John Muir Trust (2025) defines sustainability as "living on the planet as if we mean to stay here". According to the United Nations (n.d) , in 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs". According to Greenpeace (2025) "most environmental problems come from using natural resources unsustainably".

According to The Global Goals (n.d.) there are 19 global sustainability goals that were agreed by the United Nations in 2015.

The goals are:

no poverty
zero hunger
good health and well-being
quality education
gender equality
clean water and sanitation
affordable and clean energy
decent work and economic growth
industry, innovation and infrastructure
reduced inequalities
sustainable cities and communities
responsible consumption and production
climate change
life below water
life on land
peace, justice and strong institutions
partnerships for the goal.

According to the United Nation's Development Programme (n.d.) the 17 sustainable development goals are integrated, as they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others.

As practitioners, we can play our part in tackling some of the sustainability goals. We can help to end hunger by making referrals to food banks, and educating families about how to grow and prepare food. We can support families in poverty by lending resources or putting families in touch with relevant charities. We can support good health and wellbeing through teaching PSHE and life skills, and by providing a healthy environment. We can enable our children through providing high quality education and ensure that we ensure gender equality, through having and following an equal opportunities policy. Through working in partnership with families and the local community, we can support sustainable growth.

In 2002, UNESCO, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation focused on cultural diversity, world heritage and education.

The Flourish Project has considered how the UN'S 17 Sustainability Development Goals can be explored with children and acknowledges young children as active global citizens (Flourish Project, 2021). The Flourish Model considers the Sustainable Development Goals in a similar way to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory,

with the child at the centre, and being supported by key adults and then the wider community to actively participate as global citizens.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2024) does support educating children about being globally aware.

Talk about specific early learning goals:

The non-statutory guidance, Development Matters States that children as young as 3-4 years will “begin to understand the need to respect and care for the natural environment and all living things”.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states in Article 12, that children have a right to have and express their opinion.

The current educational trend for teaching oracy, will enable children to organize and articulate their ideas.

According to the Oracy Education Commission (2024) the teaching of oracy can equip children to ask questions and critically formulate powerful arguments.

Voice 21 (2024) states that teaching oracy in the early years is vital, and recommends the strategy of sustained shared thinking to support children.

Article 29, of the UNCRC states that children should be enabled to develop respect for the natural world.

Activities like those that I undertook, to improve a natural place or show concern for wildlife, will enable children to develop the skills and knowledge required to be responsible global citizens. Wilson(2007) is clear about the benefits of learning through nature.

With the work of John Muir and other environmental champions and campaigners, such as David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg, current thinking has generally moved on from anthropocentrism, which is human centred, to Ecocentrism, which prioritises the natural world and now on to Posthumanism, that recognizes the interconnectedness and complexity of the situation.

Sustainable development must take into account 3 important factors:

- environmental quality
- economic security and prosperity
- _and also social justice and fairness.

If all 3 are not given consideration, then development will not be sustainable in the long term.

Being unsustainable can sometimes be more convenient, such as buying plastic toys, buying foods whatever the season for ease, or even buying a plastic bottle of water in

the supermarket and getting a plastic carrier bag, because you did not take a refillable drinks container or a reusable bag.

To protect our world for our children and their children, we must make more sustainable choices and ensure that we educate children to take care and responsibility for our planet.

Many theorists have been wise to the need to respect and to take care of the world.

Froebel spoke of unity with nature, and Reggio Emilia understood that the environment can have a profound benefits for the child and their learning. Montessori favoured natural resources.

As practitioners we must ensure that we take good care of our world, and educate the future caretakers so they will too, whilst also being mindful to consider their emotional well-being. According to the Department for Education (2025) children are experiencing climate anxiety, and they can be supported through this with opportunities to explore outdoors and through education.

By 2025, all education settings must have a nominated sustainability lead (Department for Education, 2023)

Thank you for listening.

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