

River Where Final Report. November 2017

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Enriching young lives...

Project Outline

River Where was delivered by Firefly Arts from May to October 2017, as a film and performance project to enable young people to explore the local River Almond, gain greater awareness of how it has shaped our communities, and engage more proactively with the wider public in its care, development and appreciation.

Funded by the River Forth Fisheries Trust, the project received a grant of £5,000 to develop skills, themes and narrative with 12 young people aged 14 to 18 years. With guidance from professional film-maker, Kate Burton, and Drama Practitioner, Kirsty Byers, and through weekly workshops, location filming, research interviews and an intensive summer project, young people created a quality 16-minute film for screening to the wider public through a series of site-specific events. The project also invited a visual artist to work with an additional group of young people to create a found-object installation to accompany the film on public screenings.



A lot of us were unsure at first. We weren't clear if making a film about a river would work. But it gave us a whole new perspective. We had so much fun.

Challenge and Success

Firefly Arts provide youth arts activity for children and young people across West Lothian, and we are continuously surprised by their talent, creativity and commitment. There is, however, a significant level of teenage reluctance to work in and explore the great outdoors. As an outdoor, environmental project, *River Where* presented both an exciting opportunity and a physical challenge for several of our participants. Initially unconvinced by the suggested themes, several in the group had not even realised that they cross the River Almond several times each day, others had barely registered the existence of the river. Won over by the encouragement of the arts workers and the lure of a new film challenge the group overcame their concerns regarding weather, walking and water. The completed film is a testament to this journey, and leaves the viewer with no doubt of the fun, learning and personal development it generated.



Partnership plays an invaluable role in exploring new territory, developing skills and understanding. For this project the *River Where* film-makers liaised with Jamie Ormiston (Community Engagement Officer for RiverLife Almond & Avon), Bruce Hope from West Lothian Angling Association, and Kirsty Morrison, Countryside Ranger at Almondell Country Park. This experience increased their understanding of the social, economic and environmental role of the Almond, and the range of wildlife and activity it supports.

There was a lot of walking and climbing trying to get to specific places with all the equipment.

Filming on location presented the young filmmakers with new technical challenges, such as maintaining quality sound, using a range of lens, setting up shots in public spaces, and coping with weather, wildlife and interested passers-by. They needed to work efficiently, with purpose, patience and politeness.



Interaction with other river users, both organised and informal, played a key role in building confidence, teamwork and a sense of purpose. Since completing the film, 3 *River Where* participants have gone on to volunteer at Almondell Country Park.

I've learnt far more than I ever would have imagined about fish and otters. Wildlife in general. And water - 50 ways to fill your wellies.

River Where also included a week-long visual arts project, where young people used objects found along the riverbanks to build an installation through which to view the completed film. This activity enabled a further 5 young people, with no film-making experience, to participate in and contribute to the project.

The film-making process is a complex and relatively costly youth arts activity, but the benefits for the young people involved are significant, and include problem-solving, technical and analytical skills that will support young people into digital media training and industries. Ensuring that *River Where* is screened to the wider community will engender a range of valuable response, comment and feedback for the young film-makers, while promoting the history, wildlife and natural heritage of the River Almond to the wider community.



Public and Community Screenings

Firefly Arts plan to screen *River Where* at a number of venues and events over the coming year.

Current plans include:

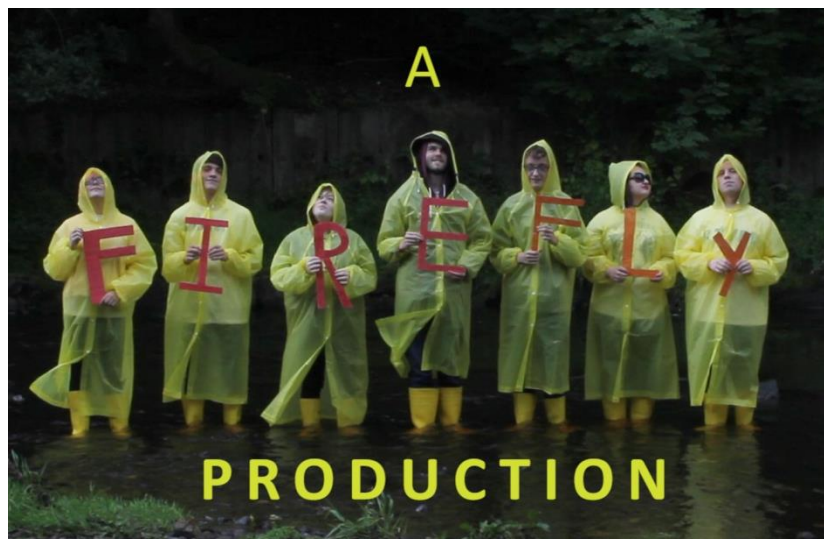
- 2 week screening, with installation, in West Lothian College Library (November 2017)
- Screening at West Lothian Council's Celebrating Youth Work at Armadale Academy (November 17)
- Ongoing Foyer screening at Howden Park Centre, Livingston.
- Submitted to The Scottish Youth Film Festival (November 2017)
- Almondell Country Park (2018)
- Inveralmond Community High School(2018)
- St Margaret's High School(2018)
- Deans Community High School (2018)
- Fauldhouse Library (2018)
- Blackburn Library (2018)
- Bathgate Academy



Thank you

Delivering *River Where* has presented an invaluable opportunity for Firefly Arts to involve young people in progressive and illuminative environmental arts activity. Our thanks to all funders, project supporters, participants and their families. Special thanks and appreciation to River Forth Fisheries Trust and RiverLife Almond & Avon; Artists Kate Burton, Jenny Holgarth and Kirsty Byers; Kirsty Morrison and Almondell Country Park; Bruce Hope and West Lothian Angling Association.

I have discovered that I actually enjoy being outdoors.



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West Lothian
Council