



# Edinburgh creatives join the Pilgrimage for COP26

Artist Natalie Taylor lives in North Edinburgh and on Monday morning she joined the Pilgrimage for COP26 when it set off from Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop en route for South Queensferry.

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A pilgrimage from Dunbar to Glasgow to reflect on the climate and ecological crisis in anticipation of COP26 passed through Edinburgh PHOTOS ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter  
Listen to the audio embedded at the foot of this article.

Natalie is the John Muir Fellow working at North Light Arts based in Dunbar and at present is trying to answer this question: “Earth – is soil alive?” She created a wearable version of the soil/food web in the form of a hand dyed cape for the Keeper of the Soils and was wearing it this morning. The Keeper (who may be a different person each time) was taking part in the pilgrimage collecting soils which will then be kept safe for performances and events. The cape has some very interesting pockets decorated with children’s drawings of soil creatures and then embroidered by ladies from Dunbar.

She left the pilgrims who walked on to Silverknowes as she and Ali Pretty of Beach of Dreams token minutes or so to visit Granton Castle Walled Garden. There Ingsay Balfour handed over

some of the pristine soil from the part of the garden tended by community gardener, Kirsty Sutherland. The small amount of soil came from a dye plant bed where *Coreopsis* grows.

This soil contrasts with that around ForthQuarter Park and also the nearby gasometer where the land will require decontamination before the development of houses which is planned there.

As part of a small ceremony, Natalie read a small quotation from Glenn Albrecht, an environmental philosopher based in Australia about soils. He has become known for his work in developing the idea of symbiocene which means a new epoch when humans will no longer dominate. Instead of destroying the planet there will require to be nurturing of the earth to fight global warming and secure the future.

The quotation read: "The idea of a Symbiocene, a time of living together, a mutual flourishing of all living beings depends on the flourishing of soils so finding kin with other species means also recognising the experiences that unite our own."



A pilgrimage from Dunbar to Glasgow to reflect on the climate and ecological crisis in anticipation of COP26 passed through Edinburgh. Natalie Taylor of North Light Arts, wearing the Keeper of the Soils cape which she has made received some soil from the Granton Castle Walled Garden from Ingsay Baalfour while Ali Pretty of Beach of Dreams looks on. PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter

Natalie said: "I've been fascinated by plants and seeds for years now and have made loads of work (sculptures, paintings, animations) about seeds since leaving art college. The subject of soil was only indirectly interesting to me at first, as a medium in which most plants are grown, but then when I was invited by North Light Arts in 2015 to do a micro residency about soil I became really interested in how important and yet sadly overlooked soil actually is. It dawned on me how much we

all depend on soil for our survival and yet we take it almost completely for granted. When NLA invited me for this fellowship on the subject of soil I jumped at the chance. Here was an opportunity to find out how East Lothian's community relates to the soils around us, what food it supplies, and what sort of soil husbandry is going on here and even better, a chance to make art with people about and with soil.\_

“During the UN International Year of Soils back in 2015 I learned that around 30% of the world's arable soils are now damaged in some way, reducing our ability to grow food and I made the Alchemy of Soil painting in response. It is created using soil as a painting medium and it's a sort of Soil/ Food web; showing the relationship between soil and our food system. The framework is based on a famous icon from Tibetan Buddhism, the Kalachakra mandala and all the images within it are about soil creatures, the food we eat, the weather which produces our food and our food distribution system. It's an attempt at putting this very complex relationship into visual form.”

Natalie said: “Environmental concerns have informed my work for most of my career, including our treatment of seeds, and our increasing control over the five main food crops we rely on.

“More recently, our abuse of global soils, and arable land through useage of pesticides, fertilisers, and urban development.

Projects involving connecting people with nature always interest me, particularly children.”



A pilgrimage from Dunbar to Glasgow to reflect on the climate and ecological crisis in anticipation of COP26 passed through Edinburgh with participation from Natalie Taylor of North Light Arts, Tamsin Grainger poet and walk leader and Ali Pretty of Beach of Dreams PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter



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## Trinity Tunnel

Natalie was also joined on the six hour walk by Edinburgh based-writer and walking artist, Tamsin Grainger, who was leading the walk to South Queensferry through Dalmeny Estate after exiting Edinburgh through Cramond.

Grainger has created a site specific sound-art installation in the Trinity Tunnel on route 13 of the Edinburgh cycle path network where it passes underneath East Trinity Road and we spoke to her while walking here.



Tamsin Grainger

It is called No Birds Land and when you visit the tunnel there are QR codes to listen to the poem which Grainger has written, and which she narrates, to highlight the lack of birdsong in the tunnel. There are no birds which land or alight here (there is nowhere for them to perch) although the odd one does pass through. This tunnel which was built to transport goods from Granton Harbour and the rest of the city has become a sort of No Man's Land for birds.

Walkers or cyclists on the approach to the tunnel are encouraged to stop and listen to the birds. Inside the sandstone tunnel there is a series of hooks on the wall which supported cables and wires until the tunnel was no longer used for trains in 1986. The bunting placed there is made of found materials with illustrations of birds on it. Sadly the bunting which is an integral part of the installation was damaged when we reached the tunnel but it will be reinstated, hopefully later today. It has been in place since August without any difficulty like this.

Grainger told us: "No Birds Land is a response to the of some of our nesting birds. In the two minutes it takes to walk through the tunnel, it is believed that two pairs of breeding birds will disappear."

Listen to the audio we recorded while walking with the pilgrims – who carried on to South Queensferry although I turned back at the Granton Castle Walled Garden.