

Briefing for the Petitions Committee

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Hydref 2016
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Research Briefing:

Petition number: [P5-05-713](#)

Petition title: The Wildlife Warriors

Text of petition:

Caerphilly Junior Forum works with children aged 7–11 years old in Caerphilly borough to give children a voice on issues which are important to children. Each year the Junior Forum identifies a priority issue to address. The priority for 2015–2016 is to protect the natural habitat of wildlife. Junior Forum members believe that every primary school in Wales should have an environment club called the "Wildlife Warriors" to help to protect the natural environment of local wildlife. This club would:

- be different from schools eco committees as it would allow anyone to join at any age. Children would not need to be elected to the club. – be active all year to help protect wildlife;
- be hands on in their community and do practical activities to help protect wildlife. These activities could include, cleaning rivers, building wildlife homes, planting flowers and trees;
- be flexible so different people can join at different times.

Introduction

[Caerphilly Junior Forum](#) is calling for every primary school in Wales to have an environment club called the 'Wildlife Warriors' to help to protect the natural environment of local wildlife. However, the Forum has not specified how it intends this should be achieved nor to whom its call for action is directed.

According to the Welsh Government's [Address list of schools](#), updated on 26 September 2016, there are currently **1,292 maintained primary schools in Wales**. The [School Governors' Guide to the Law](#) sets out the various responsibilities for education and schools. The **local authority** 'maintains' schools, which means that it has an interest in them being governed

and managed well and that, as a whole, schools in the authority area deliver effective and efficient provision. School **governing bodies** are responsible for setting the aims and objectives of the school, while the day to day running of the school is the responsibility of the **headteacher**.

Curriculum reform

The Welsh Government is currently working with schools on developing a new [Curriculum for Wales](#) following [Professor Graham Donaldson's independent review](#) of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. The new curriculum is scheduled to be ready for schools to use from 2018 and fully rolled out in 2021. It will replace the national curriculum established in England and Wales in 1988.

Professor Donaldson recommended the curriculum be built around four purposes, one of which is that, upon leaving school, young people should be '**ethical, informed citizens**' who show their commitment to the **sustainability of the planet**'.

Annex A contains a brief overview of the current statutory requirements for the curriculum in maintained schools.

The Welsh Government's sustainability policies

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) established seven 'Well-being goals' which public bodies (including the Welsh Ministers and each local authority) are required to work towards as part of a duty to carry out sustainable development. One of these well-being goals is '**A Resilient Wales**', which is defined in the Act as:

A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with **healthy functioning ecosystems** that support social, economic and **ecological resilience** and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change). [my emphasis]

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, refers to this Well-being Goal and the Welsh Government's [Nature Recovery Plan](#). One of these objectives of this plan centres on **greater participation and understanding of biodiversity** through, for example (as the Cabinet Secretary refers), 'education and training through **schools**, colleges and knowledge transfer initiatives'.

Existing Eco-Schools scheme

The Cabinet Secretary says she 'would see the Wildlife Warriors initiative as **closely complementing** our existing Eco-Schools Programme', which she adds is 'designed to be a pupil-led scheme that involves the whole school'.

[Eco-Schools](#) is an international programme run in Wales by Keep Wales Tidy and funded by the Welsh Government. It is run in both primary and secondary schools. 97% of schools in Wales are registered on the programme, including every school in Caerphilly County

Borough. **Keep Wales Tidy** announced in June 2015 that it had been awarded **£2.7 million** to ‘continue and build on its work in Wales over the next two and a half years’.

Keep Wales Tidy says the programme is designed to be run by pupils themselves, with an adult co-ordinator acting as mentor and facilitator. The wider community is also involved through participation, campaigns, active communication and action days. Keep Wales Tidy has **provided information to the Research Service** which states:

The programme allows young people to lead the way and the combination of learning and actions make it an ideal way for schools to embark on a meaningful path to improving their school and their local communities, and for pupils to influence the lives of people and wildlife around them.

The Eco-Schools programme covers eight topic areas across a range of environmental and sustainability matters: Litter; Waste; Energy; Water; Healthy living; Transport; Global citizenship; and School grounds. Keep Wales Tidy says ‘many of the topics have either direct or indirect **wildlife benefits**’ and that many schools also have an ‘environment club to help to protect the natural environment of local wildlife’.

Schools can apply for awards recognising their eco-school status at one of four levels: bronze, silver, gold and platinum.

Eco-Committees

Keep Wales Tidy has advised of the following in respect of schools’ Eco-Committees.

The cornerstone of the [Eco-school awarding] process involves the setting up of an Eco committee which needs to:

- Represent the whole school
- Feed back to the rest of the school
- Have an element of democracy

Members of the Eco Committee are either voted on by their peers or some committees are made up of volunteers. The process [is] flexible to the needs of the school and the wishes of the pupils. Eco-Committees should also have representation from different areas of the school e.g. teachers, site manager/caretaker, catering staff, governors and PTA to make it as inclusive as possible.

Annex A: Current curriculum statutory requirements

Part 7 of the *Education Act 2002*, as amended, sets out the statutory requirements of the school curriculum in Wales.

Section 99 of the Act states that the curriculum provided by a maintained school should be balanced and broadly based and satisfy the following two general requirements:

- a) Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.
- b) Prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

As part of the **basic curriculum**, maintained schools are required to deliver personal and social education, work-related education from key stage 3 (year 7/age 11 onwards), and sex education in secondary schools. The Welsh Government provides non-statutory guidance on content but schools have discretion in how they deliver these aspects of the curriculum. The other requirement of the basic curriculum is to deliver the national curriculum. The content of the **national curriculum** is prescribed and maintained schools must follow programmes of study for each subject.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.