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Survey Report

Holy Trinity School

A Healthy Biodiversity

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and habitats (see website) are in **bold** print and suggested nest boxes/feeding stations to be placed in the school grounds are in **red** print. Some species and items will be in both **red** and bold.

Dear Alison, Meg, Lee and Simon,

Thank you for a very warm welcome to your lovely new school.

As there are huge areas of well mown grass and no mature trees, immediately visible, first impressions are of a clinical and sterile environment. However on closer inspection there are many sizeable areas that are potentially rich in terms of wildlife. A variety of small native trees and shrubs (eg Oak, Hazel, Holly, Ash, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Alder, Beech, Bramble, Silver Birch) have been encouraged, particularly on the boundary near the Astra Turf area. Wild **invertebrate** friendly plants (eg nettles, thistles, dock and willow herbs), are developing in these areas. It is pleasing to note that the grounds maintenance contractors are not using herbicides to clear the edges of school fields. This policy should be maintained so as to encourage wild flower growth.

Invertebrates are the bed-rock of a healthy biodiversity; without them many of our supermarket shelves would be empty and many species of birds, bats, mammals, reptiles and amphibians would be heading for extinction. There are several ways that the school community can help:

1. Create small, **wild flower meadows** and margins;
2. Develop several 'insect hotels' using wooden pallets as a base;
3. Create a **deadwood habitat**;
4. Place **bee** boxes (for solitary bees) in or near wild flower areas.

Proposed School Wild Area

Outside of the school grounds, close to the Bowling Alley, is a sizeable wild area (Spring Wood) with public access. This will provide enough food (caterpillars mainly) to sustain breeding **House Sparrows**, **Tree Sparrows**, Great Tits and Blue Tits. With this in mind

we would provide **6 Tree Sparrow nest boxes** to be placed on the more mature trees (Cherry, Field Maple, Rowan, Sycamore and Ash) in the proposed School Wild Area. This is a relatively small, fenced area of Brambles and Rosebay Willowherb which should not be seen in isolation but as part of the whole school picture. The Brambles should be maintained as they are excellent for a variety of species. However, carefully planned and regularly maintained pathways through this scrub would enable pupils to study more closely. These pathways should be mapped. **2 Hedgehog** boxes could be placed in this area. **Hedgehog** numbers have plummeted from 30 million to 1 million in the last 50 years and the school could be involved with a local community campaign to help them. Certainly spaces under the fencing could be made for Hedgehogs to pass through to access feeding areas. **2 Bee boxes** could be placed in the drier parts of this area.

In the widest and lowest part of this Wild Area a small **pond** could be dug out. There are already some sedges growing and other **wetland wild flowers** could be introduced. Again well maintained pathways would encourage the study of a small **wetland habitat**.

South and East of the Astra Turf Area

The proposed school wild area is not the best place in the school grounds for the creation of a **pond/wetland**, instead where the sports fields slope towards the south east of the Astra Turf facilities there is standing water which would be ideal. This would be the perfect place for the development of a **pond/wetland** habitat which could also help with drainage issues. **A pond dipping platform** could be constructed and we would fund this development. We could also build a fence with a gate around the pond but the school would have to fund this item.

The viability of pond development would be assessed on site by David Allen from 'The Allen Group'.

The extensive boundary wild area to the south and east of the Astra-turf area would be an ideal place to place **20 Bee boxes** and **2 more Hedgehog boxes**. Several tracks through this area indicate the presence of Foxes. They will help to keep the number of Rabbits in check.

East of the Long Jump Pit

The area to the east of the long jump pit could also be developed to help wildlife. There is a mature group of bushes/trees making a hedgerow between gardens and the school grounds. **A Bird Feeding station** could be placed here as the 'hedgerow' would provide cover from Sparrow Hawk predation. **A metal Bird Hide screen** could be placed for closer study of feeding birds. It would have viewing spaces at different levels to accommodate the different heights of pupils. We would provide and install these items free of charge.

There are two small new plantations of Hawthorn and Oak in this area. We would propose the creation of a **wild flower meadow** in between the plantations. This would involve shaving off an area of grass and sowing pure **wild flower seed** (cost £100 per kilo). We would fund this item. Pupils would have much fun treading the seeds in as cattle do in the wild. The grass turfs could be used in the construction of an 'insect hotel'.

With regard to the bare wire fencing, consideration could be given to the planting of climbing and **invertebrate** friendly shrubs such as Ivy, Buddleia, Hebes etc.

School Building

Unfortunately there is no other place to install **Bat** or **House Sparrow** colony boxes other than the school building. Our experience with other schools tells us that Carillion would not sanction this. Please let us know if this is still the case.

School Garden.

We would suggest the planting of a variety of herbs and Lavender to encourage **Bees** and **Butterflies**.

Conclusion

We would provide all new nest boxes free of charge, present them at a whole school assembly, help with their installation, set up a mapping/recording system and follow up with nest box cleaning/contents recording the following autumn. All activities will involve children and the school community. We would recommend that interested parents are involved from the beginning of this long term project. Please share this report with appropriate staff, governors and children and let us know whether you wish us to proceed.

Initially we could make arrangements to give a presentation to a class sized group of pupils who may begin to take ownership of the project.

Maintaining a healthy biodiversity is probably the most important challenge human beings will need to face in the future.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Colin Graham
Project Leader,
Biodiversity in Schools.