

## #53. WHITEHAVEN HARBOUR YOUTH PROJECT



Photo credit: <https://bit.ly/2LBHJpE>

Theme(s): Partnership, Inclusivity, Stakeholder involvement

Type of initiative:  
Open Water Facilities

Year: 2015 - till present day

Location:  
Cumbria  
United Kingdom

Owner: Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project

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### DESCRIPTION

The Whitehaven Harbour Youth club is an inclusive youth club for young people aged 7-25 and offers an array of outdoor, indoor, sporting and non-sporting activities. Whitehaven Marina is utilised to give young people an accessible place to access recreational water sports on their doorstep. Activities included on the marina are paddleboarding, canoeing, kayaking and beachcraft. The sessions have a cost associated with them, however this varies dependent on the sport. Incorporated into all of this work is education and awareness raising of the environmental impact that the residents can, and do, have on the quality of the water in the marina. The first key action of this was continuing to pursue the project after the initial funding ended, by keeping the momentum going, as Whitehaven as a community has had a lot of projects that start but never led to anything or are abandoned before completion. The second action was to make this project youth led and therefore owned by the young people, in order for them to understand what this could mean in the future. Ultimately, the project aims to transform the marina into a vibrant sporting and adventure venue to bring inspiring, healthy and positive activities to people in the local community.

### SUCSESSES

Incorporating young people into this process has been a key success of this project. By recruiting youth club members as ambassadors to go into schools and raise awareness to other young people regarding how litter and pollution gets into the marina has been integral within the project.

This sits alongside canoe tours around the marina, which serve the purpose of acting as educational trips to talk about where the litter and pollution is coming from and what young people and the local community can do to reduce it. Partnerships with local schools and other local youth clubs to get buy in from young people has been crucial to this success.

Further to this, the organisation has had to change how they operate as a community organisation, but as expected, this is a very slow process and will continue to take time. People within the community of Whitehaven are now starting to see local residents as recreational users of water and will often stop and ponder what young people are doing on the water. It's this action which have now given the water a different purpose.

### CHALLENGES

Due to the project still being in its infancy, there is no direct evidence as of yet to suggest this initiative is making a difference to the quality of the water in the marina. This obviously acts as a worrying concern to the Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project as this would be detrimental to the outcomes of the project.

However, the main challenge was giving the community an understanding that the marina is a valued community resource and could potentially end up bringing additional tourism and economic benefits to the community, if the water quality improves enough for professional triathlon races etc. to be held there. This continues to be overcome by creating essential partnerships with a range of stakeholders who have an invested interest in the local community. In terms of increasing participation, the project, since 2015, has involved over 650 young people in some kind of recreational use of the marina's facilities.