



Corvedale CE Primary School

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CF/1718/30 Wildlife Pond Project, Corvedale Church of England Primary School

To construct a safe fenced area that contains a pond that will enhance and attract the wildlife in the school grounds.

This project has not been fully completed at this date. There was a delay in the delivery of vital materials before the wet winter weather set in which has prevented completion of the project. We are making the claim for the grant as the amount will cover costs of materials purchased to date; no further significant expenditure will be required to complete the project. Dry weather and an improvement in ground conditions (and some hard labour!) is all that is required to allow for completion.

Background

Corvedale Church of England Primary School is situated in the village of Diddlebury, in south west Shropshire a few miles outside the towns of Ludlow and Craven Arms. The school serves a diverse community with a sizeable catchment area. There are currently 81 pupils on roll (April 2018). The school has five classrooms – although only four are occupied – a school hall small playground and adequately sized playing field. The site has some mature trees and some small garden areas, it also incorporates an area designed for Forest School activities. The school shares the site with Corvedale Centre for Children which offers preschool provision and out-of-hours childcare.

During the last two years, we have been enhancing our school grounds to attract wildlife and make more use of the outside spaces for lessons and activities. The school garden has been revitalised and Forest School areas improved. In a survey (2016), pupils were asked for suggestions of how the school may be improved. A pond was one of their suggestions. (There used to be one but it was filled in some time ago.) Creating a pond area would be an asset to the school providing a valuable educational and aesthetically pleasing resource. There are several other ponds of various dimensions within the village and surrounding area so creating another would provide a strategic habitat for wildlife journeying between existing ponds.

Design

Research was carried out from books and internet, groups of children were consulted on final plans. Several local experts from environmental (SH AONB) and wildlife organisations were consulted regarding siting, design and safety. The following list of principles regarding safety have been followed.

- Edges of the pond clearly visible, no steep or slippery banks
- The depth be kept as shallow as possible, maximum depth of pond; 150cm
- Deeper zone positioned away from the edges where access is not possible
- Pond regularly maintained to ensure that the perimeter does not become obscured and that the area around the pond does not deteriorate
- The pond is located so that it is visible from nearby school buildings
- Slip/tripping hazards eliminated from the surrounding area
- Edges that are open for access for pond dipping should be gently sloping, or flat and well defined
- Appropriate level of supervision in place taking into account age of pupils and any special needs
- Appropriate warning signs posted ('No unaccompanied children', 'deep water' etc.)
- Pond fenced to (1.1m high min) with lockable gate to deter unsupervised entry

Funding was obtained from the Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund, the school committed £500 from its funds and the Supporters of Corvedale School (SOCS) provided a further £500 towards the project. We were advised that work would be best carried out during the autumn when ground conditions would be suitable and the pond could then be allowed to fill naturally over the winter.

Work

Children from the school's Wildlife Watch group measured and marked out the plot in the summer 2017. A rough outline of the pond shape was also marked with sticks and line marker spray.

Over the course of three Saturday's in October and November 2017 a small group of parent and staff volunteers began the ground work. A small excavator was used to clear the area of existing growth and topsoil (this was spread on a neighbouring field with the farmer's permission). The hole for the pond, a 'teardrop shape' approximately 5m long with a maximum width of 3m was then dug with the excavator and work began obtaining the final shape, sand and gravel was delivered to line the hole before the underlay and liner could be laid.

At the same time, fence posts had been purchased, along with concrete, and work began on erecting the surrounding fence. Panels of picket fence were reclaimed from another project and reused to secure the area.

A suitable liner and underlay was purchased, we tried to pay through the school's BACS system to avoid VAT but the supply company would not send the products without payment. After a couple of weeks delay, we eventually used a personal credit card to allow delivery mid-November.

The fourth workday in early December work was halted early due to heavy snow. By this time the heavy clay ground had become waterlogged and the original excavation had begun to fill with water, before the liner could be laid. The site was made secure with temporary fencing.

Since this workday in December no further work has been possible and over the course of the winter with heavy snow and rain, the area remains waterlogged. Infact the excavation is full of water.

Further work

As soon as drier weather comes work can continue. This will involve:

- Pump water out of the hole – local farmer has agreed to help with this
- Dry, reshape and line the pond – volunteer working party 2 days
- Landscaping to create safe access for observation pond-dipping etc. – volunteer working party 1 day
- Further landscaping to create additional habitats: log piles, stone piles etc.
- Fit permanent fence panels and gate – volunteer working party

No further significant expenditure will be required to complete the project.

Once all landscaping has been completed, the children will be able to plant the area with native species. The finished pond area will add additional habitats to the local area, attracting a diversity of invertebrates, birds and amphibians to the site. The finished area will allow children from the school and preschool to observe wildlife in a different habitat; activities would allow them to practice skills in so many curriculum areas, fully enhancing their learning. Pond-dipping activities will encourage careful observation and exploration, increasing knowledge of ecology and a growing knowledge of wildlife and environmental issues.

Corvedale News Ripples Article March 2018

Corvedale CE Primary School

It has once again been a busy half term in school.

There has been much excitement recently for Class One in their topic on Dinosaurs as they have been hatching dinosaur eggs!

Class Two have had a visit from the museum service showing artefacts and telling children about ancient Egypt as part of their topic. One of our governors, on a routine visit, narrowly avoided being mummified when he popped in to see what was going on!

Our oldest children in Class 3 and 4 have just finished off their topic work on Dangerous Earth (volcanoes and earthquakes) and will start learning about what the Romans did for us after half term. There's also Bikeability sessions booked for them and the other classes in the next couple of months.

Each half term Mrs Rook and Mrs Condra host an after school club called Wildlife Watch, it is part of an on-going partnership initiative with the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership. Each half term there is a particular theme for the club, before Christmas it was darkness, in February it was mud! A great time was had by all making things from mud and creating a mud-slide on the field. Some children had to be hosed down before being allowed in mum's car on the way home.

Talking of mud and the school field; quite bizarrely, work on the new wildlife pond has come to a halt due to too much water. The hole for the pond was dug at the beginning of November but due to a delay in the arrival of the liner and subsequent wet weather the hole has filled with water and the surrounding area become too wet to work. What's the betting when we do pump the water out, allow everything to dry and then lay the liner that it will be the start of a significantly dry spring!

Jonathan Brough
Headteacher