Consultancy Brief: Bringing nature into teaching – developing a professional development package for educators

Background

The Wildlife Trusts are a grassroots movement of people from a wide range of backgrounds and all walks of life, who believe that we need nature and nature needs us. We have more than 900,000 members, over 39,000 volunteers, 3,600 staff and 600 trustees. There are 46 individual Wildlife Trusts, each of which is a place-based independent charity with its own legal identity, formed by groups of people getting together and working with others to make a positive difference to wildlife and future generations, starting where they live and work.

Every year The Wildlife Trusts work with more than 250,000 children through school visits and outreach, nature clubs and events. This is the result of hard work from Wildlife Trust education teams, who have inspired and enriched the lives of hundreds and thousands of children, benefiting their mental health and well-being and bringing countless joyous experiences within nature.

We are now on a journey to broaden the reach of our collective education and learning work, and to bridge the gap between activities within early years and primary schools, and our emerging work in the 16-30 space (emerging adulthood). Research published by Professor Miles Richardson et al in 2019 found that our connection to nature drops sharply from the age of 11 and doesn't recover until our 30s. For many, **this connection never returns**, leaving a huge proportion of society cut off from nature. In 2024, The Wildlife Trusts commissioned Uprising to conduct research in 16-30 year olds and their perceptions and experiences of nature, and the environmental sector, with a particular focus on where nature and the environment featured in their formal education. The research told us that:

- fewer than 40% of young people left secondary school with a solid understanding of nature and climate change;
- 43% stated they were struggling with eco-anxiety;
- Only 17% felt that they understood what community action meant, or what it could achieve.

Goal two, of the collective Wildlife Trusts' 2030 strategy, sets out the need for a step-change in the number and diversity of people taking action. The aligned Strategic Transformation (three) requires that we support and inspire young people, and that we "widen our scope to the many people within our communities trying to mobilise in a different way for a better world for nature". You can read more within our Strategy: Bringing Nature Back 2030.

In late 2024, education and youth activism leads from 36 Wildlife Trusts came together to vision how we can work more consistently with young people aged 11-16 both in school and as part of their local communities. Secondary schools were identified as a huge opportunity. With each establishment supporting an average of 1000 students, we are missing a huge proportion of the population, and the opportunity to maintain young people's connection and engagement with nature, from childhood throughout their journey to emerging adulthood.

Author: Jen Davis UK Education and Learning Manager July 2025

From July 2025 to July 2028 we will be delivering a UK-wide programme of nature-connection projects to secondary-aged young people across the length and breadth of the UK, involving each of the 46 Wildlife Trusts – 'Naturally Connected Young People'. Funded by the Prudence Trust, this programme will provide us with the blueprint to develop our new pathway of engagement with 11-16 year olds, both in secondary schools and community-based settings.

To compliment this programme, and with funding from The Ernest Cook Trust, **we are looking to develop a continuing professional development (CPD) package for teachers**, to be delivered by Wildlife Trusts, to form the legacy aspect to the programme. Whilst we need this to have an initial focus on KS3-4 teachers, the ambition is to have a model that can be adapted for use from KS1 onwards. This professional development for teachers is being commissioned by the central charity, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.

Why we need this work

Many funded programmes end without suitable exit strategies being established for recipients, leading to fragmented levels of sustainability and poor long-term outcomes. We have learnt from our years of work in schools that the best way to achieve buy-in and sustained activities in schools is to secure whole-school strategic support, and to train up staff within the school to deliver independently.

We do not want to be the gate-keepers to nature-based education. We want to see this is a core part of every child's educational experience, and understand that this starts with teachers having the skills and confidence to lead learning outdoors themselves.

The aim of this consultancy opportunity is to provide The Wildlife Trusts with the blue-print of a CPD package for teachers, which will be further developed and refined by The Wildlife Trusts, in line with our unique delivery style and hyper-local approach. Our intention is to roll this professional development package out to the teachers in schools we are working with (and hope to work with in the future) from 2028.

The Brief

The purpose of the CPD package will be to raise teacher's confidence to lead learning outdoors independently. This is not a subject in itself, learning outdoors is a pedagogy and we encourage teachers to embed this within the normal school day. This could look like taking a maths class outdoors or embedding nature into curriculum such as setting a scheme of work around the environment.

This is a one-year consultancy position. We are looking for a contractor to provide the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts with a thoroughly-researched and contemporary outline of a CPD package aimed initially at KS3-4 teachers (secondary school).

This will take the form of a structured, well evidenced training and development blueprint. This will be based upon focus groups, interviews and wider desk-based research to provide an understanding of what it would take for teachers, teaching assistants, and senior leadership teams within secondary settings to sign up to and complete the training.

We are looking for a package that is targeted at a foundation level, with the potential to be further developed by Wildlife Trusts as teachers progress and increase their levels of engagement and competence.

Therefore, the training should be pitched as an “introduction to outdoor learning”, with potential for further learning and skills development.

We **do not** expect the consultant to build the entire CPD package ready for delivery. This will be co-developed by The Wildlife Trusts based on the learning and detailed blueprint provided through this contract.

We are looking for:

A complete blueprint for a non-accredited professional development package for KS3-4 teachers that demonstrates to us:

- The best-fit type of delivery model for a secondary-based teacher/teaching assistant i.e., inset-days, twilight sessions, online, in-person
- Recommendations based on direct feedback from KS3-4 teachers about duration, format, and level of pitch for the professional development
- Barriers to be removed in accessing the development package **and recommendations** on how to address these, based on direct feedback from teachers
- Recommendations for how Wildlife Trusts can best access and secure time of teachers and senior leaders in secondary schools
- How Wildlife Trusts can refine and tailor the blueprint into a full package ready for roll-out
- The potential for delivering this as a commercial package
- The potential in the future to add accreditation to the package

We expect to see the following elements included to help evolve our thinking:

- Desk-based research that explores, in detail, existing professional development for teachers in the field of outdoor learning/outdoor education
- Ideas around structure and suggested content for the development package
- Focus groups, interviews and feedback from teachers/teaching assistants and school leadership from a wide cross-section of locations across the UK
- A plan based on the reality of a wide range of different school locations, types and sizes i.e., schools that have large areas of outdoor space and schools with limited grounds
- The best routes/contacts into a secondary school – where is our time and energy best spent during initial contact and engagement

You will produce:

A blueprint for a professional development package **in a format of your choosing** that must include:

- An Executive Summary
- Overview of project area
- Breakdown of methodologies used and why
- Results – that meet the requirements of the brief
- Conclusions with recommendations

We also would like you to:

- Present and discuss the emerging findings to Wildlife Trust CEOs and Chairs, and the Communities of Practice for education and youth as part of our quarterly seminars across the 12-month contract
- Work routinely throughout the 12-month contract with the lead Wildlife Trusts of the sister programme – Naturally Connected Young People - to align the outcomes of both workstreams
- Provide all raw data collected through the desk-based research and interviews/focus groups with secondary settings to The Wildlife Trusts

What we will do

- The Wildlife Trusts will provide an experienced, consistent point of contact who can organise access to Wildlife Trust contacts and where available, contacts within secondary settings
- The Wildlife Trusts will ensure you have clarity within the brief
- Establish routine update meetings to ensure good programme management and delivery
- We will not share the contents externally, unless explicitly agreed, however, content may be used as part of future funding applications by Wildlife Trusts.

Budget

The total budget, **including VAT** is £40,000.

We will accept bids up to this amount as a maximum which must include VAT. Bids above this amount will not be able to go forward to interview stage.

Timetable

- **16 July 2025** – Tender released
- **16 July – 30 July 2025 –** Opportunity to ask questions (see contact information)
- **6 August 2025 – All tenders received.**
- **11 August 2025** – Call to interview.
- **18 and 19 August 2025** – Interview days.
- **22 August** - Confirm winning contractor.
- **28 August** – Kick-off meeting to finalise contract details and brief details.
- **1 September 2025** – Delivery phase begins
- **1 September 2026** – Final deadline for delivering assets.

Delivery updates, sharing sessions with Wildlife Trusts etc. iterative across the 12-month contract period - TBA

Contract and Payments

If successful you will sign and enter into a contract with the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts. If you have not worked with us before you will be required to complete a 'New Supplier Form'. Neither project works nor payments can be initiated until you are entered into our system and have signed and returned your contract.

Payments will be issued at key delivery milestones throughout the contract, we will not award full payment upfront. This will be discussed at the point of offering the contract to you, and will be listed in the payment terms within your contract with The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.

The application process
We will hold a 2-week period for expressions of interest and clarification conversations from 16 July to 30 July 2025

We will then move to formal applications with a **deadline for submissions by 6 August 2025.**

We kindly ask applicants to email Jen Davis, UK Education and Learning Manager jdavis@wildlifetrusts.org to inform The Wildlife Trusts of **your intention to tender by 5 August 2025.** If you do not meet this deadline, it will not prevent you from putting in an application, but it supports the management of the application process for both parties.

Interviews will take place on 18 and 19 August 2025 with three members of the Campaigning and Communities team.

Your submission should include:

- A clear overview of the phases you will deliver that demonstrate how you will meet this brief.
- Ideas and concepts for the best ways to deliver the outputs within this brief, with an eye towards sharing across a network of 46 Wildlife Trusts
- Details of staff allocated to the project, together with experience of the contractor and staff members in carrying out similar projects. The project manager / lead contact should be identified.
- A timescale for carrying out the elements of the project between 1 September 2025 and 1 September 2026 (if this can be achieved in a shorter timescale, we are open to all proposals, but this is the maximum time)
- A breakdown of cost for the work, to the maximum amount. Additional funding will not be available.

Interviews will involve you having the opportunity to further refine your proposal and present this visually and verbally through an online interview. If clarity is required on any area of your proposal, we will provide you with this steer when we call you for interview. This will be followed by a question-and-answer opportunity with the team. It should take no more than 1.5 hours in total.

Point of contact

Jen Davis – UK Education and Learning Manager – jdavis@wildlifetrusts.org

Please help us manage your enquiries by ensuring all emails use the subject line:
BRINGING NATURE INTO TEACHING: TENDER, [YOUR BUSINESS NAME]