

# NATURE PREMIUM

## CAMPAIGNING FOR EVERY CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON TO HAVE TIME IN NATURE

*As a self-employed Outdoor Educator, Dr Sara Collins was able to leave behind the academic/commercial world and work in a sector that fitted in with her son's education. Ten years on, during the first Covid lockdown, she co-founded the Nature Premium campaign which calls on government to guarantee sustainable funding for all children to experience regular time in nature. Three years later Sara describes herself as a Changemaker, Outdoor Educator and Expert Den Builder.*



*Horizons recently caught up with Sara to hear more about how the Nature Premium campaign is progressing.*

### What is the Nature Premium proposal?

The Nature Premium ([naturepremium.org](http://naturepremium.org)) is a proposal to guarantee regular and ongoing time in nature for ALL children and young people with additional funding for those that need it most.

### How is the campaign going?

We are making good progress! This is our first campaign, and we embrace our lack of campaigning experience to be different from the crowd. We are in a good place to take advantage of the remaining time before the next general election and are feeling optimistic.

### What do you mean by 'good place' in the campaign?

Well, we think we have a corker of an idea. It's about helping children grow up greener. Nature is not (or should not be) a party-political issue, which means we have found cross-party support through our campaigning. Also, without any commercial competition or branding issues, we've found that individuals and organisations feel more able to support our idea and help our campaign flourish.

Earlier this year we became a Specialist Sector Group within the Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL). We have a constituted Steering Group including representatives from the IOL, Woodland Trust, Learning Through Landscapes, the Mammal Society, the Harmony Project, The Country Trust, Early Education and three head teachers. This provides governance and accountability and a broad range of expertise to develop the campaign. We have a wide and growing base of support. Our proposal is stronger because we have incorporated suggestions from supporters, and always welcome critical friends. Our proposal includes a funding model that would allow the Department for Education (DfE) to test an innovative policy with no financial risk until

key outcomes are achieved. This would help the DfE:

- Introduce a policy that they already accept would benefit all children and young people.
- Help achieve the objectives of the Government's Sustainability and Climate Change strategy.
- Introduce evidence-based/informed policy supporting government ambition during an economic crisis.

Finally, we are building a funding coalition to finance a three-year trial to demonstrate how the Nature Premium would work in practice in a range of education settings from early years through to A level colleges.

### How will you persuade the Government to fund the Nature Premium?

We propose running an ambitious Social Bridging Finance Trial (SBF) of the Nature Premium. SBF is a model designed to change policy at scale. In this instance the DfE, the funders and Nature Premium campaign would work together to agree key outcomes for the trial. The funders would fund the trial, the Nature Premium would implement the work, and the DfE would agree to sustainably fund a Nature Premium, using a coalition of blended funding, but only when the key outcomes are achieved. This provides a risk-free mechanism for the DfE to explore a concept that they already accept benefits young people's mental wellbeing and would contribute to achieving their own strategy goals.

### The trial has some assumptions:

- Nature Premium funding goes directly from the funder to the education settings.
- Each early years provider or school agrees to key indicators and key outcomes.
- Each early years provider or school interprets nature according to its location, the experiences of its children, the interests of the staff and their connection with the community.
- Funding will be used following 5 key indicators (training staff, using external expertise, modifying grounds, buying kit, work in the community).
- Staff will be supported by a Nature Premium facilitator who will coordinate with local conservation/farming/gardening non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local government.
- Key outcomes will be determined with input from Natural England, The Royal College of Psychiatry, funders, and the Department for Education.



## How much funding would each school receive through the Nature Premium?

We propose that each Key Stage should receive £5000 plus £100 for each child or young person known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) and £25 for each child or young person not eligible for free school meals (non-FSM). This means that each school would receive annual funding, dependent on their size and cohort.

## What would this funding buy?

Early year providers and schools are autonomous, meaning that each education setting will make unique decisions as to how the Nature Premium should be used considering the:

- Location - urban, rural, coastal, moorland, wooded, farmland and more.
- Age of the children and young people.
- Life experiences of the children and young people.
- Interest and experience of staff.

Ultimately, we hope that the Nature Premium would change the education culture by demonstrating that nature is a priority, engage the wider education community to include ALL children and young people in developing and embedding a growing Sustainable Education culture. This will strengthen communities to benefit local education, health, and economy.

We also hope that the Nature Premium would act as a catalyst between the aspirations of a future Net Zero society and the practicalities of creating a knowledgeable and resilient future workforce. Finally, we hope the Nature Premium would provide financial capacity to enable schools to support staff, children and young people to connect to nature.

As with the Sports Premium (a campaign which provides opportunities to be active for children and young people from an early age), the Nature Premium should improve the engagement of all children and young people with regular nature connection activities. The profile of nature and sustainable living would be raised across the school as a tool for whole-school improvement. Further, it should increase confidence, knowledge and skills of teaching staff, whilst increasing participation in community-based nature activities.

## How could all early year providers and schools give children opportunities to connect with nature?

We believe that with a cultural change to 'think nature first' there are many opportunities using the Five Pathways to Nature Connection Model based around:

- Senses – watch out for wildlife, watch birds overhead or insects on flowers.
- Emotion – take a class outside to a greenspace, sit and close your eyes, take three deep breaths and listen for the natural sounds around you.
- Compassion – put food out for the birds and watch for them. Pick up litter in a local green space.
- Meaning – expand your nature knowledge, read a book, or watch a film.
- Beauty – capture nature's beauty, take a photo or draw a picture.

## What are the next steps?

We are now planning a three-year Nature Premium Social Bridging Finance (SBF) trial working with the expertise of Kenneth Ferguson, who originally led the development of the SBF model. The powerful aspect of Social Bridging Finance is



that Stage One of the framework convenes an initial meeting with all partners to discuss the model and application requirements, including the importance of the SBF contract. While the Nature Premium Steering Group can propose how trial schools are selected and possible key outcomes, the final decisions will be made as part of the SBF framework. This ensures that all parties have an input on the trial design and agree the success criteria. This is a key strength of the SBF model, the funders and policy makers have a voice in how the trial is run.

We hope you agree that the Nature Premium could transform a generation. We want to expand our support base, so if you represent a large organisation or know an influential individual who might be interested then please contact us. We would be delighted to meet and discuss how we might work together to deliver the Nature Premium, answer any questions about the Social Bridging Finance trial and help all children and young people 'grow up greener' ▲



For more information, get in touch with Sara, Nature Premium Co-Founder and Lead at [saracollins@naturepremium.org](mailto:saracollins@naturepremium.org).