

Education Secretary calls for children to spend summer outdoors

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has today (Friday 19 July) launched #SummerOutdoors which will suggest free or low-cost options to keep children entertained and spark interest in character building activities during the summer break, rather than being distracted by video games, boxsets or social media.

Children and families will be encouraged to explore the outdoors during the summer holidays, as a series of fun tips and events for kids happening across the country will be signposted each week.

This comes after the Education Secretary has placed a greater emphasis on the development of character and resilience as young people grow up, which has seen the development of 'My Activity Passport' for primary school children – which has been downloaded more than 43,000 times since December last year – and setting out the 5 Foundations for Building Character in a speech in February.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

We will all have fond memories of the summer holidays – adventuring and playing out with friends. But all too often these days the temptation is for children to play video games, binge on boxsets or only socialise online. I started this year with a resolution to spend less time on my phone – the summer provides the opportunity to repeat this pledge and redouble my efforts.

Character and resilience are the qualities, the inner resources, that we call on to get us through the frustrations and setbacks that are part and parcel of life. School plays a key role in helping to develop these traits but the activities that young people do over the holidays are also key. They can mean that the child going back to school in September is a little more confident, more willing to give something a go and possibly more likely to bounce back from life's knocks.

I really want to inspire children and families to explore the outdoors and understand that keeping children entertained during the summer break does not have to cost an arm and a leg. Getting out and about – whether that is going on a walk, playing a sport or building a den – can bring a range of benefits, from families spending time together to keeping an active body and active mind.

This summer campaign comes as the Education Secretary announces new steps to support schools identify opportunities that help their pupils build character and resilience. A new framework developed by school leaders and other experts will be published in the autumn and will include a series of benchmarking questions for schools to assess their delivery of character education. The questions will be based on the following themes:

- Leading and establishing a climate and ethos of character development;
- Developing character through the curriculum and teaching for character;
- Developing character through activities in the 5 Foundations for Building Character;
- Ensuring character education is for all pupils, including the disadvantaged;
- Reviewing and refining the existing offer with a view to making good work even better; and
- Developing staff and increasing capacity to deliver.

In recognition of the work in schools to help young people build character and resilience, the Department for Education will be relaunching the Character Awards, which highlight innovative or outstanding programmes that develop a wide variety of positive character traits. Schools will be able to enter in October, ahead of the awards ceremony in March 2020. Nominations will be considered in the following categories; school culture and ethos, curriculum and teaching; collaboration; a character champion; or delivering against the 5 Foundations for Building Character.

The 5 Foundations encompass an extensive list of activities, which through team work, trying new things, and opening minds, can help young people build character. They are:

- Sport – which includes competitive sport and other activities, such as running, martial arts, swimming and purposeful recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, orienteering, yoga or cycling.
- Creativity – this involves all creative activities from coding, arts and crafts, writing, graphic design, film making and music composition.
- Performing – activities could include dance, theatre and drama, musical performance, choir, debating or public speaking.
- Volunteering & Membership – brings together teams, practical action in the service of others or groups, such as volunteering, getting involved in the #iwill campaign, litter-picking, fundraising, any structured youth programmes or uniformed groups like Guides, Scouts, Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh.
- World of work – practical experience of the world of work, work experience or entrepreneurship. For primary age children, this may involve opportunities to meet role models from different jobs.

Dame Julia Cleverdon DCVO CBE, Co founder of the #iwill campaign and Vice President of Business in the Community said:

The Character Awards announced today by the DfE will give a much needed opportunity to celebrate the brilliant work schools and

colleges are doing to develop character education, spread best practice and showcase innovation and impact. Parents, teachers and employers know that developing character and building self esteem underpins young people's success and happiness in their life, work and contribution to society.

As co-founder of the #iwill campaign, a movement of over 1000 cross-sector partners across the UK, we know that taking part in social action builds young people's confidence, empathy, resilience, voice and values. We hope the Character Awards will highlight how many more young people, particularly from low-income backgrounds, are building character through making a positive difference to their communities.

Speech: Forestry Minister David Rutley in Northumberland

Minister Rutley addressed forestry stakeholders on the importance of tree planting in Northumberland.

Forestry Minister David Rutley in Northumberland

First of all I would like to thank Egger for hosting us all this morning. This government is truly committed to the future of our forests and woodlands, recognising their importance to society and the natural world and in the fight against climate change.

Forestry already plays a very important role in Northumberland and I see it playing a central part in the fight against climate change as echoed in our future ambitions to plant trees.

I view an integral part of today's programme is how we work together with stakeholders to shape the plans for the future for tree planting. Partnership working in Northumberland is key to this endeavour.

We all have to seize the opportunity. This is a unique moment and we have to

act now and respond to the climate change emergency.

As my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, stated in his speech earlier this week, time is running out for the environment if we continue in the way that we are, and it is indeed, later than we all think.

The United Kingdom is now among the most nature-depleted nations in the world. The factors driving these losses are various and inter-connected: urbanisation, unsustainable agricultural intensification, deforestation, water stress, pollution and, of course, climate change.

The new Environment Bill will set the direction for environmental improvements in this country for decades to come to help leave the environment in a better state than we found it. The Bill will take a coordinated approach to the environment.

The Bill will specifically address tree planting in England. Environmental Land Management contracts, for example, will fund the planting of millions of trees in this country

As I mentioned climate change is one of the most urgent and pressing challenges we face today. But, late as it may be, there is still time.

The UK Government is committed to addressing it, which is why the Prime Minister announced last month that the UK will eradicate its net contribution to climate change by 2050. The UK is a world-leader in tackling this global challenge, being the first country to raise climate change on the international stage, introduce long-term legally-binding carbon reduction targets and cutting emissions further than all other G20 countries.

Tree planting is increasingly recognised as an effective way to reduce net emissions and respond to the climate emergency. Forests are not only a carbon sink, but help with preventing the erosion of soils, and reducing flood risks, whilst also providing us with fantastic recreational spaces. A great example of this is Kielder Forest, which at 250 square miles is England's largest forest.

We are already accelerating the rate of tree planting in England, recognising that our woodlands and forests, street trees and parklands help create healthier places for us to work and live.

The Government has committed to planting 11 million trees this parliament, with over 3.5 million trees planted to date, and over 15 million trees planted since 2010; whilst our longer-term aspiration is to increase woodland cover in England from 10 to 12 per cent.

I strongly believe that we must raise our level of ambition and plant more trees: we need to go a lot further and I see Northumberland playing an integral part of this.

We've kick-started a vast Northern Forest which will see 50 million trees planted from Liverpool to Hull – and are working with local authorities to

prevent unnecessary tree felling.

We have also established the Woodland Carbon Guarantee fund which will provide £50 million to encourage large-scale afforestation in this country; and, as part of our Year of Green Action plan, we have allocated £10 million to plant 130,000 new trees in urban areas, including 20,000 valuable street trees through the urban trees challenge fund, which will also help meet the government's target to plant one million urban trees by 2022.

We have established the first pilot Forestry Investment Zone in Cumbria, driving large-scale planting, and I know many are keen to set up another here in Northumberland. This is where partnership work will be key to explore these future tree planting opportunities. There is already a great example of large tree planting, thanks to government funding, in Doddington North Moor where more than 600,000 will be planted.

We have also recently re-appointed our national Tree Champion (Sir William Worsley) to drive forward planting rates but we recognise that we need to go further – and faster

At this critical time, with public pressure mounting for environmental action both on climate change and biodiversity, we are currently developing an English Tree Strategy. This strategy will set out how we wish to accelerate woodland creation in this country and to deliver the level of afforestation required to reach net zero by 2050. In fact, straight after this speech, I am meeting with stakeholders to discuss the strategy in more detail.

Thank you.

Speech: Forestry Minister: We are committed to future of our woodlands

Minister Rutley addressed forestry stakeholders on the importance of tree planting in Northumberland.

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How to spot African swine fever, what to do if you suspect it and how to stop it spreading.