



For immediate use - July 20th 2015

Schools and communities in the West of Scotland get active in new river adoption project

Pupils across the River Clyde and River Ayr catchments have taken on the challenge of caring for their local rivers in a new project called **'Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities'**. The project, which is delivered by the Clyde River Foundation in partnership with the Ayrshire Rivers Trust, sees scientists encourage schools and communities to take an active role in the stewardship of their local environment by adopting a stretch of their local river or burn. 'Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities' has been funded with a donation of £25,000 from leading food-on-the-go retailer, Greggs, with support from Keep Scotland Beautiful.

The project explores the connection between the health of a river and the health of the community living around it and aims to promote responsible use rivers and greater enjoyment of the wildlife on our doorsteps. This year five schools have signed up to 'Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities': Golfhill Primary School and St Serf's Primary School in Airdrie, Kilsyth Primary School, St Patrick's Primary School in Dumbarton and Greenmill Primary School in Cumnock.

The pupils embarked on their challenge with each class taking two trips to their river in June. Firstly, the pupils spent a day getting to know their river through a series of hands-on activities. They learned how to take an invertebrate sample (an indicator of water quality), witnessed a fish survey using electrofishing, identified trees along riverbank and made a map highlighting the good and bad features of their river. Back in class they identified their invertebrates in a 'pop-up' laboratory and calculated a river health score based on their findings.

They then returned to the river to take action on some of the issues identified. A river corridor clean-up was performed and pupils recorded data on the different types of litter collected. They also learned about pollution and invasive non-native species found along the riverbank including Giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed, both of which were discovered across the five sites.

Dr Gemma Jennings, Community Engagement Officer at the Clyde River Foundation, said:

"We have a long history of working with primary schools through Clyde in the Classroom, a project in which pupils raise brown trout in class before releasing fry into the local watercourse. This 'river adoption' is the next step in promoting better stewardship and enjoyment of rivers that are often over-looked.

We are delighted with how enthusiastic the children have been so far and are looking forward to seeing how the next stage of the project unfolds after the summer break. The children are now armed with the facts and lots of creative ideas and we will work with the schools to get the broader community actively involved in celebrating and caring for their river – this is essential for long-term sustainability of the project. "

Gordon Macdermid, Project Officer at Ayrshire Rivers Trust, said:

"Adopting a stretch of a local river or burn provides a great natural classroom for outdoor learning while making a positive difference to the local community. The school we are working with in Cumnock has two rivers nearby which really differ in terms of human impact - this was a great lesson for the children and gives us plenty to work with. We look forward to tackling some larger in-stream littering with the help of the community as the project progresses."

To find out more please visit the Clyde River Foundation and Ayrshire Rivers Trust websites (www.clyderiverfoundation.org and www.ayrshireriverstrust.org) or contact Dr Gemma Jennings on gemma.jennings@glasgow.ac.uk or Gordon Macdermid on gordon@ayrshireriverstrust.org

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CONTACT:

Dr Gemma Jennings (Clyde River Foundation)

gemma.jennings@glasgow.ac.uk

0141 330 5080