

Royal Highland Education Trust – Dumfries & Galloway Countryside Initiative

“Taking the Classroom to the Countryside”

Annual Report – January 2012

As detailed in the Project Bid, the aim of the Project is to run 4 events over the course of two years, targeting young people aged between 5 up to 16 years of age. The original project was scheduled to run for 1 year only, however, with agreement by the local LAG office, the Project has been extended to 2 years therefore allowing schools to participate at times to suit them better.

Activity 1

The first of the four activities was held on 13 June 2011. A group of 50 S1 pupils (12 year olds) and 4 staff from the Home Economics Department of Annan Academy took part in a Food & Farming Day at the SAC Crichton Royal Farm, Dumfries. The objective was to provide a 'hands on' experience for pupils by exposing them to elements of local farming and food production. A range of hands-on activities and discussions exploring different types of farming and associated food products enabled pupils to learn where their food comes from.

The sessions included:

Milk: Pupils were given the opportunity to milk 'Daisy' the life-size fibre-glass milking cow, as well as see a demonstration on how ice-cream is made. This session was bolstered by a talk from the dairyman at the SAC Crichton Farm, with accompanying props.

Cereals: The pupils were shown the types of cereal crops that grow in Scotland. They discussed with a local farmer the types of produce they would buy in the supermarket that contain these crops. The pupils were given the opportunity to mill some wheat using traditional quern stones to make flour.

Diet & Nutrition: A representative from the NHS facilitated this session. The activity was based around eating a healthy diet with a hands-on activity for the pupils. Healthy Eating Handouts were made available at this station.

Meat: This proved to be a very popular session. With the support of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) who funded the provision of cuts of meat, a local butcher demonstrated his butchery skills and preparation of meat dishes for cooking. Pupils learned about the various cuts of meat, the nutritional value of red meat as part of a healthy diet, and how many meals can be prepared from one cut of meat.

Deer & Eggs: A local deer farmer discussed how deer are managed in the Dumfries & Galloway region. This involved explaining to the pupils the differences between 'native' and 'non-native' species of deer, as well as the need to cull deer. This introduced the concept of deer / venison within the human diet and the benefits of eating lean meat. The benefits of eating eggs and the differences between free-range, barn & battery egg production were also discussed at this station.

Trailer Ride: Two seated trailers took pupils and staff on a guided tour of the SAC Crichton Farm, taking in geographical aspects of the farm, history of the Crichton Estate and learning about environmental work carried out. The pupils and staff also had the opportunity to see cows being milked at the Acrehead Unit viewing gallery.

This event was extremely successful and feedback from the school, SAC staff, activity providers and RHET volunteers was positive.

Activity 2

The second event as listed in the Project Bid is a Careers Day for a selection of secondary schools in Dumfries & Galloway. It is proposed to host this event at the SAC Crichton Farm in Dumfries, but the target audience has been reviewed. Following discussions with a number of secondary school teaching staff and meetings with SAC senior staff, it has been decided to offer this event to Secondary School Guidance Teachers & Pupil Support Teachers rather than pupils. To maximise the interest from teaching staff, it is proposed to schedule this event for May 2012 when the schools are in transition with senior pupils leaving and prior to S1 entering.

Activity 3

The third event will involve working and assisting two primary schools to organise and run a Farmers Market in school. To date I have had interest from Twynholm Primary School and Rephad Primary at Stranraer, who are both keen to run their events around Easter time. Dates for both are still to be finalised.

Activity 4

The final event, and probably the one which will require most input from RHET Dumfries & Galloway is a Food & Farming Event to be held at Wallets Mart on 22 and 23 March 2012. This event will be offered to the Primary 6 age group, approximately 30+ primary schools within a half hour drive of Wallets Mart will be notified of this event, and depending on numbers of pupils, around 15 classes will be able to attend. This event is similar to that of the Annan Academy Food & Farming event at SAC Crichton Royal Farm, with various activity sessions for the pupils to meet and interact with local experts whilst learning about where their food comes from. Each day will culminate in a Mock Auction whereby the pupils can experience "bidding" for animals going through the sale ring at the Mart.

I am currently sourcing activity providers and volunteers for this event and notices will be emailed into schools in January 2012.

Claims

So far 4 claims have been submitted to LEADER, however, there has been minimal payment claimed, having only completed one of the four events. It is envisaged there will be an increase in claims over the next 2 claim periods.

Publicity

It is proposed to maximise publicity for all events. The S1 Annan Academy event was publicised in the Dumfries & Galloway Standard.