



Winter 2006/2007

Volume 4, Issue 2

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FORUM

# WONDERFUL WOODLANDS

## WOODLANDS IN THE CURRICULUM

Welcome to the latest supplement to accompany the LEEF Newsletter. It has been produced by the Environmental Education Forum to help teachers discover all about how to use forests and woodlands in the revised curriculum.

It has been designed to give you ideas on projects that the whole school can become engaged in and can be used in a range of learning areas across all four key stages. Please feel free to photocopy this resource and pass it on to a colleague who may also be able to make use of it.

### Why Woodlands?

Trees and woodlands are a valuable teaching resource in Northern Ireland and are just waiting to be discovered. They are local wherever you are in the country, relevant to the revised curriculum and easy to use for teaching - whether it is in the classroom, school ground or at a local wood.

Children of all ages can benefit greatly from the learning opportunities inherently present in a woodland environment. A visit to a forest provides pupils and teachers with opportunities for cross-curricular learning, real outdoor experiences, enjoyment, exercise and sites to study trees and wildlife, flora and fauna, whilst allowing the children to develop personally, intellectually and socially in a natural context.

With the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto recently being launched in England and the Government encouraging and urging teachers to take their pupils on more out of schools visits there is a real push towards using the environment as a tool to stimulate, inspire and motivate pupils. Northern Ireland's woodlands are uniquely placed to be able to contribute to these learning outcomes and are already making a significant and valuable contribution to children's education and awareness about the natural world. So delve in and learn more about how they can help you!

### How Will This Supplement Help Me?

This supplement will provide you as a teacher with connected and tangible ways to use forests and woodlands through the curriculum. It gives you details of successful projects being run in local woods, links to resources that can be downloaded or ordered online and examples of where to take your class on a visit to experience the wonders our woodlands have to offer.

Inside you will find:

- How you and your school can become involved in the Woodland Schools Partnership and case studies of successful projects.
- Find out how the education programme of the Forest Service at Tollymore Park can be used to teach the World Around Us at Key Stages 1 & 2
- Discover a range of curriculum linked packages and resources designed by the Woodland Trust which are available to download and use both in and out of the classroom.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THIS NEWSLETTER YOU PASS IT ON TO WORK COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS OR INTERESTED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY ENJOY READING IT.**

**REDUCE, RE-USE, RECYCLE!**

# The Woodland Schools Partnership

---

## What is a Woodland School Partnership?

Woodland Schools originated in Denmark and Italy and are based on the idea that children of all ages can benefit greatly from the learning opportunities inherently present in a woodland environment. Woodland Schools are areas where children are allowed free play in a safe area. The schools are based on the educational principles which allow the children to develop personally, intellectually and socially in a natural context. Confined to a safe area, children are allowed a degree of freedom to explore the natural environment and participate in activities largely initiated by themselves but directed by their teachers. There will generally be thorough follow up at school, integrating the Woodland School with the classroom. The Woodland School concept was designed to be taken advantage of specifically by nursery age children. It should not, however, be confined to this age group and is being applied to children of all ages who have trouble adjusting to normal school life.

---

## ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) was approached to set up a Woodland School project at some of its sites. Currently there are two schemes on EHS properties, at Castle Archdale Country Park and Roe Valley Country Park. In each case an area of mixed woodland, between 0.25 and 0.5 hectares, has been set aside as a 'Woodland School'. Both areas are surrounded by chestnut picket fences which act as a safety barrier, while at the same time affording the visiting children freedom to roam within the area itself. Woodland School visits differ from other school visits to the parks in that the programme requires that the children make a series of visits on a number of occasions each year. Each class, therefore, may visit the project as many as eight times per year. A third Woodland School is opening shortly at Peatlands Park, and plans are well underway to open a fourth at Crawfordsburn Country Park.

The schemes meet the needs of teachers of nursery school children as they pioneer efforts to establish good educational practice already established in England. At present there are no other locations in Ireland, North or South, where the curriculum needs with respect to nursery school children and their links with the environment can be adequately met. The WSPs were established through approaches made to the educators on site by local teachers. They were interested in locally establishing best practice from other countries. The schemes are supported by the WELB and NEELB advisory services. The 'Woodland Schools' in the Northern Ireland context differ from those in Britain in that no specially trained leaders have been involved. The project is led by the nursery teachers in cooperation with the environmental educators based at the parks. Both the schemes currently in operation can now act as lead projects to what will become a more widespread approach to outdoor learning in Northern Ireland.

---

## How a Woodland School Partnership Works

The activities which take place in the woodland schools are designed, monitored and assessed by the teachers themselves. They are thoroughly integrated into the normal school week by follow-up work in school. Basic concepts of appreciation and care of our natural heritage are built into every aspect of the work undertaken in the woodland schools. The early introduction of children to their environment has to be seen in the context of continuing education in all aspects of appreciation of the environment. The Woodland School forms the first step in this important and life long process. All aspects of the curriculum can be taught outside, stimulating the imagination and bringing subjects to life in a real context. A few examples of how curriculum areas can be enhanced in the Woodland School are given here with the Curriculum area in brackets.

- Exploration of different colours or textures (**Art and Design**)
- Listening to the sounds of the woodland (**Music**)
- Use language to describe what a badger looks like (**Language and Literacy**)
- Enjoy stories or songs (**Reading**)
- Investigate and talk about patterns, colours and shapes e.g. trees, leaves (**Mathematics and Numeracy**)
- Develop confidence and a sense of security (**Personal, Social and Emotional**)



- Recognise and experience change through time e.g. their clothing at different times of the year (**The World Around Us**)

Most importantly, respect for the natural world is encouraged by enabling the children to see each living thing in its context and as part of a habitat which needs to be cared for (**Education for Sustainable Development**)

In addition, a Woodland School Partnership experience manages the positive elements needed for risk taking:

- Supportive adults who do not intervene too early,
- Encouraging the children to make choices,
- Encouraging children to assess their own risks,
- Providing small achievable tasks.

---

## CASE STUDY OF WOODLAND SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: THE CASTLE ARCHDALE EXPERIENCE

---

Castle Archdale Country Park is situated about 10 miles north west of Enniskillen and extends to cover 230 acres along the shores of Lower Lough Erne. A former family demesne, it is now a lakeside park with extensive woodland, grassland, lough shore, ponds, deer and rare breeds enclosures connected with miles of walking trails. Exhibition Programmes cover habitat studies of woodland, freshwater and meadows and the history of the park.

The first Woodland School Partnership in Northern Ireland opened here in 2001 after interest from the local Enniskillen Nursery School. A designated area was set aside and made secure with environmentally sensitive chestnut picket fencing. A number of factors were taken into consideration in the location of the area, including its proximity to the Exhibition Centre and car park. The safety and security of the site was also a major factor.

Initially there were three pilot Nursery Schools involved—Enniskillen, Holy Trinity and Ballinamallard. In its first operational school year 2001-02 there were over 800 pupil visits to the area. The actual size of the Forest School has been enlarged twice so that today it is over one acre in area.

The three pilot schools have a year round programme in the woodland which ties in with the school curriculum and many local Primary schools are now using the area to develop children's skills.

### What has the Project achieved for Local Children?

*"Castle Archdale Woodland School is a classroom in the forest. It provides school children with opportunities to develop independence, curiosity and a sense of worth" (Jenny Boyd, Principal, Enniskillen Nursery School).*

In an age when play is a forgotten art for many children, especially urban children, the Woodland School can achieve great results:

- Give ownership of the forest to the children and the wider school community,
- Provide children with an area in which they can explore, play and learn in a fun positive way,
- Give opportunities to make choices, take risks and develop life-long skills,
- Provide a place for developing an understanding and appreciation of their natural environment and fostering in them a desire to care for it.

Further information on the project can be obtained from any of the participating schools or from the Education Officer at Castle Archdale Country Park.



# The World Around Us at Tollymore Forest Park (Forest Service)

## A History-led study with links to Geography and Science

---

The World Around Us is an education package for upper Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils, based in Tollymore Forest Park. It was designed by staff of the Forest Service and the Curriculum Advisory Service of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, working together to embrace the opportunities of the new Northern Ireland primary curriculum in linking History with Geography and Science.

The education package is skills based, allowing pupils to be involved in investigation; independent creativity, decision-making, and is also a multi-media education experience incorporating workbooks, computer skills and library research.

While aiming to meet the requirements of upper Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 it was recognised that within those there would be the need to allow teachers the opportunity to choose what level of study within each key stage they required for individual pupils within their class. To this end time-lines, guidance notes, follow-up classroom work, local history research facilities, etc. were incorporated.

'The World Around Us' education package allows pupils to take ownership of their local history and environment, develop awareness that global environmental issues are also local environmental issues, and to experience, to examine, evaluate, access and discuss what they see.

The Shimna River story, waterpower and sustainable forestry were included as geography subjects and a study of the fallow deer, conservation and the lifecycle of the Atlantic salmon, as science subjects.

Copies of the portraits of past owners of Tollymore Forest Park from the Forest Service library were put on to the CD ROM and a time line was created.

The creation of the archive increased the number of curriculum topics, to include English, Art and Social Science etc. The package contains teaching and learning activities as suggestions in using a visit to Tollymore Forest Park as a springboard for delivering aspects of The World Around Us.

For example:

### Key Stage 1

#### [Strand 3 : Me and My Environment](#)

The variety of living things in the local environment

My area now and in the past

A people-environment issue

### Key Stage 2

#### [Strand 1 : The Way We Live](#)

Exploring how we live now and how people lived in the past

Comparing and contrasting different environments

Considering ways of caring for the environment



### Key Stage 2

#### [Strand 3 : An Ever-Changing World](#)

Investigating local habitats

Researching how an aspect of 'their world' compares to that of a time in the past

Investigating the effect of natural disasters and extreme events on people and places

Promoting creative and critical thinking skills underpins the proposals for curriculum review.

The World Around Us education package seeks to promote these skills in the following examples:

---

Managing information	Record and present information in different ways, e.g. pamphlet, powerpoint, creative writing, a diary extract.
Decision Making, Problem Solving	Role-play on the use of the forest
Being Creative	Using imagination to explore the thoughts of the different people living in Tollymore House. Collage or sound picture on the journey of the Shimna River
Working with others	Scavenger Hunt, Quiz, Role-play on the use of the forest
Self Management	Managing their own time to complete the different activities

When studying the World Around Us pupils are encouraged to use their own locality and see the importance of the conservation of our built and natural environment in our ever changing world. The pack is designed to use a trip to Tollymore Forest Park as a basis for a range of teaching and learning activities in the classroom lasting up to six weeks. As with any topic, there are numerous opportunities for cross-curricular links e.g. literacy, numeracy, ICT, art and design, music, personal development etc.

The World Around Us package contains a powerpoint presentation with old and new photographs of Tollymore Park and a commentary to give some information about them. This powerpoint presentation could be useful to the pupils before they visit Tollymore Forest Park, as Tollymore House is no longer standing and this would give the pupils an understanding of what Tollymore Park must have looked like in the past.

There are guide notes which provide a written record of the key information given on a visit to Tollymore Forest Park and are useful for follow up work back in the classroom. Teachers who do not wish to use the services of a Forest Guide can use the guide notes to take their pupils around the trail (note that there is an entrance fee for visits that have not been pre-booked with a forest guide).

The World Around Us education package can be downloaded from the Forest Service website [www.forestserviceni.gov.uk](http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk). Follow the link to the Education page and click on Forests and the Curriculum.

In booking your trip to Tollymore Forest Park, teachers should liaise with the Forest Guides at the Forest Service East District Office in designing a trip that best meets the needs of their pupils. Booking forms are available from [www.forestserviceni.gov.uk](http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk)





# Websites and Further Reading

---

## Woodland Trust

### Nature Detectives

An exciting way for pupils of all ages to learn more about the natural world. Visit the website for curriculum-linked indoor and outdoor activities and the chance to help scientists with their research on climate change.

[www.naturedetectives.org.uk](http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk)

### Tree For All

Our five year campaign with an ambitious target to get one million children helping to plant 12 million trees. Pupils can start by planting an 'etree' online. [www.treeforall.org.uk](http://www.treeforall.org.uk)

### Trafalgar Woods

Part of our five year Tree For All campaign, the schools section of this website has a selection of historical and environmental resources - worksheets, a poster and chance to search the database of all the crew at the battle.

[www.treeforall.org.uk/trafalgar/schools](http://www.treeforall.org.uk/trafalgar/schools)

## OFFLINE RESOURCES

### Wild about Woods CD-ROM

Hundreds of woodland images, sounds and animation. Suitable for anyone aged 9 or above.

### Wild about Woods Video

Join Children's TV presenter Howie Watkins on a journey through time to track the story of ancient woodland. Aimed at children in the 9-14 age range.

[www.wild-about-woods.org.uk/Primary/resources\\_wawcdromvideo.htm](http://www.wild-about-woods.org.uk/Primary/resources_wawcdromvideo.htm)

### Free Trees For Schools

School grounds in need of TLC can benefit from a free pack of 30 native trees (enough for a small grove or short length of hedge) which come with guidance on planting and maintenance plus curriculum-linked activities. The activities were designed for primary age, but some of the information will be relevant to the secondary sector. [www.treeforall.org.uk/JoinIn/Hedgeandcopse/](http://www.treeforall.org.uk/JoinIn/Hedgeandcopse/)

---

## Environment & Heritage Service

A range of worksheets is available to download from the EHS website at the following address:

[www.ehsni.gov.uk/other-index/education/edu-resources/resource-packs/woodland\\_resources](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/other-index/education/edu-resources/resource-packs/woodland_resources)

### These include:

**Teddy Bears Picnic Colouring Book**

**Teddy Bears Picnic Teachers Handbook**

**Woodland Creatures Recording Sheet 1**

**Woodland Creatures Recording Sheet 2**

**Woodland Creatures Recording Sheet 3**

**Fergus' Nature Diary**

**Red Squirrels in Northern Ireland**

**Biodiversity of Northern Ireland**

**Banagher Glen Nature Reserve: Resource Material for Teachers**

**Woodland Habitat Studies: Roe Valley Country Park - Activity Book for KS 1 & 2**

**Woodland Habitat Studies: Roe Valley Country Park - Teachers Resources**

---

## Forest Service

A visit to a forest provides pupils and teachers with opportunities for cross-curricular learning, real outdoor experiences, enjoyment and exercise and sites to study trees and wildlife, flora and fauna. All pre-booked educational visits to Forest Service forests are free of charge and guides are available at many locations. To find out further information on the locations and facilities available, booking forms contact information and details for teachers on how a visit can fit in with the Northern Ireland National Curriculum please visit the following website: [www.forestserviceni.gov.uk/index/education](http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk/index/education)

# Grants and Awards for environmental projects

## BIG LOTTERY FUNDING

For the period of 2006-2009 there is £90 million available through the **Big Lottery Fund** divided over several different grant programmes.

### Improving Community Buildings

A one-off refurbishment programme aimed at enhancing the quality and use of community venues across Northern Ireland. Grants from £25,000 to £50,000 will be awarded to community based organisations. The total project cost cannot be over £75,000. Applications must be submitted by 24 May 2007.

### Strategic Programmes

Safe and Well and Live and Learn are two strategic programmes. Together they will have a budget of over £30 million in Northern Ireland. Closing date for applications is 29 March 2007. See [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

### Big Trust Fund

BIG Trust Fund is designed to support change in organisations in Northern Ireland's voluntary and community sector through a period of significant restructuring and rationalisation. It is a long-term investment, possibly up to ten years, to support all the changes that will need to happen to the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. Due to be launched early 2007. See [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

### Awards For All

Awards for All is a joint Lottery grants scheme aimed at local communities. Bring people together and increase community activity. Awards range from £500 to £10,000 and are on going. See [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)

### Big Deal

Fund projects that help young people to make a difference in their own life and to the lives of others. The Big deal can only make awards directly to individual and informal groups of children and young people aged 0-25. An individual can apply for awards of £500 and a group can apply for an award between £500 and £2,500. Closing date for application are 30 September 2009. See [www.thebigdealni.com](http://www.thebigdealni.com) for further details.

## B&Q 'You can do it Awards'

The awards aim to play a key part in helping local communities create inclusive and sustainable projects to be proud of, for example giving new life to a community centre, local sports club facilities or community garden. The Awards are launched every January, and 20 awards worth **£5,000** of B&Q products are donated to community and charitable organisations across the UK and Ireland. Closing date Friday 30 March 2007. More details can be found at [www.diy.com](http://www.diy.com)

## Low Carbon Buildings Programme Phase 2

Grants for the installation of microgeneration technologies are available to public sector buildings (including schools, hospitals, housing associations and local authorities) and charitable bodies. Paper applications are now being accepted, and you can apply on-line at the following address: [www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonbuildingsphase2.org.uk)



**Environmental Education Forum**  
c/o Northern Ireland Environment Link  
89 Loopland Drive  
Belfast BT6 9DW  
Phone: (028) 9045 5770  
Fax: (028) 9094 2151  
E-Mail: [eef@nienvironmentlink.org](mailto:eef@nienvironmentlink.org)  
Website: [www.eefni.org.uk](http://www.eefni.org.uk)



PRINTED ON  
RECYCLED PAPER

**The Environmental Education Forum**  
is supported by the  
**Environment & Heritage Service**



**Environment & Heritage Service**  
[www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)



An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**  
[www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)