

Investigating Natural Science in Wild Ennerdale: Science Programmes at the STFC Education Hub, Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre, Ennerdale in the Lake District

Inspiration in Science, Technology and the Environment

Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre has a reputation built over half a century of providing life-enhancing and life-changing experiences for young people. The Centre occupies a 15th Century farmhouse in the middle of the Ennerdale Valley, the focus of the Wild Ennerdale Project, a project started in 2003 and with a 200-year time horizon to allow the valley to return to a natural state.

We are a Dark Skies Discovery site at 'Milky Way' level (<http://www.darkskydiscovery.org.uk/>) and have organised Astronomy events open to the public since 2011. In 2014, recognising the success of the astronomy activity and having particular regard to the Centre's contribution to the science and practice of sustainable living, the Centre was nominated by the Science and Technology Funding Council (<http://www.stfc.ac.uk/>) as its Education Hub for the North West aimed at the general public and families, school groups of all ages and their teachers with additional focus on Inner Cities and 'hard-to-reach' groups.

We run 'inspirational' events for school, community and other groups visiting the Centre, usually over a two-day visit, with a range of activities tailored for each individual group. We currently offer Astronomy (activities, talks and observation sessions using our own telescopes), Sustainable Energy (the Centre uses a hydroelectric system and a recently installed borehole for water supply) and Quaternary Geology of Ennerdale (what it tells us about climate change). We are in the process of adding Ecology and Archaeology to our portfolio (the Centre is located at the heart of the Wild Ennerdale project <http://www.wildennerdale.co.uk/>). Events are organised and run by our knowledgeable and enthusiastic team of volunteers, including leading authorities in their field up to professorial level, together with external experts.

The aim of our events is to showcase the excitement of natural science and to inspire young people to become the scientists of tomorrow.

Who are we?

Low Gillerthwaite Field Centre Association (www.lgfc.org.uk) is a member organisation formed in 1966 with the aim of allowing young people to experience the outdoors and to stimulate appreciation of all aspects of the natural environment. It was established to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the City of Leeds College of Education, but is, and always has been, a completely independent body. It is run entirely by volunteers and employs a full-time warden based all year at the Centre.

What do we offer?

We provide accommodation for up to 40 in five dormitories. Communal living is a key experience enabled by the Centre, with self-catering facilities (supplies can be delivered direct to the Centre) provided in a large kitchen and two sizeable lounges with wood fires. There is no charge for our Education Hub programmes; the cost to users is our standard accommodation charge at less than £12 per young person per night. Whilst our programmes are generally over two full days, it would be perfectly straightforward to insert one of our programmes into a more extended stay covering, for example, hill walking or canoeing.

For further general information about our programmes for visiting groups or to design an event to suit your own group please contact John Grocott (EducationHubCoordinator@lgfc.org.uk).

One of our principles is 'Open to All' and we seek to ensure nobody is excluded from the experiences we offer on financial or other grounds - please discuss any issues in this regard with the Education Hub coordinator.