



## **Is that on the SCQF...? National Navigation Award Scheme (NNAS) – Bronze, Silver and Gold Navigator Awards by Nigel Williams, Board Member at NNAS**

The National Navigation Award Scheme (NNAS) is a Scottish charity which began in 1995.

Navigation is a life skill and the scheme is relevant to anyone interested in being in the outdoors and using a map to find their way. It is suitable for age groups 12 and upwards and around 50,000 people of all ages have gained an NNAS award over the years.

There are 3 levels: Bronze, Silver & Gold Navigator Awards at SCQF levels 4/5/6 respectively. Each level requires 12 hours' contact time which can be delivered over two days or spread over a much longer period, perhaps as part of another programme such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) Scheme. The Bronze NNAS content exactly matches the Bronze DofE, Silver NNAS meets the needs of Silver and most Gold DofE expeditions, with Gold covering the skills of remote mountain navigation in poor weather.

Map Reading in the class room is often numeracy based static exercises with little real life relevance or consequences, the teaching methodology dates back to the 1930s for military purposes.

Navigation for work or recreation requires simultaneous interpretation of the map and ground whilst on the move. Fundamentally navigation is a decision making process which has consequences: it requires planning and problem-solving skills, therefore, confidence plays a big part. Confidence in an unfamiliar environment and confidence in one's navigation and decision making skills. NNAS's strap line is "*navigate with confidence*".

NNAS has mandatory training for all tutors delivering the syllabus, and each level is carefully designed to build confidence by following the natural human cognitive navigation and wayfinding development. The natural progressions of exploration are to initially follow paths and tracks (Bronze), progressing to taking short cuts across country between paths or going a short way off a path to a view point (Silver), to navigation off paths in remote wild country (Gold).

Navigation is a practical outdoor activity, it helps people engage with the environment and enjoy the many benefits that offers. Not being able to use a map can be a barrier in later life to accessing and valuing the outdoor environment.

It is relevant to anyone considering employment in countryside management, tourism and adventure education and can engage the less academically inclined. Being able to use a map and navigate enables a level of independence in the outdoor workplace. The programme also offers a small step in bridging the attainment gap within schools.

Feedback from a Bronze run by Natural England:

*"The course was accessible, engaging and challenging in parts and I have to be honest it wasn't until we got out in the field (on the first trail walk exercise) that I realised how rusty I was. I am glad I did the Bronze before diving into Silver, absolutely. Over the duration of the course, the framework and progression of tasks worked really well in terms of my learning and development. It was clear that the tasks had been planned thoroughly, and provided the opportunity to demonstrate my development, whilst being assessed in the field and back in the classroom."*

For more information on NNAS and the Awards available visit <https://nnas.org.uk/>