



**Wildlife and School Grounds Conference
Thursday 13th June 2019, Leicester City Hall**

This event had great feedback, the atmosphere was calm and positive with many saying how they had benefited from the opportunity to see and hear what others are doing to engage children with nature.

The conference was filled to capacity with 94 delegates and a further 6 partnership staff. We had over 70 organisations represented, including more than 30 Schools and at least a dozen forest school leaders.

“far exceeded my expectations with fascinating presenters always speaking with such passion” – delegate feedback



“Honestly, I wish I knew about half of what I found out yesterday when I was still teaching 😞 - I was just ‘out of the loop’. I hope now, that I can be a part of making sure there are less and less teachers, like I was, who are outdoor learning converts but still unaware of the extend of support out there.” – delegate feedback



The event was opened by Councillor Adam Clarke who represented the hosts Leicester City Council.



Adam is Deputy City Mayor in Leicester, with responsibility for the environment and transportation. He was first elected to Leicester City Council in 2011 and was promoted to the City Mayor's Executive in 2015, becoming Deputy City Mayor in 2017.

Adam has held several responsibilities in his time as a city councillor, including chairing the city's Health and Wellbeing Board and its Licensing and Public Safety Committee. He is now focused on delivering Leicester's response to the climate emergency, improving air quality and developing transportation, particularly for the benefit of the local economy, public health and the environment.

Before entering politics, Adam led initiatives to promote access, participation, well-being and learning in the arts and in the historic environment. He is the city's Heritage Champion and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Adam emphasised the importance of us coming together to network and share ideas, giving examples of schools across Leicester who are benefiting from funding to make changes for wildlife, including the 12 Polli:Nation schools and Holycross who are putting in a school pond. Adam gave special thanks to the workshop leaders and keynotes.

Dr Steve Head – Founder and Chair of the UK Gardening for Wildlife Forum



Steve is an invertebrate zoologist and general ecologist with an interest in gardening and helping people at every level to understand the importance of garden wildlife. He was a founder member of the forum and the steering group and managed the forum and its conferences for several years.

Steve has a lecturing background in universities in the UK, Jamaica and Oman, subsequently leading conservation NGOs and managing their development. Steve was for 8 years a Secretary of State Member on the Exmoor National Park Authority, leading on biodiversity and landscape.

He lectures and runs courses on wildlife gardening and is particularly proud of leading a team that won Gold and Best in Show for a Courtyard Garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2010.



Steve wowed us with statistics from studies into the importance of gardens and school grounds for Wildlife. He drew particular attention to local ecologist Jennifer Owen who found 3 new species in her garden in Leicester City itself. He talked about the Sheffield Research programme in which misconceptions around wildlife in gardens were researched and statistics used to prove or disprove them. He cited the Bugs for Plants research carried out by the RHS which shows how the use of natives and non-natives can complement each other in a garden. Steve is looking for case studies to share on the UK Gardening for Wildlife education webpages.

Overall Steve emphasised the value of gardens to wildlife, seeing school grounds as large gardens. He talked about the importance for a matrix of habitats to provide micro niches for wildlife. To see his presentation please visit the event webpage <https://www.ltl.org.uk/event/wildlife-in-school-grounds-conference/>

Sarah Eames CSci Teach

Sarah Eames is a teacher at the Sandfield Close Primary School which is representative of the diverse urban Leicester community where we are holding this conference. The award-winning English STEM Primary School of the Year in 2017.

"We're doing it - you can too - how Sandfield weaves outdoor learning into their curriculum". Sarah talked about how Sandfield got involved in several local and national initiatives that promote the use of their school grounds as an outdoor learning space. These have encouraged the children and teachers to find out about the natural environment and care for it.

Sarah's speech was inspirational, giving practical case studies of how Sandfield Close Primary have linked to a wide range of science organisations to enrich their science curriculum.

She has shared her presentation on the [school website](#) and it includes 10 tips at the end.



Sarah Brady

Sarah Brady was born and graduated in Scotland but is now the Education Manager for Birdlife Malta. Sarah manages over 15,000 children, taking part in education activities across Malta both at nature reserves and in their schools.

Over the last 2 years she has been managing the Erasmus+ One World Learning Project which has funded this conference and has set out to establish a network of education staff who work in the Birdlife Partnership (RSPB is the UK partner).

Sarah introduced the unique nature of the Maltese people’s relationship with nature, including the hunting techniques. She talked about the way in which the One World Learning network is now engaging with over 22 countries, mainly in Europe, to share best practice in engaging children and adults with more sustainable life-style choices.

Sarah talked about the One World Learning which is a network of education professionals who believe that nature education is vital in order to inspire and empower individuals and communities to live sustainably. Environmental issues cannot be contained within borders; therefore, we work transnationally to support organisations and individuals to create and deliver high quality learning through nature programmes. Join our friendly supportive community for free by filling in the form on our website: <http://www.owleducation.org/contact-us/get-involved/>





For the latest updates you can also like our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/OWLOneWorldLearning/>

Susie Smith

Susie is the Development Manager at Learning through Landscapes. She is an experienced educator and environmental communications specialist, having worked at the University of Exeter's Environment and Sustainability Institute, Schumacher College and The Vegetarian Society (of the UK).

She presented on the topic of Outdoor Classroom Day and sharing her top tips for how NGOs and schools in the UK and Northern Ireland can secure funding to support year-round outdoor learning and play.

Susie showed us a lovely film about Outdoor Classroom Day and talked about how schools get involved. She explored some of the needs schools have and finished with possible funding sources that schools can access, we have shared her presentations on the conference webpage <https://www.ltl.org.uk/news/one-world-learning/>

Summary from the Workshops

In the hall we had three large workshops from:



Felicity Robinson

Felicity is an experienced Landscape Architect, she explored how pupils can be the researchers and planners for making changes to their school grounds and how this can support the participatory approach from the whole school community.

She explored the value of play in natural spaces in school grounds and how this can support inclusion. Felicity is the author of *Naturally Inclusive* a Learning through Landscapes's partnership publication.

Sophie van de Bergh

Who led a very popular workshop on the use of sticks for math's and literacy lessons. The activities were taken from the recently published Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust publication.



Jill Gaunt

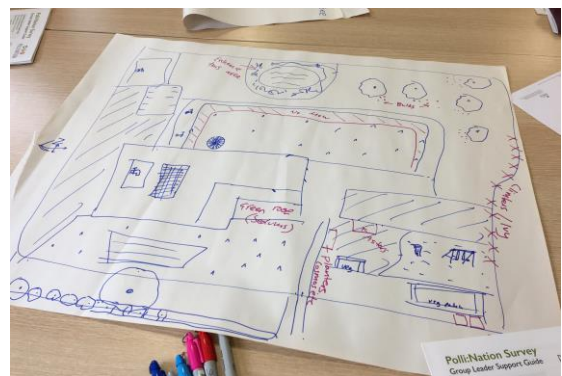
Jill is an experienced teacher and focused on the huge range of resources that she uses to help her embed her outdoor sessions into the curriculum. Delegates were able to see and touch natural materials, learn about the use of small world for scaffolding writing and find out where she accessed her favourite resources from websites such as the Woodland Trusts Nature Detectives.

Mary Jackson

One of the most popular workshops was for the Polli:Nation project, an award winning 3 year project that worked with over 260 schools to create pollinator habitats in their school grounds. The delegates squashed into one room to hear Mary Jackson, the Project Manager's, talk. During the workshop the delegates mapped their grounds for pollinators, looking at the whole site, not just the traditional wildlife area.

In other rooms delegates learnt about Earthwatch's programmes. The Butterfly Conservation's, Munching Caterpillars Resources, the RSPB's Wild Challenge Programme and Wildlife Trust's Thirty Days Wild challenge.

A special thanks goes to our host Leicester City Council and in particular Lee Jowett, who has supported us in the organisation and ran his own workshop on the role of eco schools in engaging children with nature.



Key feedback from the delegates

Here are just a few of the repeated messages from the participant evaluation forms:

- This supported a networking need to enable greater partnership working and information sharing, many didn't realise just how much is going on.
- We still have a need for partnerships to provide a well-rounded and used resource for schools.
- We must continue our work with senior officials and school managers, to influence the way in which schools' approach outdoor education and the management of school grounds.
- How can we provide local opportunities to network to overcome travel barriers?
- We need to continue to look at our secondary offer as it is still underdeveloped



- School grounds are big gardens and can host more wildlife than many other habitats if we encourage a mixture of habitats and wildlife friendly mowing.
- Link to your local councillors to make sure they don't have funds to support this work
- Think Global, Act local

Quotes from the feedback forms

"Outdoor learning is so important for the whole child"

"a great networking opportunity"

"far exceeded my expectations with fascinating presenters always speaking with such passion"

"Taking away some of the different activities for math's and literacy from Sophie's workshop and adapting it for pre-school children"

"The futures bright if we all help to understand nature and the benefits it can bring."

"Amazing to see so many outdoor educators together and a fabulous to feed of each other."

"It was FREE – thank you" (Erasmus+)

"Children need to experience nature to care about nature"

Possible Resource links from the delegates

Learning through Landscapes professional accreditation

Local school nature grants

Facebook a Farmer

Countryside Classroom

Trees for cities

Where now?

Sign up to the OWL network by filling in the form on our website:

<http://www.owleducation.org/contact-us/get-involved/>

Come to future Learning through Landscapes events planning more events like this

<https://www.ltl.org.uk/>

For funding sign up to the LTL newsletters <https://www.ltl.org.uk/>