



TNR Learning and Outreach Strategy (draft)

Develop the reserve as an outdoor learning environment, offering a range of learning and outreach opportunities tailored to different ages, interests and needs.

The aspiration to see Tewkesbury Nature Reserve (TNR) as an outdoor learning resource has been at the heart of the reserve's development since its formation. TNR has strong potential to be a living laboratory (44 ha) trialling different approaches to learning and outreach, working with the residents of Tewkesbury and its surrounding communities. Urban floodplain nature reserves like TNR bring particular challenges with competing interests (nature, farming, recreation, infrastructure, floods), and diverse communities with different drivers, knowledge, skills and values. This learning strategy encompasses both "formal" learning through links with local and regional educational establishments seeking an outdoor classroom or laboratory, and "informal" learning by community groups and different publics who want to develop a better understanding of nature through immersion in an attractive outdoor setting. This pays particular attention to the co-benefits to health and well-being. Some contacts have already been established with local schools, organisations, community groups, and the University of Gloucestershire and UWE Bristol, and some learning through TNR has already taken place (e.g. through Duke of Edinburgh award activities, undergraduate and postgraduate student dissertations and internships). We are aware there is much more to do to understand how we can capitalise on the potential of the reserve as an educational resource.

The learning and outreach strategy needs to be conceived within the wider context of the physical development of TNR as a nature reserve. Entering its next phase of development, TNR is moving from a focus on implementing infrastructural changes for wildlife enhancement to engaging communities in using the reserve as a resource for varied learning activities linked to environmental awareness and knowledge, health and wellbeing and wider resilience building. In the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, TNR - acting as a 'green lung' - has potential to intertwine recovery for nature and humans.

Over the next five years, we will deliver on the following objectives:

Staffing and volunteering

1. To seek funding for a learning and outreach officer to develop resources and train the volunteer base. This requires attention to the time and skills needed for initial set up and the development of sustainable model of funded staff time and volunteers. A key task is the identification and cultivation of funding sources for learning and outreach within Gloucestershire and nationally. It also requires the development of skills in bid construction for teaching and learning among volunteers.
2. To draw on, and build expertise/capacity in learning and outreach, within a group of volunteers to support learning and outreach activities on the reserve. Sub-objective is:
 - To draw on local specialists with interests in sharing their knowledge about the reserve (e.g. ecology, heritage), and in supporting the development of learning activities (e.g. acting as walk guides).

Establishing the character of TNR's potential community of learners

3. To build knowledge of the different demographics of groups bordering TNR and Tewkesbury, along with their needs and interests, with particular attention to underrepresented groups and disadvantage. This involves building collaborations with organisations like Priors Park Neighbourhood Project.

Developing learning opportunities for different groups

4. To offer an inclusive range of learning opportunities tailored to different ages, interests and needs. This involves building learning and activity communities around the reserve through a structured programme of activities. Sub-objectives are:
 - To develop citizen science volunteering opportunities through the reserve, working with partners. Possible areas include species and ecosystem monitoring; invertebrate surveying; water quality surveying; and river form adjustment to rehabilitation measures. Data collected will feed into TNR's monitoring strategy.
 - To support local people in participating in national initiatives in species and habitat monitoring through the reserve (Bioblitz; Waterblitz; Riverfly project)
 - To develop a programme of monitoring activities for young people (e.g. pond dipping) so encouraging environmental stewardship.
 - To develop and test learning activities (walks; activity days) on different themes for different age groups. This includes the development of permanent meadow and river walk on the reserve with educational plaques, and themed river walks e.g. science and nature, storytelling.

- To explore the potential to develop countryside skills through the reserve (e.g. pollarding, willow work; hedge laying; tree planting). This was mentioned in the early years of the development of TNR.
- To build local knowledge about key agendas and issues in management of the reserve, such that local people can input in an informed way to the management (e.g. around rewilding; sustainable drainage for managing urban pollution; restoration versus rehabilitation)

Increasing co-benefits of outdoor learning

5. To develop strong links between nature, and health and wellbeing for the general public, while also working with healthcare professionals to encourage participation by patients. This includes a possible programme of themed nature-health walks run by volunteers.

Building learning partnerships

6. To establish partnerships with appropriate organisations (schools, colleges, universities, community groups, etc.) to promote an interest in using TNR for outdoor learning. This involves developing a set of learning resources to support both learners and teachers and lecturers. Sub-objectives are:
 - To develop partnerships with local primary schools, creating educational resources to support on site-learning (STEM). This includes teaching packs for STEM and the development of Forest School provision.
 - To develop partnerships with local secondary schools, creating educational resources to support on-site learning. This includes geography, biology/ecology, hydrology, geomorphology, floodplain and water management.
 - To develop and build on partnerships with local tertiary education institutions for student assessment and monitoring projects. This includes University of Gloucestershire, UWE Bristol and University of Worcester.
 - To develop partnerships with those community groups involved in informal education at all levels – to promote the reserve as a space for lifelong learning. Organisations include U3A and Friends of the Earth – both active in Tewkesbury.
 - To develop partnerships with organisations concerned with learning and the natural and cultural heritage in Tewkesbury. This includes the museum sector.

Innovation and creativity in learning

7. To develop use of technology and the arts in learning activities to reach new target groups within Tewkesbury and beyond. Sub-objectives are:
 - To develop the use of creative arts to engage different groups on the reserve (e.g. through storytelling and photography walks)
 - To develop the use of different digital technologies in the field to engage different groups e.g. geotagging

Culture of evaluation and sharing of practice

8. To evaluate and learn collectively from the delivery of the above objectives to inform future strategy and practice in learning and outreach.
9. To share learning and seek models of good practice in learning activities with other nature reserves in urban floodplain settings bordered by diverse communities.