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20/04/2015

Survey Report

**Netherwood A.L.C.**

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 Tom,

Thank you for showing us around your extensive and interesting school grounds. Although a **woodland** was destroyed in order to build the school the possibilities for biodiversity may be greater in value as a result. The school is placed next to the River Dearne corridor that leads from RSPB Adwick Washlands and Old Moor Wetlands through to Wombwell Ings and Parkhill Nature Reserve. It is surrounded by **Wet and Mixed Deciduous Woodland**. It was good to hear that the nationally threatened **Willow Tit** has been seen close to the car park area. Otters have returned to the River Dearne.

The grounds are so extensive and biodiverse that we can only develop a few areas at one time. They are as follows:

#### **The Allotment Area.**

We could fund the construction of a **pond with dipping platform** here. It would be close to the school building for access and a source of water is close by. Our pond expert and provider would visit school to assess needs, including safety issues if you were able to take us up on this offer. We have created 7 ponds at different schools and they have been very successful, attracting wildlife (**amphibians and invertebrates**) very quickly.

## The Muggers Field.

Carrillion have created an embryonic **mixed deciduous/coniferous woodland** here with Hornbeam, Hazel, Hawthorn, Oak, Goat Willow, Mountain Ash and Silver Birch. This will be excellent for **Invertebrates**, small mammals and birds.

A small **Wild Flower Meadow** could be created here and we could provide the **wild seed mix**. This is best done in the Autumn. The turfs removed to create this meadow could be used to edge the pond.

**10 Bee boxes** for solitary **Bees** could be placed here. **Honey Bees** and other pollinators, including solitary **bees**, are suffering a world-wide colony collapse syndrome and decline in numbers. This is a significant threat to the survival of human beings.

Consideration should be given to the installation of a **bird feeding station and metal, single panel hide** in this area. The feeding station needs to be near trees or bushes so that birds can avoid Sparrow Hawk attacks and feel safe to feed. If this cannot be achieved consideration should be given to the placement of a bird hide and feeding station near to the School Grounds **Woodland**.

## The School Grounds Woodland

This is an area of **mixed Woodland** on a dry slope leading to a seasonally wet ditch. Trees and shrubs include: Silver Birch, Sycamore, Hawthorn, False Acacia (invasive N. American tree) and a few conifers including a Scots Pine. There is an extensive Bramble patch and some dead trees (**Deadwood Habitats**) which should remain in place to encourage **invertebrates** and **birds**. **Invertebrates** are the bedrock of a healthy biodiversity. A Blackcap and several Chiffchaffs, migrants from Africa, were singing. Peacock and Speckled Wood **Butterflies** were in evidence. An injured **Hedgehog** has been found recently and as there is no evidence of Badgers being present we would be able to provide **3 Hedgehog boxes** for this area.

**Hedgehogs** have declined in numbers from 30 million in the 1950s to 1 million today. They are in danger of extinction and many of our schools are thinking of running local community campaigns to help this iconic British species. They are largely a suburban species and school grounds can be ideal places for them to forage and hibernate. However, the fencing and walling of the school grounds is not helpful to a creature that can travel 2kms per night in search of food. Consideration could be given to creating intermittent spaces under the fence line so that **Hedgehogs** can travel freely to new feeding areas.

12 **Tree Sparrow** boxes and 6 **Bat** boxes could be placed in this **woodland**. **English Bluebells**, Wood Anemones, Snowdrops and other woodland plants could also be established here.

The **Soakaway Area** next to the school sports field could accommodate a further 6 **Tree Sparrow** boxes.

### **Conclusion**

We would provide all new nest boxes, pond, bird hide and feeding station, wild flower seeds, English Bluebell bulbs free of charge, present them at a whole school assembly (not the pond!), help with their installation (Autumn 2015), set up a mapping and recording system and follow up with nest box cleaning and recording nest box contents in the Autumn of 2016. All activities will involve pupils and the school community. Please share this report with appropriate staff, governors, volunteers and pupils and let us know whether you wish us to proceed. If you do wish us to continue we would need a copy of a map of the school grounds.

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

Once again, thank you for welcoming us to your school. We look forward to working with you. Suggested dates for the presentation to a class sized group of appropriately interested pupils are: the mornings of June 18<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Please let us know as soon as possible which date is suitable to the school.

Kind regards,

Colin Graham

Project Leader.

Biodiversity in Schools