

Gracie Allen statement

There is a big similarity between the youth voice and nature and not one you have probably thought of before.

In conversations about planning and different motions you put through the council often young people and nature will be the most impacted by your decisions but when was the last time you had a young person involved in the conversations from the beginning and on an equal level to everyone in the conversation?

When was the last time nature was a priority when you thought about building new houses or new roads?

Nature and young people are often the most impacted areas by your decisions but they are silent in all of the conversations.

I'm not talking about primary school ages children they have forest school and play scheduled and built into their curriculum but as you get older and start to sit exams you could spend a whole day inside.

Too scared to cycle to school because the cycle lanes haven't been created safely so you get the bus.

Sat inside the classroom all day because there is no funding for schools to take you on a trip to see what your learning about.

And then walking home through a new housing estate that now covers the only green space that was once in your area.

The Royal Psychiatry Board found that being out in nature not only helps your mental health but also helps to lower blood pressure and benefits your physical health aswell. So in a time when mental health is at an all time low in young people because of the pressure we put on them to perform in exams, why are we making it so difficult for them to reach one of the easiest ways to help them feeling better?

I spend a lot of time outdoors and last year I had the opportunity to take 20 young people to the lake district and walk across the mountains and camp for 4 days and when we got there some of them didn't even know that mountains like that exist in the UK and one of them came up to me and said it was the best thing they have ever seen and they still talk about it now! This shows the immense power of nature and it's all just sat there waiting for us to explore it.

So I encourage you when you make decision about the future of our city to also consider the impact on those silent voices, on nature and the people that rely on it for their own health.