



# Biodiversity Education, Awareness and Involvement

## 1. Introduction

Education, awareness and involvement are essential for helping individuals and communities in the County develop the knowledge, values and skills necessary to understand, appreciate and manage both landscape and biodiversity. Implicit within this is the realisation that both landscape and biodiversity are changing as a result of climate change and along with other factors this necessitates a re-appraisal of the way in which we manage, interact with and take action to protect and enhance our local environment.

The vision of the Worcestershire *Learning for Sustainability Strategy* (a strategy of the Worcestershire Learning for Sustainability Forum that spans County and District Councils and NGOs) is as follows:

*"That everyone involved in education, formal and informal, at all levels, will play a key role in creating a more sustainable future, locally and globally".*

There is a clear need to link the vision and targets of the Learning for Sustainability strategy with the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.

## 2. Current Status

There are a number of key themes that need to be addressed through **biodiversity education** activity and several national plans and strategies that have an enormous influence within both formal and informal education, some with particular focus on outdoor and environmental education, which provide clear opportunities for this LBAP. There are also major resourcing implications to undertaking biodiversity education activity: this will necessitate a focus on key priority areas and further development to then extend the scope of the work over the next 10 years.

### Themes

- We need to ensure a focus on **local biodiversity, and its links to global biodiversity**. There is wide awareness of globally threatened habitats and species but less so an appreciation of the special and unique wildlife within our own County.
- It is essential that the possible implications of **climate change** are widely appreciated. There are a number of threads that need to be highlighted:
  - Building an awareness of the links between our lifestyles and climate change.
  - Making the links between the threat to habitats and species and the need to buffer the ecological changes that are occurring.
  - Helping people to explore what they can do to make a difference in the effort to mitigate the effects of climate change on our natural environment.
- The **links between schools and their wider community** can be an exciting and productive one in linking people, place and wildlife. There is

a dynamic interface between schools and the stakeholders with direct influence on biodiversity in their area such as landowners and local businesses.

- As a rural County the theme of **food and farming** is an important one that needs to make specific reference to the other three themes above.

### **National Plans and Strategies**

The following three areas of National focus are important for all those considering biodiversity education:

- **Every Child Matters:** with its focus on five key outcomes - Stay Safe, Be Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve, Making a Positive Contribution and Economic Well-being - this is one of the most significant drivers for schools at present. Major opportunities for links to this exist within biodiversity education.
- **Sustainable Communities:** a major national set of Government initiatives to involve local communities in the planning process, something that has clear relevance to the LBAP.
- **Outdoor Learning Manifesto:** launched by Government to act as a shared statement of intent for all who see the benefits of outdoor learning to young people and want to help bring about a vision of high quality, meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom.

### **Mechanisms for biodiversity education**

- **The DCSF Sustainable Schools Framework and the International Eco Schools Award:** offer clear opportunities for schools to focus on biodiversity through looking at their school grounds, local and global biodiversity, and most significantly these approaches place the role of children and young people at the heart of the thinking and decision making process and the action that will be taken as a result.
- **Forest Schools:** supports teachers and children in participating in outdoor education in a woodland environment
- **Duke of Edinburgh Award:** offers students opportunities for involvement in practical biodiversity action, for example on local nature reserves.
- **Extended Services:** there are a number of opportunities for biodiversity education within Extended Services provision. This could include summer schemes and after school clubs focusing on local wildlife.
- **Curriculum review:** this will be another key driver for biodiversity education with opportunities for teachers to link different elements of the curriculum around the theme of sustainability and biodiversity. This could be one of the major drivers for convincing school leadership to take the biodiversity and sustainability themes forward as unifying ones for their schools.

## **3. Current Factors for Consideration**

### **Focus and limitations of this plan**

Many of the Habitat and Species Action Plans within the Worcestershire BAP contain reference to raising awareness and improving understanding of biodiversity amongst different sectors of the community, notably policy and decision-makers, landowners and those living within areas of the county having particular importance for certain habitats and species. The focus of this plan, therefore, is on the awareness raising and educational work that is being

undertaken within the formal and informal education sector (schools, higher education, life long learning) and other settings where young people and their families can be involved in biodiversity activity.

For immediate priority within this LBAP there will be a focus on:

- Those working with schools and higher education sectors (from Local Authorities, Statutory agencies, NGO's etc.)
- Workers extending the role of schools within local communities through Extended Services
- Teachers and Head teachers
- Children and young people attending nursery, school and college
- Students in higher education

The following are sectors where there is a need for support and input but where few resources currently exist. Over the life of the LBAP opportunities for working with the following sectors will need to be developed:

- Community workers
- Health Sector
- Public Utilities
- Potentially other key Public Sectors e.g. Fire and Police services

## 4. Current Action

### Approaches

Current focus for action in Worcestershire can be summarised under the following headings:

- **Supporting whole school approaches such as Sustainable Schools and Eco Schools:** this is vital to help give biodiversity a high focus within each school's Development Plan and Curriculum Plan. Emphasising whole school approaches gives a joined up focus to biodiversity across Curriculum, Campus and Community more likely and will radically enhance the impact of biodiversity education work taking place.
- **Supporting and training teachers to deliver biodiversity education:** this takes place through INSET training, District Eco School meetings and Conferences, signposting to relevant literature etc.
- **Enabling access to the outdoors:** this takes place via tailor made programmes for students of all ages and abilities at locations around the county. Visits to outdoor education centres such as Bishop's Wood and to nature reserves owned by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust as well as the promotion of the use of school grounds encourages experience of the world beyond the classroom.
- **Promoting and supporting projects and school grounds work at individual schools:** this may encompass one-off projects undertaken by that school or encouragement to join in with countywide initiatives e.g. Let the Grass Grow Long. School grounds development work is supported by, amongst others, Bishop's Wood Centre.
- **Events programmes** run by the County and District Councils, working direct with local schools or through family holiday activities.
- **Promotion and support of the Forest Schools initiative** by Bishop's Wood Centre.

## 5. Targets

Target Type	Target Text	Baseline value	Target Value	Target Timescale
Expand	Increase the number of active Forest Schools in the county	260	300	2017
Expand	Increase the number of schools in the county engaged in DCSF Sustainable Schools and Eco Schools Award programmes and activities across curriculum, campus and community	200	250	2017
Expand	Increase the number of schools undertaking audits through the Eco Schools Green Flag award programme and who subsequently put in place a management plan for school grounds biodiversity	35	80	2017
Expand	Increase the number of schools taking the auditing / action planning process around the theme of biodiversity out into their communities	0	20	2017

## 6. Actions

Action Code	Action Category	Action Text	Location	Complete Action By	Lead Organisation	Support Organisations
WRC EAI AP 01	1.1	Learning for Sustainability Forum to meet 3 times yearly with biodiversity as a constant agenda item.	Worcestershire	2017	WCC	
WRC EAI AP 02	1.1	Ensure that the two Learning for Sustainability Forum Working Groups - Strategy and Communication / Events - have a biodiversity agenda item at each meeting.	Worcestershire	2017	WCC	
WRC EAI CA 01	2.9	Hold 10 Eco Schools conferences (annual event) with each to have at least one biodiversity element to them.	Worcestershire	2017	WCC	
WRC EAI CP 01	3.17	Two Eco Schools conferences to have an overarching biodiversity theme focused on Worcestershire habitats and species.	Worcestershire	2017	WCC	WWT
WRC EAI CP 02	3.17	Initiate two major biodiversity projects in schools in the lead up to the two Eco Schools conferences to act as a focus for workshops.	Worcestershire	2017	WCC	
WRC EAI CP 03	3.7	Reproduce biodiversity education fact sheets	Worcestershire	2008	WCC	

		following completion of the BAP review.				
<b>WRC EAI CP 04</b>	<b>3.19</b>	Update and improve the schools / biodiversity education pages of the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership website.	Worcestershire	2008	WCC	
<b>WRC EAI CA 02</b>	<b>2.15</b>	Develop and deliver a programme of training events for teachers and other youth workers on basic biodiversity knowledge / techniques / topics / issues.	Worcestershire	2017	WWT	WCC
<b>WRC EAI ID 01</b>	<b>8.2</b>	Produce simple questionnaire for schools to enable them to report on biodiversity education events, activities and visits that have taken place each school year.	Worcestershire	2008	WCC	

<b>WCC</b> – Worcestershire County Council	<b>WWT</b> – Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
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