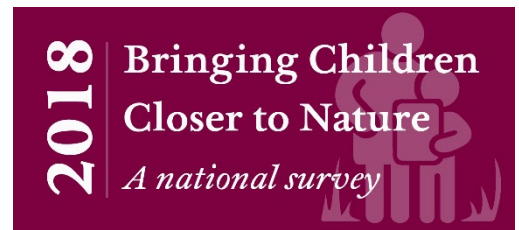


How can more children get closer to nature?



Embargoed until 14th November 2018

Three of England's leading environmental education charities have joined forces to gather much-needed evidence about how schools and educators use wooded areas and forests in England. They want everyone with an interest in bringing children closer to nature to take part in a national survey which will inform practice and policy.

Enabling children to be closer to nature, especially by learning and exploring in wooded areas and forests, was recognised as a key action in the government's 25-year Environment Plan, published earlier this year. Yet despite the well-proven benefits of children spending regular time outdoors—including health and wellbeing, attitudes to learning, and environmental awareness—there is poor understanding about the current level of outdoor activities for young people across England, particularly in wooded areas and forests.

The *Bringing Children Closer to Nature* survey aims to explore barriers and opportunities to activities in wooded areas and forests, including the practice of Forest School, and it will quantify any issues preventing development and growth. Its three main aims are to:

1. acquire basic information, including the number and distribution of schools and other organisations who do forest education activities including Forest School, and the levels of training and skills among practitioners;
2. understand more about barriers and opportunities to establishing and sustaining forest education, including Forest School, among host organisations (e.g. schools, early years nurseries) and practitioners, and explore how these could be overcome;
3. explore potential interest among woodland owners in providing greater access to woodland sites to support forest education, including Forest School.

This national survey forms part of the *Forest Schools for All* project, a partnership between Sylva Foundation, The Ernest Cook Trust (funder) and The Forest School Association

Chief Executive of Sylva Foundation, Dr Gabriel Hemery, said:

"Efforts to enable, increase, and sustain activities for young people in our woodlands and other outdoor areas across England have been held back by a poor evidence base. This important survey will provide a powerful voice for those with an interest and expertise in bringing children closer to nature. The survey outcomes will help inform delivery, funding opportunities, and policy development and will be freely available."

Chief Executive of The Ernest Cook Trust, Dr Victoria Edwards, said:

"It's been invaluable to work alongside experienced professionals at Sylva Foundation and Forest School Association to produce such a targeted research survey. The outcomes will influence decisions on how we work at The Ernest Cook Trust in broadening our reach to inspire young people to learn from the land."

The survey was launched in November 2018 and will remain open until the end of the year. Research outcomes will be summarised in a freely-accessible report in early 2019. Those people interested in taking the survey can read more and follow a link to it here: www.sylva.org.uk/survey

ENDS

Notes for Editors

Contacts:

For media enquiries and to arrange interviews please contact Jen Hurst, Head of Forest Education, Sylva Foundation. jen@sylva.org.uk or 01865 408018

Images:

Images are available to download (reproduction free). Two example are provided. Please contact us for further information. All images © Sylva Foundation.





About the partners:

Sylva Foundation is an environmental charity helping trees and people grow together. From its base at the Sylva Wood Centre in Oxfordshire, it works across the UK supporting sustainable forest management with thousands of woodland owners. It works widely in partnership with other organisations in delivering environmental and educational projects, under the themes of science, education, forestry, and wood. www.sylva.org.uk

The Ernest Cook Trust, based in Fairford, Gloucestershire, is one of the UK's leading educational charities, inspiring young people to achieve better educational and life outcomes by learning from the land and is rooted in the conservation and management of the countryside. It owns and manages more than 8,900 hectares of landed estates across five English counties. ECT actively encourages children and young people to learn from the land through education programmes (including Forest School training) on its own estates, through partnerships with other organisations, and through its grant-giving programme. Each year its Trustees distribute around £2m in dedicated grants to a range of education initiatives. www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk

The Forest School Association is the National professional body for Forest School, running the recognised providers and trainers' scheme to ensure high quality Forest School. It has more than 2,000 members. www.forestschoollassociation.org