



We're changing lives through the power of outdoor adventure

Working with young people

We are based in the heart of the Merkinch & South Kessock area of Inverness. Our community has so many strengths but faces the most severe multiple deprivation anywhere in the Highlands.



Outdoor youth clubs

Our outdoor youth clubs provide regular, positive healthy activities and social experiences for young people who otherwise wouldn't get the opportunity.

Àban Mountaineering Club • Àban Bike Club and Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Positive impact

Spending time outdoors has a positive impact on young people by connecting to nature, opportunities for physical activity and positive social connections, as well as developing transferable skills for life.



Progressive opportunities

Through the clubs we build deep, long-lasting relationships with young people throughout their teenage years, offering progressive opportunities that support healthy development and engagement with life.

Our work in numbers

38

In 2024 Àban has worked with 38 young people across our charitable activities. We aim for depth not breadth, with many young people participating in multiple clubs and returning over many years. Our relational approach including getting to know families is an important part of our success.

290 EXPERIENCES
2259 HOURS

Together our participants have taken part in 290 experiences, totalling 2259 hours of contact time in the outdoors.

Collectively participants and staff have:

HIKED
2037km

CYCLED
735km

CAMPED
64 NIGHTS

USED PRE-LOVED KIT
325



Social enterprise activities

We recognize the generosity of our grant funders such as the Robertson Trust, whilst striving to cover as much of our costs as we can through our own social enterprise income. We were delighted to host a visit from Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes MSP in recognition of our work.

- We run Scotland's first charity shop dedicated to outdoor equipment & clothing - over 1,000 donated items sold!
- The 2024 Kessock Ferry Swim was again a sold-out success - a challenging tidal open water swim raising vital funds for our work
- In a major new partnership with The European Nature Trust, we delivered the Alladale Wilderness Experience for 106 S3 pupils from 6 schools across Inverness, Sutherland & Caithness. This is the most remote outdoor residential anywhere in the UK.



Theory of change

Our theory of change is based on the Adventurous Learning model*. Participants experience Authenticity, Autonomy, Uncertainty and Mastery during the club activities. For those unlikely to engage in mainstream education, our model offers a rare opportunity to feel genuine empowerment.

Responses to this way of learning are measured through a series of questions post experience.

*Beames, S., & Brown, M. (2016). Adventurous learning: A pedagogy for a changing world. Routledge.



Mastery

Getting better at something improves young people's confidence and self belief enabling them to take on future challenges.

100%

felt they got better at something

"Àban has helped me to go for my goals and also to stay committed to the things I enjoy. I've surprised myself with the potential I have!"

Autonomy

Experiencing the freedom to make real decisions helps young people to feel a sense of responsibility and control over their lives.

97%

felt they made decisions without the help of the leaders

"I got to put skills we have been taught to good use on the practice expedition. It gives me an escape from tough parts of life by giving more responsibility in myself."

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a necessary ingredient for young people's development as it enables creativity, choice and provides real world relevance.

80%

felt they had to experiment to find a solution to a problem

"I've developed a sense of exploration."

Authenticity

Adventures which feel authentic, relevant and repeatable are key for young people to continue with the skills and healthy habits in their own time.

66%

said they would be able to get back to the places they had been.

"Àban is super supportive of the goals I have and has also assisted me in doing my hobbies, like for hiking I wouldn't have been able to go without the input and gear library."

Positive Social Relationships

Positive relationships with peers and adults who can role model healthy, pro-social behaviours allow participants to develop trusted connections they may not otherwise have. These relationships often extend beyond the clubs influencing the participants whole ecosystem.

90%

felt they could be themselves in their Àban group

100%

trusted these new people they had met.

"The clubs give you a break from the constant social pressure teens experience. The number of new people I've met through Àban who are amazing is extraordinary!!!"

We can also understand about our longer term impact through the young people who decide to keep in touch with us and share the impact Àban has had on their lives. Tess says,

"Some years ago I decided to join a swim academy after school. I had no idea that moments decision would completely change my trajectory in life. After the swim academy I joined bike club and started my Gold Duke of Edinburgh. I met some of my best friends through these programs and they helped me to see how capable I was when I struggled to see it. I even got my first job at Àban!"

