

# ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY

*Promoting wise management of trees and woods*



## PRESS INFORMATION

**DRAFT**

For further details, and pictures, please contact Wendy Necar, RFS Communications Officer on 01926 421679/07973523168

## Somerset Nursery is top of the tree for outdoor learning

Nurseries everywhere should be looking to take several leaves out of the books of one outstanding Forest Schools nursery in Somerset, say judges in the Royal Forestry Society's (RFS) Schools Excellence Awards 2012!

Against tough competition from across Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire, Welton Free Rangers Forest School Nursery in Midsomer Norton, Somerset has won gold in the RFS Schools Excellence Award for a project which left judges amazed by its creativity.

RFS Education Officer Debbie Cotton and Richard Pain, Forestry Commission Woodland Officer, judged the event and said "The Welton Free Rangers nursery is an outstanding project which not only exposes young children to a forest school experience on a daily basis but embraces an ethos of completely immersing children in a natural environment; even when they are indoors. ... They have truly brought the outdoors in!

The Nursery was only set up in August 2011 but has achieved great things. It caters for almost 100 children from six months to 5 years old, but such has been the success of their approach that when children are too old for nursery they still want to come back! As a result Welton Free Rangers has established summer schools for children up to the age of 10 with another aimed at encouraging 10-15year-olds to enjoy the natural environment in a non-damaging way. The project has also reached out to involve the local community with 'big dig days' when parents and children planted over 500 trees and a new hedge.

The Nursery has developed two Forest school areas, both with fire pits and one with a bell tent complete with wooden stage, and will be developing a third. The £1000 prize money will be used to purchase apple tree species that are nearly extinct for an orchard project which will ultimately produce apple juice for the nursery, and a 'living' willow hedge.

For the Nursery XX says: XXXXXX quote to come

The RFS includes a number of educational activities and an interactive Pancake Woodland Challenge for Primary Schools on its web site, [www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk) The RFS Schools Excellence Award is sponsored by PEFC and ECL Howard Watson Smith.

**For further details on the award winners, and pictures, please contact Wendy Necar, RFS Communications Officer on 01926 421679/07973523168**

**Notes for editors**

[www.rfs.org.uk](http://www.rfs.org.uk)

- The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) was founded in 1882 and now has **approaching** 4,000 members who include woodland owners, land managers, foresters, students, keen amateurs, arborists, landscapers, timber **users** and ecologists.
- **The RFS is the UK's largest forestry education charity.** We promote the wise management of woodlands through formal and recognised qualifications; by the exchange of ideas and networking of experiences; by providing information to the public and through our **website**.
- The RFS arboricultural qualifications are recognised the world over. We offer the Level 2 Certificate in Arboriculture and our woodland meetings count towards the CPD for a number of professional bodies.
- The **annual** RFS Woodlands Awards recognise best practice across four categories – Multipurpose (Duke of Cornwall), Silviculture, Community and Small Woodlands (up to 20ha). A Schools Award is presented for inspirational projects from nursery through to age 18.
- Bursaries and awards are available to students **of all ages** to further their **forestry know-how**.
- Our website Discovery Zone includes an interactive Pancake Wood Challenge game for primary school children and resources for teachers to encourage an understanding of woodland management - log onto **www.rfs.org.uk/learning/woodland-discovery**.
- We work with policy makers on woodland management issues; our three woodlands are managed as examples of good practice. Details are on our website.
- The 21 RFS Divisions **cover** England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members meet regularly and attend study tours in the UK and abroad; **there are 100 woodland visits a year**.
- We publish the Quarterly Journal of Forestry and a regular e-newsletter on forestry issues.
- The RFS Silky Fox Handsaws Awards are presented at 22 colleges to recognise outstanding Further Education students on courses which have a strong practical element.