



REVISED PLAN AUGUST 2021

SCHOOL GROUNDS

1. INTRODUCTION

School grounds can provide a valuable habitat for many native plants and animals, especially where green space may be limited. Sympathetic maintenance regimes can maximise the benefit of boundary features, such as hedgerows and tree belts. Unused corners of recreational areas can be managed to increase the growth of wildflowers and therefore the sites value as invertebrate and bird habitat.



Oak Cottage Primary School, Solihull

School grounds also have great potential for developing young people’s awareness of the environment around them. Having school nature areas, which have been set aside or created especially for environmental education should be valued as it allows children to experience and interact with biodiversity on a daily basis. Such nature areas enable local children to take part in enjoyable activities that benefit nature conservation. The recording, investigation and creation of wildlife habitats and species within school grounds can be used in conjunction with almost all the National Curriculum core subjects and themes. There is also evidence that natural surroundings have a calming effect on people, including children. Biodiversity 2020 (Defra, 2011) identifies ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ as an important area which schools will be encouraged to teach. The government intends to help remove the barriers at schools for teachers to this aspect of teaching.

2.	OBJECTIVES	TARGETS
Associated Action Plans are: ‘Gardens’, ‘Built Environment’, ‘Hedgerows’, ‘Hedgehog’, ‘Bats’, ‘Song Thrush’ and ‘Great Crested Newt’		
PLEASE CONSULT THE ‘GENERIC HABITATS’ ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR OBJECTIVES COMMON TO ALL HABITAT PLANS		
A.	Increase the number of actively managed school grounds.	2026
B.	Produce locality maps showing local biodiversity interest for schools.	2026

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

School grounds come under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Broad Habitat type ‘Built up areas and gardens’ ([Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 1997](#)). The conservation direction for this habitat type is stated as follows in the UK BAP:

“Maintain the existing diversity and extent of wildlife in all urban areas, expanding the range and distribution of rare and common species and enabling this resource to be utilised as an educational tool.”

4. CURRENT STATUS

In 2012 there were 68 primary, 13 secondary and 5 special schools in the Borough of Solihull. In Warwickshire there are 199 primary, 37 secondary, 10 special, 17 independent schools and 5 private schools. In Coventry there are 13 secondary, 89 primary and 11 special schools in the Local Education Authority control. All these school grounds have potential for biodiversity enhancement and use for environmental education.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

A wide range of species and habitats are protected under international and domestic laws, including the [Wild Birds Directive](#) (1979), the [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#) (1981), the [Conservation Regulations](#)(1994) and [EC Habitats Directive](#) (1992). Protection of sites is afforded nationally through [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSI), [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SAC) and [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNR) statutory status. Other sites are offered recognition of their value through LWS status Local Character Areas and identified Landscape Scale Areas. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2021) paragraph 180 states conditions with regard to any development negatively affecting biodiversity, including protected sites, ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats. The Wildlife & Countryside Act and schedule 2 of the [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations](#) (EU exit, 2019) make it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, sell, buy or transport a range of species.

There is a biodiversity duty under the [NERC Act 2006](#).

There is the potential for school grounds to be designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) by the Local Authority. A few school grounds already contain land which is designated as LWS land (formerly known as SINCS) e.g. Tile Hill Lane and Lower Stoke Disused Railway in Coventry. Future LWS designation may involve further schools.

In those cases where planning permission is required, normal planning regulations offer some form of protection from development or land use change.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Habitat

- **Loss of school grounds - through sale and development encroachment, including** school building extensions
- **Lack of or inappropriate management** -clearing of shrubs, filling in ponds and levelling land with hillocks and hollows making them less attractive to wildlife.
- **Lack of funding and manpower for on-going maintenance of wildlife areas.** Grants for school grounds enhancements have tended to overlook on-going maintenance requirements. A keen member of staff may keep on top of the work for a number of years but staff changes often mean that maintenance becomes neglected. Specific management of wildlife areas is rarely part of the ground maintenance contract.

- [OFSTED](#) promotes the **use of school grounds for biodiversity education** both for foundation outdoor curriculum areas and for whole school development.

5. LOCAL ACTION

- Many partners have educational officers who work with, and in schools throughout the region. These can be Local Authority staff as well as through partnerships with external funding e.g. [Landfill Tax](#) credit schemes.
- Up to 2011 Warwickshire County Council provided the [Eco-Schools](#) initiative where 237 schools were registered and working on the programme. 'Ecological Services' continues to offer schools advice on grounds management and biodiversity.
- Warwick County Council works hard to encourage biodiversity and has its own biodiversity strategy for the substantial amount of land it owns including school playing fields. It has been recognised as being the first local authority in the country to display bio-diversity net gain. Biodiversity including an increase of pollinators is encouraged through the Covid-19 recovery plan and the Council Plan 2025. The Council's Forestry Team operates a tree planting scheme and works with voluntary groups and schools to encourage tree planting. Through the Central Warwickshire LEADER programme small orchards of 5-20 trees were planted at 13 schools between 2010-2013; tree planting took place by WCC at Long Itchington School in 2014. A biodiversity survey form for pupils to complete themselves has been circulated to all schools by Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and by the Eco-Schools Environmental Review, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (2020).

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
PLEASE CONSULT THE '<i>GENERIC HABITATS</i>' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL HABITAT PLANS			
Policy, Legislation & Protection			
PL1. Survey, designate and record qualifying educational establishments.	LWSP	LAs HBA	ongoing
PL2. Talk to 30 schools regarding the inclusion of a biodiversity statement in their 'School Development Plans' and /or 'Eco Action Plans'.	WCC	LEAs CCC SMBC	2026

Advisory				
A1. Act in an advisory capacity to provide nature conservation / biodiversity advice to 25 schools.	WCC	WWT SMBC	LEAs CCC	ongoing
Research & Monitoring				
RM1. Identify 10 schools that are managing their grounds for wildlife, to act as 'Best Practice' Case Studies.	WCC	LEAs SMBC	WWT	achieved in 2015
RM2. Identify 10 schools using their school grounds as an outdoor classroom / learning resource, e.g. Forest Schools.	WCC	LAs CCC	SMBC	achieved in 2015
RM3. Develop an easy to use biodiversity survey form and circulate to schools for pupils to complete themselves.	WCC	WWT SMBC	LEAs CCC	achieved in 2015
RM4. Continue to collate evidence of school grounds undertaking positive habitat management including any wildlife records from the surveys.	WCC	LEAs WWT WBRC	CCC SMBC	ongoing
Communication, Education & Publicity				
CP1. Deliver training days to 10 schools on developing the biodiversity value of school grounds.	WWT	LEAs CCC	SMBC	2026
CP2. Promote awareness of the need and importance of nature conservation in 30 schools.	WCC	LEAs WWT	CCC SMBC	ongoing

Abbreviations: CCC – Coventry City Council, HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit, LAs - Local Authorities, LEAs – Local Education Authorities, LWSP – Local Wildlife Sites Project, SMBC – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Records Centre, WCC - Warwickshire County Council, WWT - Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS

From 2015–2020 there will be a rolling programme of reporting on progress, of 10 action plans per year with an annual summary of results. Progress with this plan up to 2015 can be seen at <https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP>

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kirby, P. (1992). [Habitat management for Invertebrates](#): a Practical Handbook. RSPB.

Falk, S.J. (2009) Warwickshire's Wildflowers - provides habitat-specific species lists, and explanations of habitats from a botanical viewpoint.

Stephen Moss (2012) [Children & Nature](#) – a report commissioned by the National Trust

Lawton, J.H. (2010) [Making Space for Nature](#): a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network. Report to Defra, advocating a landscape-scale approach guided by four key principles, summarised as '*more, bigger, better and joined*'.

DEFRA (2011) [Biodiversity 2020](#): A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

HBA (2013) The State of the Habitats of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull.

RSPB (2016) [State of Nature](#) – a stocktake of all our native wildlife by over 50 wildlife organisations.

Natural England (2016) [Conservation Strategy for the 21st Century](#). Sets out how NE will help deliver DEFRA's ambitions for the environment to reverse biodiversity loss, sustain distinctive landscapes and enhance engagement with nature.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (2018) [The Living Planet Report](#): aiming higher. Published in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

UK [Urban](#) Biodiversity Action Plan (JNCC Old broad habitat type, 1995-1999, now archived)

Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) for Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull – mapping data set and associated information. Phase 1 ([JNCC](#)) 1996-2002 and Phase 2 (Local Wildlife Sites) ongoing.

[Buglife](#) - the Invertebrate Conservation Trust provides information on the habitat-management requirements of key invertebrates.

[Plantlife](#) - a charity which carries out plant species and habitat conservation, owns and manages nature reserves, campaigns, and raises awareness through education.

The Council for [Learning Outside the Classroom](#) - is a national voice providing resources for practitioners of learning outside the classroom.

[Learning through Landscapes](#) - is a UK charity dedicated to enhancing outdoor learning and play for children.

Natural England: Booklets on wildlife gardening and [Wildlife Gardening Forum](#)

[Royal Society for the Protection of Birds](#), The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551.

[Mammal Society](#)

The Woodland Trust's "[Nature Detectives](#)" project helps schools to provide outdoor experiences and improve environmental literacy.

[Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#) Education Team is based at Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry, CV3 3GW. Tel. 02476 302912.

Solihull Ecoschools - contact is Sarah Lardner. Email: slardner@solihull.gov.uk

Coventry Ecoschools - contact is Murray Hayden. Email: murray.hayden@coventry.gov.uk

[theWILDnetwork](#) – a film-led movement of organisations and individuals looking at the increasingly disparate connection between children and nature.

[Coombe Country Park](#) - the education service provides a range of exciting activities for early years, primary, secondary, FE colleges and universities to encourage a sense of wonder and appreciation for the environment through positive outdoor experiences in formal and informal learning situations.

[Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team](#) (WART) is dedicated to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Warwickshire. We aim to encourage people to learn about, protect and conserve these animals and their habitats.

[Butterfly Conservation](#) is devoted to saving butterflies, moths and their habitats throughout the UK.

The [Royal Society Partnership Grants Scheme](#) helps schools to run exciting and innovative projects in partnership with a professional scientist or engineer. The grants can also provide an opportunity for pupils to get out of the classroom on field or residential trips.

[Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#) (2014) – the PolliNation project has won Heritage Lottery Funding to help 260 schools across the UK to transform their grounds into pollinator-friendly habitats. A key driver is to increase awareness of nature and particularly insects.

10. CONTACT

Barbara Golding,
Email: barbara.golding@btinternet.com