

LANCASHIRE BAP TEMPLATE FOR HABITAT ACTION PLANS

SCHOOL GROUNDS

(Line Drawing of Habitat)

Summary

School grounds comprise valued open spaces used for learning and recreation. Many include features which form a significant resource for wildlife, including flower beds, trees, shrubs, meadows, ponds or areas of wetland. They can provide significant opportunities for Lancashire's youth to have direct contact with biodiversity.

Main factors affecting school grounds include increased disturbance and loss of habitat due to increased pupil numbers, inappropriate management and vandalism.

Action Plan Aim

To assess, monitor and promote the biodiversity in school grounds throughout Lancashire.

Habitat Description

This Action Plan covers Lancashire's School Grounds, including those in Blackburn with Darwen Borough and Blackpool Borough. These are valued open spaces used as learning and recreational areas. School grounds are varied and may include areas of regularly mown grass, flowerbeds, ornamental trees and shrubs, fruit trees and bushes. They may also contain meadows, rough unmanaged areas of grasses and other plants, areas of scrub, a pond or a wetland area. Some may be bordered by hedgerows or stonewalls.

Many of these features are valuable wildlife habitats, which may also be found elsewhere in the wider landscape. All school grounds, large or small, are potential nature reserves, within wider rural or urban areas in which wildlife is increasingly under threat. School grounds may also act as wildlife corridors and "stepping-stones" allowing plant and animal life to migrate between larger areas of suitable habitat.

School grounds may support flowering plants, ferns, mosses and liverworts, lichens, fungi, small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects and other invertebrates. Wildflowers may provide food for butterflies and moths; while frogs, toads and newts may breed in school ponds. Fruit trees and bushes may feed small birds and mammals. This "Backyard Biodiversity" can thrive when school grounds are managed in a wildlife-friendly way.

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Many of the features found within school grounds are also found within gardens, allotments, churchyards and cemeteries, for which there are separate Habitat Action Plans. Ponds and their surrounding vegetation are to be dealt with in more detail within the proposed Pondscapes Habitat Action Plan. There are also separate Habitat Action Plans for unimproved neutral grassland, unimproved calcareous grassland, and broadleaved and mixed woodland. These may be of relevance to some school grounds.

School grounds form a significant resource for wildlife within a Lancashire context. Here there are significant opportunities for Lancashire's youth to have direct contact with biodiversity, and to learn how to look after and encourage wildlife.

National Status

The four countries of the UK have differing education systems.

In England, the national and post 16 curriculum offers opportunity for young people to study biodiversity within their school grounds, mainly through science and geography – '*Life Processes and Living Things*.' In addition, natural habitats within school grounds act as a context for literacy, numeracy, information communication, technology and art.

No information on the biodiversity resource of school grounds appears to have been collated at the UK or England levels.

Regional Status

No relevant information appears to have been collated at the NW England level.

Local Status

There is no collated data on the grounds of Lancashire's schools. However, there are twenty-six nursery schools, four hundred and ninety-three primary schools, eighty-eight secondary schools, thirty-two special schools, and sixteen short stay schools in Lancashire County. In Blackburn with Darwen Borough there are ten pre-schools, nine nursery schools, fifty-four primary schools, eight secondary schools and four special schools. In Blackpool Borough there are thirty-two primary schools, eight secondary schools and four special schools. The total area of school grounds is therefore likely to be significant. A substantial proportion of this area is likely to be managed as open grassland and used to play team sports, so the *Amenity Grassland and Sportsfields* urban Habitat Action Plan is also likely to be relevant.

Currently, of those schools working towards the *Eco-Schools Award*, eighteen have achieved bronze awards and nine silver awards. All are in Lancashire County.

Current factors affecting the habitat

- Increase in pupil numbers leading to extension of school buildings and car parking facilities
- Loss, or relocation of schools and sale of land for development
- Inappropriate management
- Vandalism

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- Increased disturbance and loss of habitat caused by increased use of school grounds as an educational resource

Indicators of Habitat Quality

The authors are not aware of a satisfactory definition of habitat quality for school grounds that can be simply expressed in educational terms. School grounds per se are not a specific habitat in ecological terms, but may support various habitats, e.g. improved grassland, species-rich neutral grassland, broadleaved woodland, open water.

Important Sites

Rossall School Fields – Ditches and Bankings, Fleetwood, Wyre Borough (BHS 34NW01);
Fleetwood Promenade – Coastal and Dune Grassland (Rossall School to Marine Gardens), Wyre Borough (BHS 34NW02)

Chatburn School Wildlife Garden (see web site below)

Current Action / Mechanisms

- *Policy*

National Curriculum

There are many opportunities for enriching the curriculum through the use of school grounds. In *Science*, key concepts such as comparison of habitats, how animals and plants are adapted to their environments, and feeding relationships (food chains and webs) can easily be demonstrated. Schools should build up their own resource banks of materials and 'props' (many are already published and in use) so that they can be taken 'off-the-shelf' whenever they are needed.

There are also opportunities to practice *Geography* skills using school grounds, by setting up orienteering trails for different age groups (e.g. as at Coates Lane primary school, Barnoldswick, Pendle Borough). With a bit more detailed planning and construction, school grounds can also be useful additions to the *Literacy* and *Numeracy* schemes of work. Lastly, *Art* and *Citizenship* can also benefit greatly. There are many organisations in Lancashire that can advise on and even fund these sorts of developments.

- *Site Safeguard*

School grounds are areas of protected open space and cannot be put to alternative uses without special permission from the relevant government department.

Three schools in Lancashire have part of their grounds designated as part of Biological Heritage Sites.

- *Land Management*

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Schools are responsible for the maintenance of their own grounds. Management and maintenance of school grounds may be carried out through Service Level Agreements between schools and Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, or Blackpool Borough Council or through private contractors.

As part of the County's LA21 programme, Lancashire County Council has pledged itself to "*develop a service for the management of school grounds for wildlife*".

- *Advisory*

Support for the Eco-School Awards <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/> is provided by ENCAMS' Wigan office, and for the National Healthy School Standard <http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/> it is provided by the relevant LEA.

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire LEAs provide curriculum support services, offering advice to schools about the national curriculum. Their respective advisors on Science and Geography cover biodiversity.

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, and LCC Countryside Services offer advice and support to schools wishing to enhance their school grounds for biodiversity.

Lancashire County Council sponsors and supports the "[Making Ground](#)" web site, "*a step-by-step guide to achieving the most from your school's grounds*". The site is specifically geared to schools in Lancashire. It contains examples of school grounds development project from across the county, as well as links to local sources of advice and information

Other organisations working within Lancashire promote environmental awareness and offer assistance in all aspects of biodiversity in school grounds. These include:

BTCV (Lancashire)
Burnley Sustainability Action Project (BSAP)
Groundwork Trust (Lancashire)
The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside

- *Research and Monitoring*

Not known.

- *Public Relations*

Not known.

Habitat Targets

Target	Area	Measure	Timescale
Assess biodiversity resource within school grounds	Lancashire	Resource assessed	2012
Ensure that school grounds within	Lancashire	School grounds appropriately	2015

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Lancashire are appropriately managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity		managed	
To raise awareness of biodiversity, especially amongst pupils, parents and school staff	Lancashire	Awareness raised	Ongoing

Proposed Actions

Action (priority: H, M, L)	Area	Measure / Milestone	Partners	Timescale
<i>Research and monitoring</i>				
Encourage schools to carry out biodiversity audits of school grounds	Lancashire	50% of schools contacted and encouraged to conduct an audit	LCC, TWT, LA's	2009
<i>Site safeguard and monitoring</i>				
Encourage schools to participate in annual surveys (as part of the Eco-schools programme where appropriate), and encourage the submission of records to the Biodiversity Partnership.	Lancashire	50% of schools contacted and encouraged to participate in surveys	LCC, TWT, LA's	2009
Encourage the development of conservation areas within school grounds	Lancashire	30% of schools to develop conservation area.	LCC, TWT, LA's	2012
<i>Habitat protection and management</i>				
Encourage the incorporation of biodiversity aims within new Service Level Agreements between schools and their contracted grounds managers	Lancashire	20% of schools to include biodiversity measures in new service level agreements.	LCC, TWT, LA's	2010

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(including the provision of training for contractors and grounds managers). (H)					
Promote cross-directorate local authority teams to support management of school grounds to conserve and enhance biodiversity (H)	Lancashire	Team developed	LCC, TWT, LA's		2008
Encourage schools to develop and adopt a school grounds biodiversity management plan or even incorporate one into their school improvement plan (M)	Lancashire	75% of schools to have adopted a biodiversity management plan.	LA's, BTCV, LCC, BSAP, TWT		2012
Minimum of one school per year achieving an Eco-school Flag award.	Lancashire	1 Eco-School Flag achieved per year.	ENCAMS, LA's, BTCV, BSAP, LCC , TWT		2012
Disseminate examples of good practice amongst schools.	Lancashire	Examples of good practise identified and shared.	LA's, BTCV, BSAP, LCC , TWT		2010
Advisory					
Provide advice and support to schools on carrying out biodiversity audits of school grounds.	Lancashire	Advisory documents produced.	LA's, LCC, TWT		2010
Provide advice on ways of utilising school grounds within the national curriculum, including fulfilling those requirements relating to biodiversity.	Lancashire	Advisory documents produced.	LCC , LA's		2008
Publicity					
Promote	Lancashire	"Backyard	LCC , LA's,		2010

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“Backyard Biodiversity Day” among schools on an annual basis.		Biodiversity Day” observed by 30% of schools.	TWT	
Offer to give talks on biodiversity to schools.	Lancashire	Biodiversity talks regularly given to schools.	LA's, BTCV, BSAP, LCC, TWT	Ongoing

Links with other local and national policies

The National Curriculum

Schools Improvement Plans

Sources of information

British Wildlife in Danger (Resource booklet for teachers – Key Stage 2).
International Centre for Conservation Education.

School Grounds Habitat Action Plan for Bexley.

School Grounds Habitat Action Plan for Flintshire

LEA advisors

Abbreviations

BwDB = Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
 BIBC = Blackpool Borough Council
 BSAP = Burnley Sustainability Action Project,
 BTCV = British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (Lancashire),
 LCC = Lancashire County Council,
 LEA = Local Education Authority,
 TWT = The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside.

Related Action Plans

People; all other urban HAPs and SAPs

References and additional reading

Web Sites:

The “Backyard Biodiversity Day” web site:
 The charity, *Action for Biology in Education* joins forces with the *Chelsea Physic Garden* - London's secret botanic garden - to create an annual, national event that brings children face-to-face with the nature right under their noses. Imagine children all over Britain celebrating the amazing variety of life that exists in their back gardens, school grounds, local streets, parks, countryside and seashore.
<http://www.gondar.co.uk/biodiversity/>

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The “Chatburn Wildlife” web site:

This is an on-line resource for Lanehead Quarry Biodiversity Corner and Chatburn School Wildlife Garden. Both are at Chatburn, near Clitheroe, Ribble Valley Borough, Lancashire:

www.chatburnwildlife.org.uk

The “Eco-Schools” web site:

Eco-Schools is a programme for promoting environmental awareness in a way that links to many curriculum subjects, including citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and education for sustainable development. It is also an award scheme that will raise the profile of award-winning schools in the wider community.

www.eco-schools.org.uk

The “Education for a Greener Future” (EFG) web site:

The *Education for a Greener Future* project runs waste awareness and waste reduction programmes for schools throughout Lancashire. It is based at the Environment Education Centre, Penwortham and is run by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.

<http://www.greenerfuture.com/>

The “Learning Through Landscapes” web site:

This is the web site of the national charity dedicated to helping schools improve their grounds for the benefit of children:

www.ltl.org.uk/

The “Making Ground” web site:

This is a step-by-step guide from Lancashire County Council on achieving the most from your school’s grounds.

www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/schoolgrounds/index.asp

The “Wildlife After School Project” (WASP) web site:

The *WASP* runs after school wildlife clubs in nine primary and four high schools across Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. It is based at the Environment Education Centre, Penwortham and is run by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, with funding from the New Opportunities Fund. The *WASP* is not able to expand the project into other schools. However, it would be very happy to provide ideas for activities and share resources with people interested in setting up wildlife or environmental clubs.

<http://www.wasp.ik.com/>

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside:

“Environment Education Centre” web site: <http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/penwortham/>

This well-resourced centre, based with National Grid plc at Penwortham, near Preston, is dedicated to environment education. A team of professional Wildlife Trust environment educators based there service the environmental needs of Lancashire’s schools (including those in Blackburn with Darwen Borough and Blackpool Borough).

The “Wired for Health” web sites: These are a series of web sites providing health information for a range of audiences. They relate to the National Curriculum and the National Healthy School Standard.

<http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/>

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Organisations

Association for Science Education <http://www.ase.org.uk/>

Field Studies Council <http://www.field-studies-council.org/>

Council for Environmental Education <http://www.cee.org.uk/>

Mammal Society (Mammalaction)
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/newsite/mammalaction.shtml>

National Association for Environmental Education <http://www.naee.org.uk/>

National Association of Field Studies Officers <http://www.nafso.org.uk/>

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Wildlife Explorers)
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/youth/>

The Wildlife Trusts (Wildlife Watch) <http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/>

Woodland Trust <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/discovery/>

Contacts

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council:

Anthony Newsham, Education Planning Officer, Education & Lifelong Learning Dept.
Tel: 01254-585 413, E-mail: anthony.newsham@blackburn.gov.uk

Blackpool Borough Council:

Education, Leisure & Cultural Services, Tel: 01253-476 637; Fax: 01253-476 504; E-mail: schoolaccess@blackpool.gov.uk

Eco-Schools:

Cath Darbyshire & Carl Thurlston, Eco-Schools (NW England), ENCAMS, Elizabeth House, The Pier, Wigan WN3 4EX, Tel: 01942 824620

Lancashire County Council:

- *Countryside Service:* Nick Osbourne, Countryside Manager, LCC Environment Directorate, Tel: 01772-339 200
- *Healthy Schools Programme:* Heather Hardy, Tel: 01257-226 900
- *Making Ground:* Rosemary Pritchard, Tel: 01772-534 197
Fax: 01772-533 423
- *National Curriculum and Schools Improvement Plans:* Julian Sims, Schools Science Adviser, LCC Environment Directorate, Tel: 01254-580 530, E-mail: janet.bowers@ed.lancscc.gov.uk

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside, Education Department, Environment Education Centre, Howick Cross Lane, Penwortham,

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Lancashire PR1 ONS: Tel: 01772-751 110; Fax: 01772-751116; E-mail:
mail@penwortham.cix.co.uk

- *Education for a Greener Future Project*; Tel: 01772-751 110; E-mail:
egf@penwortham.cix.co.uk
- *Wildlife After Schools Project (WASP)*; Tel: 01772-751 138; E-mail:
wasp@penwortham.cix.co.uk

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