

Foyle Ambassadors enjoying and exploring the river

The Foyle Ambassadors programme gives the young people an opportunity to discover the natural heritage of the River Foyle, its tributaries, sea loughs and coastline through a range of activities. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Young Roots programme, the project engaged with 14-17 year olds, bringing together youth work and natural heritage with the common theme of the Foyle catchment. Participants discovered and explored the wildness of the river, took action to improve it and shared their experiences with others whilst working towards the John Muir Discovery Award.

Kevin Wilson, Director of Development said "During the programme the Ambassadors developed skills in investigating, surveying, recording, analysing, working as part of a team, working on their own, problem solving, planning and communication – all skills we look for when recruiting staff at Loughs Agency."

Rosemary McCloskey, Community Engagement Officer said "These young people have really engaged with this programme, shown themselves as true Ambassadors with most taking on volunteer roles during the Foyle Maritime Festival. We couldn't be prouder."

Tony McCusker, from HLF Northern Ireland, said "It's fantastic to be involved in this project which has had such a positive impact on both the young people and the river Foyle. The young people have learned a host of new skills and really connected to the natural heritage of the river and the shore. Their continued support and care will help to safeguard this vital resource and protect it for generations to come and I am delighted to congratulate the Foyle

Ambassadors for their hard work and commitment to the project."

Speaking at the graduation Clipper Race Founder and Chairman Sir Robin Knox-Johnston said “It gives me great pleasure to meet so many young people who are eager to work hard at maintaining the waterways around Derry-Londonderry. As Foyle Ambassadors, you have taken on a very important role here to protect the environment around the lough which you are fortunate to have on your doorstep.

“During our six year partnership, the Clipper Race has helped to showcase this city’s assets around the world and the Foyle Maritime Festival is the ideal platform for the Loughs Agency to put on full display the benefits of investing in the waterways for locals and attracting tourists. The return on the investment can be seen by the thousands of visitors in the past week alone, which in turn will result in millions of pounds going towards economic development here. I hope that the people of Derry-Londonderry continue to celebrate and build on the facilities already in place.

“When I founded the Clipper Race twenty years ago, it was to inspire people to challenge themselves and also to explore the world’s oceans. If you get the chance to talk to any of our crew here, they will share tales about the mighty waves of the Pacific Ocean and incredible wildlife that joined them on their journey here across the Atlantic from New York. They have developed a respect and love of the water which I hope you will too over the coming years. We all have a duty to look after our oceans, our loughs and our rivers because they are essential to our very being, and fundamental for all of our futures.”