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Tankersley St. Peters C.E. P.S.

Site Survey report on the possibilities for a Healthy Biodiversity.

Present: David Beet, Monica Ward, Graham Shepherd, Colin Graham

Species and habitats that are part of the Barnsley Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) are marked in **red**. Nest boxes to be given to the school are underlined.

Thank you to David Beet for giving up his time to guide us through the school grounds on a very cold morning. In terms of biodiversity the grounds, though small, showed much promise.

The Main Playground.

Permission could be sought to place 1 **House Sparrow** (RSPB red listed species) colony box and 3 **Bat** (all species rapidly declining) boxes under the eaves of the main building. This has been successfully achieved at other schools.

Although bird feeders could be placed on the lone tree (Copper Beech I think?) birds may be wary of visiting because of the lack of cover from Sparrow Hawk attacks.

The School Playing Field.

The playing field is bordered by an excellent, natural **Hedgerow (declining habitat)** with Hawthorn, Elderberry, Bramble and Blackthorn. This habitat should be protected and cherished so it will provide seeds and invertebrates for birds and small mammals to eat. The Japanese Knotweed is being eliminated by injections of herbicide from above. This is needed. However the extensive use of herbicide sprayed along the entire length of the **Hedgerow** is unnecessary and devastating for **wild flowers, invertebrates**, birds and **Hedgehogs**. **Hedgehogs** have declined from 30 million to 1 million in 60 years and are heading for extinction. It is thought that herbicides, pesticides and lawn enhancers are a major influence on this worrying trend. If wild flowers were allowed to develop in

Hedgerow bottoms the school's biodiversity would hugely increase and become more healthy. However, we did find a Shield Beetle on our way round the perimeter.

The Local Authority's new grass cutting regimes could be applied to the field edges (contact Trevor Mayne, LA Biodiversity Officer).

The Gardening Area.

It was very pleasing to see 4 insect 'hotels' attached to the fencing. Periodically one of them could be examined by 'tapping' it on to white paper and carefully collecting the invertebrates in bug boxes before studying and releasing them back to their 'home'. The use of pooters would be helpful.

One of the four planting areas could be devoted to herbs as a sensory area with Lavender, Rosemary, Thyme, Mint etc. 4 bee boxes (for solitary bees) could be placed inside the Wildlife Area but facing the gardening area on the fence line. The world's dramatic **bee** decline has been well documented and the school would be helping **bee** as well as human survival.

The greenhouse is a recycling triumph!

The Wildlife Area

This small area has a variety of mature deciduous trees including Willows, Hawthorn and Field Maple. It needs careful management if it is to be wildlife friendly as well as a study area. We recommend that the area is mapped to include a central study area with several marked pathways leading into the 'woodland'. Study groups would be confined to these spaces to allow wild areas to develop. **English Bluebells**, Wood Anemones, Snowdrops could be planted and fallen trees and branches should be left to create vitally important **Deadwood Habitats**. They are important for **invertebrates** and fungi. Children could help to build 2 insect habitats, one to be studied while the other rests/recovers from study. We would recommend installing 4 Tree Sparrow nest boxes, 3 Bat boxes and 2 Hedgehog boxes here. It is important to make gaps under the perimeter fence for **Hedgehog** movement. This would also apply to the school field.

The New Road Entrance.

There are four mature trees on which 4 Tree Sparrow (RSPB red listed species) nest boxes could be installed. The Trust will investigate the possibility of providing a camera (free of charge) in one of these boxes so that nesting activity can be seen on computers and on mobile phones. There are already some bulbs planted under these trees and additional **Bluebells**, Snowdrops and Wood anemones would enhance this

entrance. Unfortunately the base of the trees appear to have been sprayed with herbicide. This should be discouraged if a healthy biodiversity is to develop.

The Field Opposite the New Road Entrance.

This relatively unspoiled field and its mature **Hedgerows** will provide much of the food (caterpillars) for the birds nesting in boxes. The owners could be contacted regarding the possibility of placing a **Kestrel box** (RSPB amber status species) on a mature tree. With our help children could monitor activity at this site.

The Nursery Garden.

The nursery garden lends itself to being a sensory/rocky area with heathers and herbs. A pathway through it would allow access for children. 1 **bee box** for solitary **bees** could be placed here. Any spare apples from the apple tree could be placed in the New Road Entrance area for Blackbirds and Thrushes to eat in the Winter.

Conclusion.

This report should be discussed with children, staff and governors. All nest boxes/camera would be provided free of charge and presented at a whole school assembly. Arrangements would then be made to number, place and map the nest boxes in readiness for data collection and recording.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Kind regards,

Colin Graham.

Project Leader, Biodiversity in Schools.