



## **PRESS RELEASE**

November 2021

### **Grants available for outdoor learning groups in Northern Ireland**

Charities and not-for profit organisations in Northern Ireland, committed to helping get young people outdoors, are being invited to apply for a grant towards employing an Outdoor Learning Officer.

There are ten grants available to groups across the UK, in this latest round of Outdoor Learning Officer Grants given by educational charity The Ernest Cook Trust.

When the grant was last made available, there was just one successful application from a Northern Ireland-based organisation – Belfast Hills Partnership, a charity seeking to improve how the hills are managed, by working with local councils, government departments, community groups, nature conservation organisations and businesses committed to caring for the Belfast Hills and their people.

Each grant is worth £15,000 per year, for three years, and can be used towards funding the salary of an Outdoor Learning Officer, who will help promote the benefits of getting outdoors to young people and their communities.

Suzie Paton, The Ernest Cook Trust's Head of Grants, said the Trust works across the UK and was keen to encourage applications from Northern Ireland.

"We know that inspirational educators are key to helping young people form lasting connections with the natural environment," said Suzie.

"This is why we prioritise charities and organisations whose approach is to encourage young people to enjoy the outdoors and engage with nature. The Outdoor Learning Officers will educate communities about land, food production and biodiversity, their work will enable society to have a healthy respect for their local environment and drive sustainable behaviour."

*(continues...)*

Laura Shiels, Belfast Hills Partnership's Outdoor Learning Officer, whose role has been part-funded by The Ernest Cook Trust, said: "Thanks to the funding, I have been able to work with primary school children to get them out into the countryside, to discover nature. We've been pond dipping, and bug hunting, and going on nature walks in places that are on their doorstep, but they may never have been to."

Each grant recipient's new recruit will also get an opportunity to join The Ernest Cook Trust's network of Outdoor Learning Officers, sharing best practice and exchanging ideas and skills. As well as giving grants for outdoor learning activities, The Ernest Cook Trust creates outdoor experiences for children, young people and their families, on its own estates and with partner estates across the country.

Applications are open to charities and not-for-profit organisations in the UK. Projects focusing on supporting people with disadvantage – including disadvantage for social, physical, economic or community reasons – are prioritised.

For more information visit <https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/everything-outdoors/outdoor-learning-officer-grant/>.

