

Report

Cabinet Member for Resource

Part 1

27th May, 2009

Item No.3

Subject **Creation of Biodiversity in Schools Officer**

Purpose To ask the Cabinet Member for Resources for his approval to create the post of Biodiversity Officer in Schools.

Author Countryside and Conservation Manager

Ward All

Summary To create the post of Biodiversity Officer in Schools using CCW grant funding and Newport City Council match funding which has been generated through a 'Biodiversity SLA' with participating schools, as agreed with relevant Head of Service for Education. The author wishes to add the post to the Public Protection and Environmental Services/Countryside Services portfolio, for the duration of these contracts, namely, three years.

Proposal **To create the post of Biodiversity Officer for Schools for a three year fixed term period.**

Contact Joanne Gossage 01633 232340 joanne.gossage@newport.gov.uk

Action by Head of Public Protection and the Environment

Timetable The post of Biodiversity Officer for Schools to commence from April 2009 - April 2012 for a three year fixed term

Signed

1 Background

- 1.1. In 2008 The Countryside Service secured a four year framework agreement with the Countryside Council for Wales for grant funding totalling £260,000 over 4 years (2008 - 2012). The grant is to assist the Council in its environmental initiatives: either directly, for the physical implementation of projects, or indirectly through supporting existing or new Officer post.
- 1.2. The grant bid included continuation of the 50% funding for the Biodiversity Officer post that commenced in 2003. The grant also included 50% of the revenue funding required to support a Biodiversity in Schools Officer a NEW post within The Authority. The post will be:

Biodiversity in Schools Officer	Post would be on a Scale 5. 50% funded as a direct contribution from participating schools agreed through a 'Biodiversity SLA' via Education Services to match 50% CCW input. Full Time post on 3 year fixed term
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- 1.3. The job description for the post of Biodiversity Officer for Schools is attached in Background Papers, Appendix 1.
- 1.4. The post holder will be on a fixed term, three year contract that will only be extended if further grant funding is found. The match funding required for the 3 year period has been discussed and agreed with the Head of Education Resources and the participating Schools.

2 Need for Posts and Proposed Funding

Biodiversity in Schools Officer ~ Need for the Post

- 2.1. The Biodiversity in Schools Officer has arisen from discussion with Newport's teachers, Environmental Education Specialists and Grounds Managers. The post has been proposed as the most effective way for Schools to:
 - Increase the biodiversity of their grounds; and
 - Make best use of their grounds to assist in the delivery of the environmental aspects of the curriculum, in conjunction with the work of the Schools Science Officer, the Countryside Service and the Grounds Maintenance Service.
- 2.2. The Countryside Service has completed a year long pilot study to assess if biodiversity can be increased within all school sites regardless of the available 'grounds' area. Following the successful conclusion of the pilot study, Newport City Council are now able to proceed with the implementation of a full time officer post who will be available to all schools wishing to be involved in the programme. This Biodiversity in Schools Officer will provide support to all participating schools from 2009 to 2012, review their potential, help them best manage their existing resources, support existing 'Eco' initiatives and Forest School programmes and link with the Grounds Contractor Service to ensure that the proposals are married in with the maintenance programmes, and that un-programmed work resources are allocated efficiently.
- 2.3. Details of the aims and objectives of this post were set out in the Schools' Forum report dated 18 November. A copy of this report is attached in Appendix 2.

Biodiversity in Schools Officer ~ Funding the Post

- 2.4. The anticipated cost of the Biodiversity in Schools officer is £28,000 per year rising £500 per year for years 2010- 2012. This sum will include:
 - An Officer salary at Scale 5 SCP 22-25 (£19,300 - £21,244);

- Post on-costs at 28%;
- Remaining sum used to supplement/implement works in Schools;
- Any final payout in year three if post is not extended beyond the fixed term. (One week pay for every year of service)

Please note all figures are approximate as pay reviews are not finalised. On-costs are also reduced, as posts will utilise existing work stations.

- 2.5 The CCW funding for the post will provide 50% of the funding up to £14,000 for 2009, (14,250 in 2010-2011 and £14,500 in 2011-2012). The match 50% will be sourced through a specific, separate Biodiversity SLA with schools. Initially, the match funding focused on adding a sum to the existing individual 'Service Level Agreements' (SLAs) for Grounds Maintenance contracts, but it gradually became clear that a separate contract was needed. This would include an element of environmental education and allow Schools that have opted out of the Grounds contract to still take advantage of the Biodiversity Schools Officer. It was, therefore, agreed that the 50% match funding will be achieved through the creation of a separate Service Level Agreement that will run alongside the existing agreement of every participating school. This level of the Biodiversity SLA will be in the region of £200-400 per School and will be payable by participating Schools for each year of the programme. Schools that have opted out of the grounds maintenance service will be offered the opportunity of entering into a SLA just for this service. The overall contributions can be 'pooled' together to match fund the grant-aid from CCW.
- 2.6 All Schools have been contacted by the Science Advisory Officer Karen Mills to see if they wish to be included within the scheme. So far, 35 of the 64 Newport Schools have expressed an interest. A report on the Biodiversity in Schools post was presented to the Heads Forum on 18 November 2008, by the Science Officer Karen Mills. The Heads Forum voted unanimously to carry the project forward and to seek the agreement of all other Schools.
- 2.7 The establishment of this post is essential, if the Schools in Newport are to retain their high ESTYN results, and fully deliver on the environmental agenda, which now forms an increasingly important component within the school curriculum.

3 Options Considered/Available

- 3.1. To create the post of Biodiversity Officer in Schools
- 3.2. To not create the post of Biodiversity Officer in Schools.

4 Preferred Choice and Reasons

Option 3.1 - To proceed with the proposal on the grounds of environmental benefits and because they are funded from external sources

5 Sustainability and Environmental Issues

The post will make a substantial contribution to environmental education within Newport.

6 Equalities Impact

The post will be advertised in accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policies.

7 Crime Prevention Impact

There are no crime prevention impact issues in this report.

8 **Comments of Cabinet Member for Environment and Community Safety**

I fully support the creation of this post. The role of the Bio-diversity Officer will play a pivotal role in the delivery of the foundation stage in our Schools, and will offer the children a wonderful opportunity to learn about their environment.

9 **Comments of Cabinet Member for Young People Services**

This appointment has my full support. It is supported by the Schools' Forum and by those Heads and Governing Bodies who have so far responded. The appointment will help Schools deliver the curriculum in this area

10 **Comments of Head of Law and Standards - Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct legal implications. The Cabinet Member will need to be satisfied that the proposed grade for the new post is commensurate with the duties and levels of responsibility involved and also comparable with other similar posts in accordance with the Council's pay and grading structure. Under the Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment regulations, fixed term postholders now have the same employment protection rights as full-time members of staff. Therefore, the postholder will have accrued unfair dismissal and redundancy rights if the funding is discontinued and the fixed term post cannot be renewed after the end of the three year period.

11 **Comments of Head of Finance - Chief Financial Officer**

I have no objection to the creation of this post which will be funded by grant and an SLA from Schools

12 **Comments of Head of Human Resources and Policy**

The proposal to establish the new fixed term post of Biodiversity in Schools Officer on the grade of SCP 22 -25 is supported. The duties and responsibilities outlined in the job description are commensurate with the proposed grade.

Under the Fixed Term (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations any employee on a fixed-term contract will have the same employment rights after twelve months as a permanent employee, and if in post (on renewable fixed-term contracts) for a period of four years may be entitled to consider the post as permanent. The Council can no longer request employees on fixed-term contracts to waive their rights to redundancy payments after two years service. If the Council was unable to offer the postholder suitable alternative employment under the Council's *Job Security Policy* at the end of the fixed-term contract, the postholder would be redundant. If the postholder has more than two years' continuous local government service at the end of the fixed-term contract, statutory redundancy pay would be payable and the cost of this would have to be found from the Service's budget.

13 **Comments of Head of Education Resources and Planning**

The implementation of this post is fully supported. The funding contributions provided by the School's demonstrate it will provide significant added value to the environment, environmental learning and environmental approaches of Schools. "

Comments of Elected Members

Councillor Langsford

It would appear that this is closing the stable door when the horse has bolted!! It states in the report that the funding is for such an Officer from April 2009 to April 2012. I know this matter has been discussed at all Governors' meeting across the City. From a schools' point of view this is a worthwhile scheme.

Response from Head of Service

The funding has been made available from the 1st of April 2009 and the work of the post is currently being covered by an agency posting. This will continue until a formal appointment is made. We are glad that the councillor is happy to support the scheme

14 **Other Relevant Consultation**

15 **Background Papers**

- Appendix 1- Job Description - Biodiversity in Schools Officer
- Appendix 2 – Education Forum Report 18.11.2008
- Appendix 3 – Current Structure
- Appendix 4 – Proposed Structure

Job Description



Date	May, 2009
Post Title	Biodiversity in Schools Officer
Post No.	PE xxx
Grade	SCP 22-25
Section	Countryside and Conservation
Service Area	Public Protection and Environmental Services
Service Grouping	Environment and the Economy
Responsible To	Countryside and Conservation Manager

Job Purpose

This post has two main targets. It will focus on: improving biodiversity opportunities within schools grounds, with particular emphasis on meeting targets within Newport's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) targets; teaching children within the participating Schools about practical biodiversity implementation. Helping each School meet its environmental curriculum objectives in relation to The Outdoor Classroom.

Key Results Areas

1. To increase the biodiversity of Newport by working closely with Schools, in order to increase the biodiversity of their school grounds resource, and to create a more relevant outdoor teaching resource with particular reference to The Outdoor Classroom.
2. To undertake partnership working between Education Services, the Schools Scientific Officer and Newport City Council's Grounds and Countryside Teams (using a model developed through a pilot scheme) in order to create realistic workable schemes for all participating schools within Newport including managing project budgets.
3. To work with Grounds Maintenance technical Officers, and Area Managers, to agree and manage long-term input from the Council's internal Grounds Maintenance service to Client Schools. To also assist Schools in managing inputs from external grounds maintenance operatives.
4. To support all schools with their existing environmental education programmes - such as Eco-Schools; Forest Schools initiatives, and other curriculum requirements.
5. To work closely with the Council's Biodiversity Officer, in delivering measurable increases in biodiversity targets within Newport.
6. To play a key role within the team which progresses the 'Eco Week' initiative, as part of the 'Newport In Bloom' Campaign, which reaches all schools and nursery groups in Newport.
7. To work alongside Countryside Wardens (Education and Footpaths) to help implement and manage practical conservation schemes within schools;

arrange and oversee work of external contractors; and, if required, to assist Wardens with educational visits to Nature Areas managed by the Council.

8. To help raise environmental awareness within the City - through close working with Schools and Local Communities.
9. To attend site visits, and meetings, within the city boundary area as necessary within a reasonable distance.
10. To contribute to the maintenance of a healthy, safe and efficient working environment by taking reasonable care of own and others safety; to co-operate with Managers and Supervisors in complying with statutory health and safety duties; to report incidents, accidents, faults etc.
11. Any other duties as directed but the relevant level of responsibility, competence and appropriateness.

Qualifications and Experience

An appropriate professional qualification in Ecology, Environmental Science or environmental education.

A minimum of two years relevant experience in the delivery of environmental education programmes.

Supervisory Responsibilities

None

Supervision Received

Responsible to the Countryside and Conservation Manager

Principal Contacts

The Schools Scientific Officer
Local Education Authority;
Newport Schools;
Grounds and Countryside Service
Ward Councillors;
Community Councillors;
The local community
Wildlife in Newport Group (WING)
Gwent Wildlife Trust

Special Conditions

Working hours

The post holder will be required to work outside normal office hours, including evenings and weekends, for which the equivalent time off in lieu will be given.

Post Funding

This post is supported by a framework grant from the Countryside Council for Wales, which Newport City Council will receive until 2012. Grant funding for this post will be guaranteed for the next 3 years (up to March 2012). Should a point be reached where the funding is discontinued, the post holder will be subject to the Council's Job Security Policy

<p>This job description sets out the main duties of the post at the date when it was drawn up. Such duties may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or the level of responsibility entailed. Such variations are a common occurrence and cannot of themselves justify a reconsideration of the grading of the post.</p>
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Job Requirement



Date **May, 2009**
 Post Title **Biodiversity in Schools Officer**
 Service Area **Public Protection and Environmental Services**

Requirement	Essential or Desirable	How Tested (S) used at Shortlisting
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Education/Qualifications/Knowledge

1.1 Appropriate professional qualification in Ecology, Education, Environment or a combination. Degree level.	E	Application Form (S)
1.2 Knowledge of environmental education in schools and links to the national curriculum.	E	Application Form(S)/Interview
1.3 Understanding of LBAP principles and its underlying legislation and policy.	E	Application Form(S)/Interview
1.4 Knowledge of practical implementation and management of grounds for habitat creation and enhancement.	E	Application Form(S)/Interview

Experience

2.1 Minimum two years relevant environmental education experience either in school setting or as part of delivering other environmental service.	E	Application Form (S)/Interview
2.2 Experience of practical implementation of conservation works in urban and rural settings.	E	Application Form (S)/Interview
2.3 Production of ecological assessment, management plans and general reports writing.	E	Application Form/Interview
2.4 Liaison with a range of outside bodies; in particular the principal contacts as listed above and the general public.	D	Application Form/Interview

Aptitudes and Skills

3.1 Ability to liaise/work with a range of organisations: including Council services, outside bodies, elected Members, the public.	E	Application Form/Interview
3.2 Ability to communicate effectively in written and	E	Interview

verbal form to children and adults with a range of knowledge and experience.

3.3 Ability to work effectively within a team to achieve shared objectives.	E	Application Form/Interview
3.4 Ability to achieve and maintain effective work performance, involving several ongoing applications/issues to meet deadlines	D	Application Form/Interview
3.5 Computer literacy, general word processing.	E	Application Form/Interview

Personal Attributes

4.1 Be able to work on own initiative	E	Interview
4.2 Be self-motivated	E	Interview
4.3 Be able to work as part of team	E	Interview
4.4 Good interpersonal skills	E	Interview

Circumstances

5.1 Be available, on occasion, to work outside of office hours, including evenings	E	Interview
5.2 Be able to undertake site visits within the city	E	Interview
5.3 Hold a current, full, UK driving licence	E	Application Form (S)

Equal Opportunities

6.1 Understand and demonstrate a willingness to promote positively the Equal Opportunities Policy of Newport City Council	E	Interview
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Report to Heads Forum 18.11.08

Schools' Forum

ITEM

Report

Date of Meeting: 18th November 2008

Title Support Biodiversity in Schools Officer

Purpose To seek the views of Forum Members re: agreement on match funding the post.

Author Joanne Gossage – Countryside Manager

Schools ALL

Summary

This proposal is for the creation of a new full time (3 year fixed term) post to effectively be a single point of contact for schools to enable them to:

- 1 increase the biodiversity of their grounds; and
- 2 make best use of their grounds to assist in the delivery of the environmental aspects of the curriculum, in conjunction with the work of the schools science officer, the countryside service and the grounds maintenance service.

In order to assess the potential for such a post, the Countryside Service is currently running a pilot study in five schools with varying constraints/opportunities in terms of grounds area and service budget. Although the pilot has not been completed the results so far indicate that regardless of the available 'grounds' area, there are numerous ways that biodiversity can be increased within the school sites.

Following the successful conclusion of the pilot study, the proposal, as agreed with CCW, would be for the Biodiversity in Schools officer to roll the scheme out to all interested school in Years 2, 3 & 4 (2009-2012). CCW would provide 50% of the funding for the post with the remaining 50% provided by Newport City Council by education. A possible source for raising this match funding would be a slight increase in cost of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between individual schools and Grounds Maintenance.

1. Background Information

- 1.1 Assisting with the delivery of environmental education by other service areas has been on an ad hoc basis. This is both for installation of features within school grounds and group activities at NCC sites such as nature reserves. Service areas such as Grounds and Countryside have a broad remit for environmental education and awareness raising, however, this is not part of a formal SLA with Education. At a time when schools really need assistance with developing the potential of their grounds there is not a post committed to helping them achieve this.

- 1.2 In 2007/08 the Countryside Service successfully obtained a 4 year Framework Grant from the Countryside Council for Wales. Included within Year 1 of this grant was a proposal to undertake a pilot study to formalise an approach to improve school grounds for biodiversity and is a key element of the 'Eco Schools' Green Flag initiative.
- 1.3 The pilot was to work with 4 -5 schools to determine the potential for increasing biodiversity in their school grounds, regardless of their size or condition. The pilot is run by one of the biodiversity officers as a part time programme (1½ days per week). The choice of pilot schools was assisted by the schools scientific officer. The pilot schools are:
- St.Julians Comprehensive;
 - Llanmartin
 - Millbrook Juniors
 - St Patricks
 - St Woolos
- 1.4 Each pilot area was assessed for its existing biodiversity and opportunities and challenges to the enhancement of biodiversity in each location. The Officer liaised with Teacher's Parents and children within the pilots Schools to identify opportunities and constraints and create a realistic list of potential works. Following this some of the more challenging work was undertaken by contractor – removal of bitumen macadam surfacing etc in the Autumn Term. other tasks were undertaken by pupils and parents where appropriate to their skills i.e. planting whips.
- 1.5 Grant this year has also covered costs of implementation of raised beds, bird boxes and feeders, aromatic planting, log circles, flower plug planting, whip planting.
- 1.6 As part of the pilot the officer has undertaken researches on schemes that have been undertaken in other authorities i.e. Learning through Landscapes and similar initiatives.
- 1.7 The cost of the pilot is being funded 50% through Countryside Service (biodiversity) budget and 50% by Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) as part of Year 1. Total cost this year has been £6,000 of CCW funding matched with the same in officer time from countryside.

2. Biodiversity in Schools Officer Core Role ~ Years 2, 3 and 4

What will they provide.....?

- 2.1 The creation of a this post will provide a single point of contact for schools to enable them to:
- increase the biodiversity of school grounds; and
 - Assist schools in the in the delivery of the environmental aspects of the curriculum, in conjunction with the work of the schools science officer, the countryside service and the grounds maintenance service.
- 2.2 The post will be a 3 year fixed term contract starting in March 2009. The post will be at a scale 5/6 level and would be aimed at those with an environmental education background of either teaching or ecological/countryside.
- 2.3 CCW have agreed to provide up to £14,000.00 (50% of £28,000 anticipated costs). The 28k total would include the salary plus on costs and also a nominal sum to undertake some smaller practical works.
- 2.4 The post would have a direct link with CCW and other funding bodies to assist schools in funding applications and long term programming in addition to taking advantage of gifting –

offers of trees, plants, materials etc from council programmes (carbon offset tree planting scheme), private individuals and organisations.

- 2.5 The post would provide the support and knowledge to develop the grounds, assist with practical works and offer on going advice and support.
- 2.6 The officer would be located within the Grounds Maintenance Service Area, which would enable the officer to liaise directly with grounds maintenance operations to ensure ongoing sustainability of each of the schemes. They would undertake in house training with grounds maintenance operatives to ensure that the managers and operatives understand the specific needs of each scheme and how this will be a new approach to the maintenance of each site.
- 2.7 Over the remaining period of the project, years 2-4, the scheme will be rolled out to other interested schools. The schools can buy in either be through the Service Level Agreement with the grounds maintenance or as a stand alone agreement.
- 2.8 The cost of the match funding £14,000 for the scheme would be through a slight increase in grounds SLA, or in case of the opted-out schools an annual payment. The individual costs would be in the order of £300- £400.00 per school depending on the numbers of schools wishing to be part of the programme.
- 2.9 The ongoing work of the officer will involve partnership working between Science Advisory Officer, Education, Grounds and Countryside services and external monitoring and funding agencies such as CCW.

3. Added Value

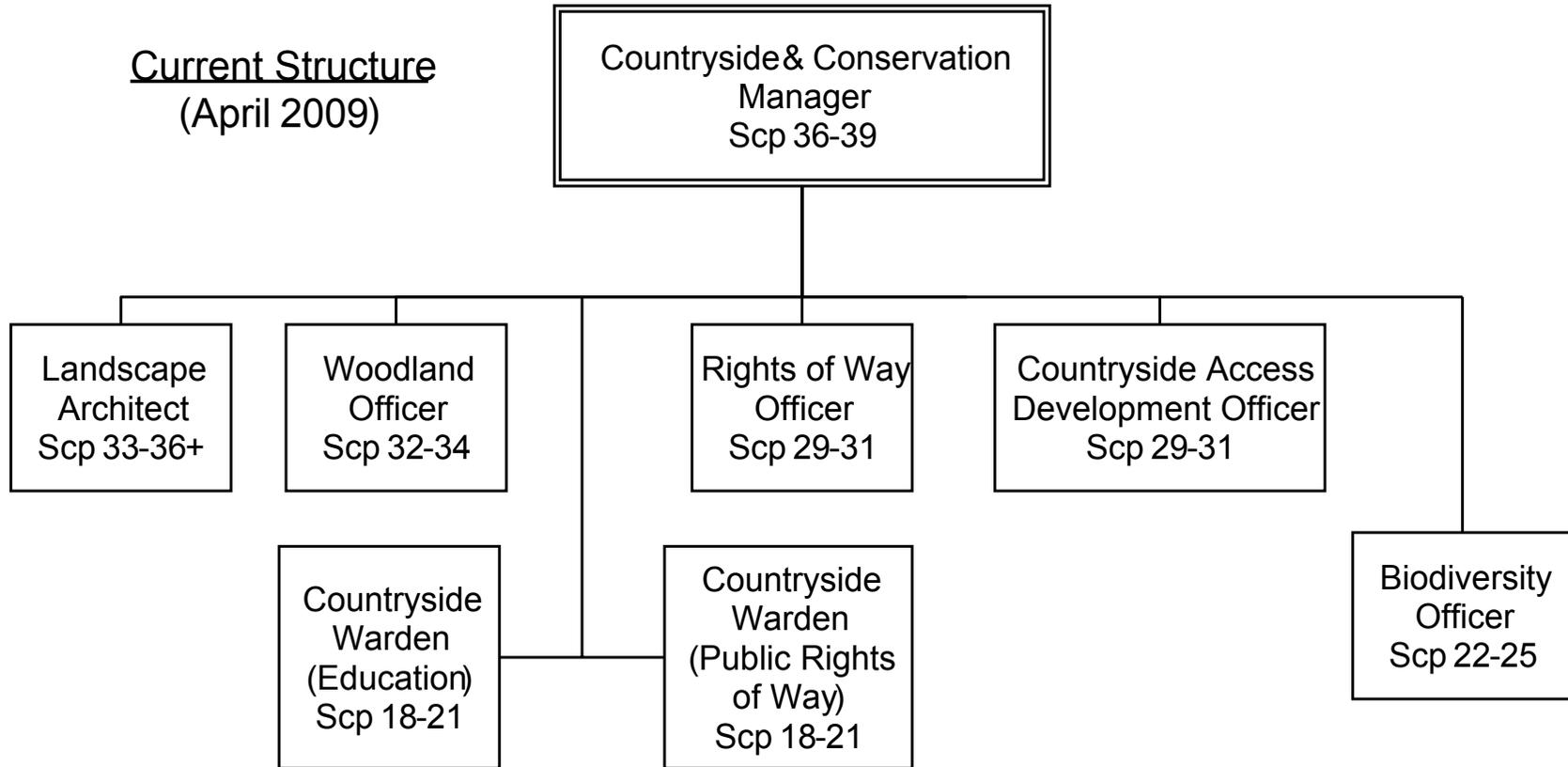
- 3.1 The scheme will build on past CCW funded projects which provided some nature areas for approximately 20 of Newport's 64 schools.
- 3.2 The project will fit alongside the existing Eco Schools programme, which includes biodiversity as one of its nine subjects. It will also help schools to implement their Forest Schools initiatives. Whilst aiming to help schools fit some of their curriculum requirements, this project will concentrate on improving overall biodiversity of schools groups, with particular emphasis on Newport's LBAP targets and teaching the children of the participating schools/organisations about practical biodiversity implementation.
- 3.3 The project will also tie in with the Newport in Bloom competition, encouraging participation and providing school/library grounds with increased biodiversity potential. Students and parents / guardians, as well as the wider community, will be asked to participate in informing and implementing the identified biodiversity improvements, thus widening the sphere of influence of the project. The proposed officer will also have a key role in the development and implementation of **Eco week**, the Launch of the Newport In Bloom Campaign that reaches all schools and nursery groups in Newport.

4.0 Summary of Key Issues

- 4.1 The pilot study on is successful and NCC is proposing to take up the CCW grant offer to fund a Biodiversity in Schools officer from March 2009.
- 4.2 It is hoped that all remaining 60 schools in the Authority will be involved in the scheme over the 3 year project period.
- 4.3 The post will support and assist schools with the delivery of environmental aspects of the curriculum.
- 4.4 The work on the ground will increase biodiversity over Newport and help NCC achieve biodiversity targets.

- 4.5 The outcome of the scheme will be to effect a change in the approach to management school grounds. Ideally this will be to change the 'drill yard' into school gardens and the 'green desert' into species rich landscape.
- 4.4 The match funding from education will be £14,000. The cost to schools within the scheme will be between £300 and £400 per annum depending on the uptake of the scheme.

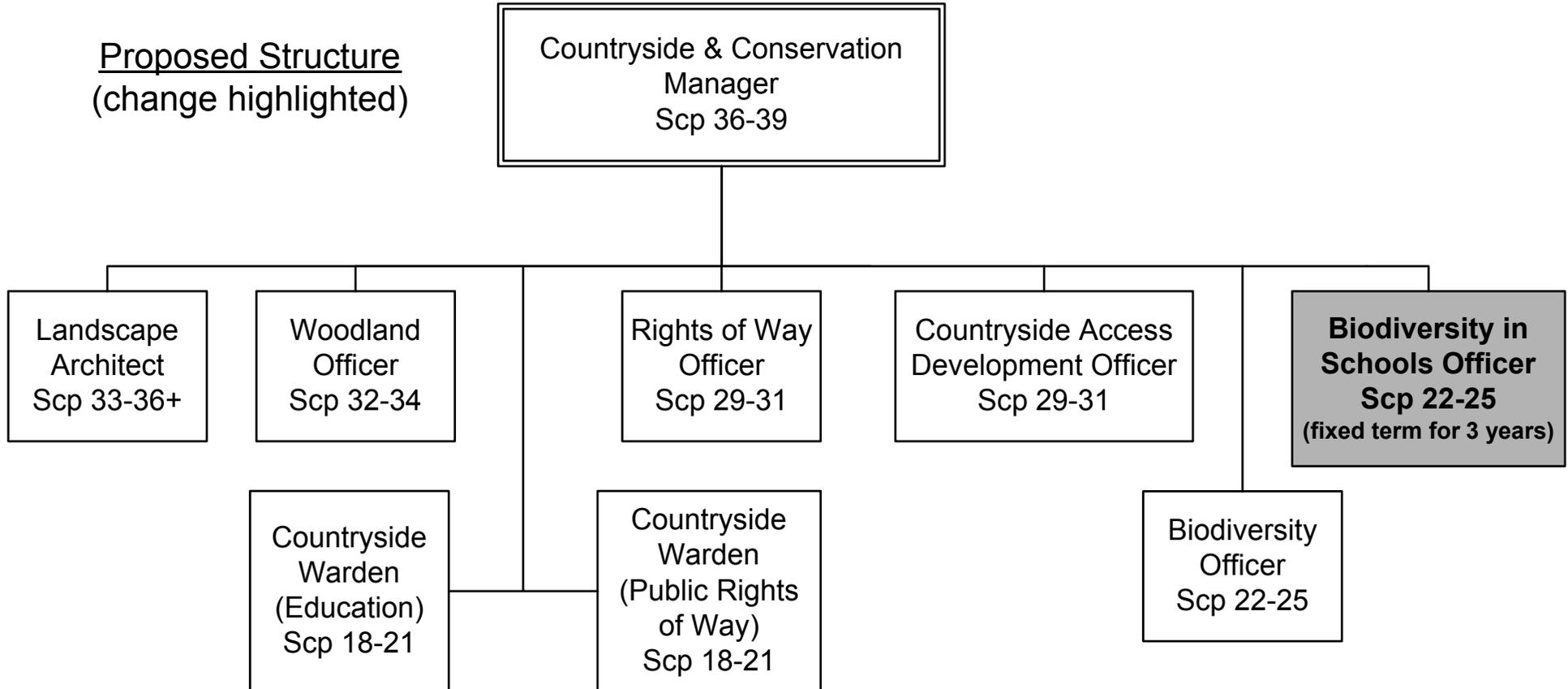
Public Protection & Environmental Services Countryside & Conservation Services



+ = post has a market supplement of £1,500 pa at Scp36

Public Protection & Environmental Services Countryside & Conservation Services

Proposed Structure
(change highlighted)



+ = post has a market supplement of £1,500 pa at Scp 36