## Yorkshire

## \#TeamWilder Educator Toolkit: Planning your new wildlife zone


#### Abstract

Wildlife zones are a great way of empowering everyone in your school to take part and understand the positive impact that they can make for wildlife and nature within your school grounds. Planning your wildlife zone will encourage creativity whilst being a valuable and rewarding way of delivering multiple elements of the National Curriculum.


This planning diary will take you through the stages of planning a new wildlife zone. We'll give you tips on how to involve other people in the planning and action stages, and you can find a prepopulated diary at the end which you can fill in.

## 1. Understanding the site

Establishing an understanding of the area that you will be working with is a vital first step in planning your new wildlife zone. This planning can begin indoors using maps, photographs and local information from books or the internet - a bit like an investigation! You'll need to establish the following bits of information:

Grid reference: If you're short for time or this doesn't fit into your learning aims then there are tools online such as Grid Reference Finder to help you find this.

Location: You may want to include further bits of information on location such as the what3words reference.

Area: $\mathrm{m}^{2}$
Planning authority: This will quite often be the local council but it's also worth checking for any further information such as tree preservation orders so that you're prepared for anything further down the line.

Tenure: Note down who holds the permission and land rights for the area that your wildlife zone is situated in.

Stakeholders: As well as knowing who holds the land rights, it's always good to be aware of who your stakeholders are. Brainstorming and role play activities are great for developing an understanding of the users and stakeholders of your site and what their motivations, concerns and needs might be.

Include a variety of maps of the site as well as photographs. These don't necessarily have to be contemporary; it is useful to look at the historic use of the site to understand more about its topography.

## Further information to include:

- If you can find out more about the history of your wildlife zone then this is good to have notes on. You may find that you're able to reflect the history of the area in the design.
- Include notes on the type of soil found in your wildlife zone. You don't need to be a soil scientist for this! This can be a descriptive activity. Explore the texture, is it clay-based or crumbly? Give it a sniff, does it smell nutty or earthy? Describe the colour, is it dark like charcoal or lighter like milk chocolate?


## 2. Understanding the wildlife in your zone

Before starting any work on your wildlife zone, you should get to know the species and habitats which currently call it 'home'. We've divided this up into:

- Plants and trees
- Mammals
- Birds
- Invertebrates

A starting point for this is discovering which potential habitats already exist in your wildlife zone. Piles of natural materials such as leaves, rocks and logs provide shelter to a variety of wildlife from insects, and these are good spots to observe. Choose a period for everyone to become citizen scientists and record what they see.

Depending on skill level, you may want to use spotter sheets as these will help your citizen scientists to identify what they are seeing.

You can make your own spotter sheets using this tool:
https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/things-do/get-started-your-spotter-sheets


## 3. Planning your zone

There are a range of questions which you'll need to ask to help you frame the planning of your new wildlife zone.


## How are we going to make it better?

## Using the research from your diary, you're now able to set relevant and achievable objectives based on what you have available to you.

Think about what you want to achieve with the area as well as the outcomes that you're working towards. A wildlife zone should benefit wildlife but will also have a human impact. You may want to consider how this will be beneficial to the stakeholders involved in terms of wellbeing, physical and mental health.

## What will we do?

This will depend on a few factors; you will need to know:

- What is our budget and timescale?
- What can we achieve in a short amount of time and what may take longer?

Top tip! Try to frame the actions that you'll take to make your wildlife zone better using this table:

| Headers | Description | Actions may include.. |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Food | Making sure that there is enough food in your zone to support a variety of wildlife throughout the year. | - Creating seed bombs packed with wildflowers <br> - Planting native fruit trees <br> - Making the most of a variety of flowering bushes and shrubs. |
| Shelter | Think habitats, ensuring there are areas of shelter for wildlife from season-toseason. | - Making room for a tangle <br> - Leaving piles of logs and fallen leaves <br> - Installing bird boxes <br> - Making an insect or bee hotel. |
| Water | Providing a variety of features using water that wildlife can use to bathe, drink and live in. | - Creating a bird bath out of recycled materials <br> - Installing a water butt <br> - Creating a container or wildlife pond. |
| Connectivity | Connecting your wildlife zone to the surrounding landscape and wider community. | - Joining or creating a neighbourhood wildlife group - even starting one which is school-based can sow the seeds for a larger network <br> - Hosting seed swap days <br> - Creating a hedgehog highway. |
| Management | Managing your wildlife zone in a wildlife-friendly way. | - making sure that you are using peatfree products <br> - Avoiding use of chemicals <br> - Plastic-free gardening. |

## What will we need?

Once you have your actions and objectives you can begin to plan how you will achieve these. Think practically but also reflect on what knowledge you'll need to be able to empower both adults and children to get stuck in!

Consider the following:

- Tools and equipment
- Health and safety
- Size of group
- Any specialist skills or knowledge that you'll need to have


## What might happen to the wildlife that already lives there?

This is an important question to ask within your planning and once you've got your objectives, actions and needs lists written up you can use this to review the plans.

Leaving certain areas of your wildlife zone as they are will be beneficial to the wildlife that already lives there. Using the research you conducted into the habitats within your wildlife zone should help you decide which areas these are.

## 4. Creating your wildlife zone

Record your progress as you go - and get creative with it! Diary entry style recording adds a personal element to the project which can include photographs, clippings, thoughts, and feelings. It's a good way to encourage connectivity to the space too.

From video diaries to natural art pieces, there are plenty of ways to include a range of different subjects in the new wildlife zone.

Don't forget to share your progress with stakeholders and the community too. Sharing knowledge and practice has a wider impact and you may want to invite the local press to see how things are shaping up!

## 5. Reflecting on your wildlife zone

Your wildlife zone will be a valuable space that will continue to grow, thrive, and survive once you've achieved your objectives. Taking the time to continually reflect on the space means that you can continue to improve it for wildlife as well as learn from it.

## What have we done?

Get together and look at your progress from your initial planning stages through to now. You may want to do this at defined checkpoints ( 6 months, 12 months etc).

Reflection goes both ways - how have you and your school taken action to have a positive impact for wildlife? How has taking action for wildlife had a positive impact on you?

## Who lives here now?

Look at the habitats which you've left for wildlife and the habitats that you've created for wildlife. One idea is to focus on a range of ways in which you can monitor who lives in the wildlife zone now. These could include identifying tracks and signs; using apps such as iNaturalist and Seek; and developing more spotter sheets to encourage other people within your school to take a few mindful minutes to see what they can spot.

## Our Wildlife Zone Planning Diary



School or group name:
We want to help wildlife by:

## Understanding our site

## Grid reference:

Location:

Area:

## Planning authority:

Tenure:

## Stakeholders:

Further information:

Photographs and maps

Understanding the wildlife in our zone

| Plants and trees | Mammals |
| :--- | :--- |
|  |  |
| Birds |  |

## Planning our zone

How are we going to make it better?

What are we going to do?

What do we need?

## Reviewing our plans

## Creating our wildlife zone

## Wildlife Zone Diary: Week ....

Here are some handy prompts for what to record if you're stuck for words:

- What have you been doing this week?
- Who has been involved?
- Highlights and favourite moments
- Challenges and things that could have gone better
- Wildlife you've spotted in your zone
- How has working on your wildlife zone made you feel this week?
- What have you learnt?

Insert a photo or clipping here!

## Reflecting on our wildlife zone

What have we done?

Who lives in our wildlife zone now?

