

URBAN NATURE ACT

OBJECTIVE

Students evaluate the challenges facing nature in cities and devise solutions at a policy level.

OVERVIEW

Students are tasked with drafting a new set of laws to protect urban nature. First, they must highlight the major threats facing urban nature, and then come up with a law to try and mitigate each one.

Proposals for new laws to protect urban nature can be raised, before being debated and voted on. Those that are approved become law and make it into the final Urban Nature Act.

This activity works well as a summative exercise after issues have been properly explored in other activities or lessons.

INTRODUCTION

Only so much that can be achieved without the protection and power of legislation. Laws are used to protect nature and biodiversity. Species records play an important role in understanding how nature is changing and provide evidence to policy makers to prove that action is needed.

Laws are being written every day. Your opinion about them matters and it is important to speak up and be heard. Now, as a class you get to decide what laws could be made to help protect urban nature.

TIME NEEDED

1 hour

Optional: research on current policies or issues threatening urban nature

PARTICIPANTS

Groups of 3-5

RESOURCES NEEDED

- marker pens and large sheets of paper
- optional: print outs of current or case studies

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- understand that laws are used to protect the environment and biodiversity.
- appreciate that scientific evidence can help to inform new laws.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Option 1: Each group is given 10 minutes to identify key threats facing urban nature, before swapping these with another group.

Option 2: Students research what laws are in place to protect nature in the UK and current issues facing urban nature as a homework task before the class.

Option 3: Groups can be given case studies, such as recent news articles and examples of current laws.
2. Students spend 15 minutes deciding what action could be taken. These can be recorded as mind maps that can later be shared with the class.
3. Groups are draft their ideas into proposed laws. They can submit up to three laws for consideration.
4. Students present their proposed laws to the class. What evidence do they have to make a compelling case for their proposal? The class should be given the opportunity to ask questions before each law is voted on.
5. A show of hands can be used to see how popular each proposal is, or students can vote via ballot.
6. The chosen laws can be refined and agreed upon as a class before the Urban Nature Act is drafted.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Parallel stories

Students write two short stories set in 2050. One is imagining an urban environment where we have complied with the Urban Nature Act and addressed threats to urban nature, and the other where things have stayed the same and no action has been taken.

Taking action

There are lots of ways that you can make your voice heard by policy makers. You can contact your MP about an issue that is important to you:

1. Go to www.parliament.uk/findyourmp to find upur MP and see what they have been doing in and out of Parliament. Are there any subjects that they have taken a close interest in?
2. Think about what an MP might be able to do about your issue. What could you ask them to do to help?
3. Write to or email your MP, explaining the problem, what you think about it, and what you would like them to do.

You can also write a petition to present your case to the government. A petition is a letter that explains a problem with a law or policy, signed by people who agree.

The more signatures on the letter, the louder it speaks. If a national petition reaches 100,000 signatures, it must be debated in Parliament.

Learn about UK Parliament and how laws are made: parliament.uk/education-resources/11%20-%2014%20resources/KS3-Booklet-Get-to-know-your-UK-Parliament.pdf

Learn more about the legislation that protects wildlife and wild places in the UK: wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law