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For immediate release

**FIFE'S YOUTH AGAIN TARGETED FOR HELP BY LIFE CHANGING CHARITY
Ten pupils selected for Arctic experience with The Polar Academy**

After recently completing a rigorous selection weekend at Glenmore Lodge in the Scottish Highlands, ten teenagers from Coupar in Fife have been selected to benefit from the life-changing work of Scottish charity, The Polar Academy. As part of their involvement, the eight female and two male participants will undertake a self-guided 100km, 10-day expedition in Eastern Greenland next April.

All of the youths selected for the expedition team (names listed below) are between 13-16 years of age and pupils at Bell Baxter High School in Fife where the school motto is 'I am being prepared for life.' An additional ten pupils from the school have been selected for the (back-up) leadership team. Two of the participants, Emily (expedition team) and Stephanie Birrell (leadership team) are twins. Kirsty Simcock, a drama and guidance teacher at the school will also be part of the expedition team.

It is the second occasion in three years that a Fife secondary school has benefited from the transformative work of the charity. In 2017/2018, pupils from Lochgelly High School in Fife participated in The Polar Academy, a charity that has been described as delivering Europe's toughest youth training programme.

The Polar Academy was set-up in 2013 Craig Mathieson, Scotland's greatest living polar explorer. His vision is to inspire youth through exploration and to help young people positively transform a life blighted by crushed self-confidence, anxiety and / or a lack of self-esteem.

Over the past six years, 50 year-old Mathieson has worked closely with teachers to identify what he calls 'invisible' youths. To date, five expeditions involving pupils from a total of eleven secondary schools have experienced the life-changing methods deployed by the charity that helps participants to redefine their physical and mental limits. Over 70,000 youths have already been engaged and inspired by the charity.

Carol Ann Penrose, who since August last year has been Head Teacher of Bell Baxter High School was previously the rector of Lochgelly High School and was part of the Lochgelly expedition team throughout 2017/2018. She recalled: "The calm, understated approach of Craig (Mathieson) and his guides really gets results. They quietly instil a 'can do' mind-set in the participants. You come to recognise that with a little more self-belief you can accept and overcome challenges."

Craig Mathieson reminded the pupils from Bell Baxter High School that their selection into the programme, following a weekend of physical and mental challenges at Glenmore Lodge

in early June is only the beginning of their 9-month journey to positively transform their young lives. He commented: "It's a tough selection process and the pupils from Bell Baxter High School who have come through should be proud of their achievement.

"However, now the hard work really begins. Supported by the school and their families, the youths will now need to fully commit to the programme that will include undertaking regular physical training. Like the many positively transformed youths who have gone before them, The Polar Academy will prepare the individuals to work as a team, culminating in a 10-day, unsupported expedition in Eastern Greenland. Everyone will haul their own 45kg sledge, navigate, camp and cook in temperatures as low as minus 30C.

"In the months ahead, these teenagers will encounter and overcome challenges that steadily develop self-confidence and instil the realisation that with focus and effort the seemingly impossible can be achieved. They will return to Scotland as young adults equipped with a can do attitude. Crucially, they will be more than ready to inspire thousands of other youths with the message that with sustained effort and focus, goals and dreams can be achieved."

In the Arctic, accompanied by a doctor and expert guides, pupils will conduct scientific experiments to support the Scottish school curriculum and to further understanding of the impact of global warming. Mathieson, who in 2013 was named the first Explorer in Residence of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in 129 years, is also a STEM ambassador for Scotland.

Despite its growing success, The Polar Academy remains wholly dependent on donations to deliver its programme that costs £170,000 to operate and to which the participants and their families are not asked to contribute. Chris Tiso, CEO of Tiso the outdoor adventure retail specialist and Cornhill Building Services (CBS) are among founding supporters of the charity whose trustees are drawn from the fields of education, business, exploration and the media.

www.thepolaracademy.org

Notes to the editor

The Polar Academy 2019/2020 Expedition Team:

1. Emily Birrell
2. Sophie Blair
3. Lauren Calley
4. Ember Davidson
5. Eve Gill
6. Leah Graham
7. Blair McDougall
8. Molly Poolman
9. Kristian Smurthwaite
10. Molly Turnbull
11. + drama and guidance teacher Kirsty Simcock

The Polar Academy 2019/2020 Leadership Team

1. Stephanie Birrell
2. Lara Burdett

3. Jorja Darlington
4. Louis Allison Finch
5. Rachel Murray
6. Boo Scott
7. Bryce Tyndall
8. Robbie Williams
9. Kayleigh Yorke
10. Charlotte Youngson

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