

Project management and staff

The project can succeed or fail on the strength of the people involved and the processes they adopt. Here are just a few of the things we've learnt.

Be passionate-

- Personality is more important than skills- you can't teach attitude and enthusiasm! The original staff still work for the AONB except the Project Manager. This reflects the level of enthusiasm amongst the team.
- Staff should, however, know what they're talking about and be able to communicate it.
- Remember to give staff the opportunity to train in generic skills e.g. time management or sales training.
- Talk to people - there is tremendous enthusiasm out there and many people are just looking for an opportunity to get involved.

Make it easy- For yourself and everyone else!

- Keep budgets and other management paperwork simple- BRH has 51 budget headings, which isn't helpful!
- Keep applications simple and help grantees fill them in. One grant number for all paperwork works well.
- Be clear about what you want to achieve and what you expect from people. Have agendas for meetings and come away with an action plan that everyone concerned knows about.
- Think about your audience and make the discussion appropriate. E.g. Try not to alienate landowners with jargon or abbreviations.

Work in partnership-

- Landowners and other local people are our key partners. Think about agreeing shared goals and working together to achieve them.
- This is our money! Sharing resources can improve value for money. E.g. working with other agencies to create a shared events calendar resulted in it being designed, printed and delivered for 1.5p each.
- The project team is also a partnership- trust people to do their jobs and bring them together regularly to share ideas. BRH has monthly staff meetings that include a field trip to ensure we understand each others work and to give an opportunity for informal discussion.
- Try and base the team at one site if possible to ensure an integrated approach.
- Use other's expertise. Shadowing can be the most effective way of learning. Local people have a plethora of skills you can tap into.
- 'What's in it for me?'- Put yourself in the other man's boots and ask yourself 'why would I get involved?' Always look for mutual benefit.
- Be flexible- Keep an open mind and let the community decide.

Review, learn and adjust-

- Encourage innovation- consider everyone's ideas.
- Plan in time for review- with BRH we put a week aside for the whole team to work on a mid-term review together. The review process is included.
- Learn from what you find and act on it. Work with the funders when changes are needed.
- Be able to justify your position- take a logical approach. An example of the prioritisation for footpath work is included in the pack.

Keep an eye on the bigger picture-

- Make sure the Project Manager has time to manage- with BRH the manager had two of the nine project elements, three cross-cutting themes and evaluation to do as well as staff and budget management and developing an exit strategy.
- Take a day out just thinking.
- Fully integrate the project into your organisations' and regional strategies and help feed into those strategies. Grass roots feedback is so important.
- Build relationships with key local and regional contacts that can keep you up to date.