

Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund
Projects supported 2017-18
Grants awarded from the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust



South Shropshire Youth Forum - Clee Young Rangers & Church Stretton Outdoor REACH

Project: 20 young people aged 12-18 will be actively involved in Clee Young Rangers. Activity days will include conservation tasks, natural history sessions, some training and lots of outdoor adventure to gain an understanding and appreciation of the landscape. In Church Stretton, SSYF will deliver an Outdoor REACH programme, providing learning experiences for 10-12 young people aged 13-16, who have been referred by the secondary school. Rectory Woods and Carding Mill Valley will be the outdoor classrooms for 8 sessions involving hands-on practical tasks. In both cases, the young people will play an active part in the programme development, so that the activities respond to their needs and interests.

Grant £2,000, total project value £20,099, rate of grant 9.95%.

Butterfly Conservation – Wood White Project: The Wood White is one of the UK's most threatened butterflies. Almost half of all remaining sites for these butterflies are found in the West Midlands. This project will use the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre as a focus for interpretation, including a film, to raise awareness. Ongoing woodland management at Bury Ditches will create refuge scallops away from vulnerable ride edges. Habitat assessments will be carried out on four potential Wood White butterfly sites and management advice provided to the landowner. The project will also be reintroducing the Wood White to at least one suitable site in the AONB (Walcot Wood or Blakeridge Wood). Supervised volunteer work parties will encourage community participation and help to raise awareness.

Grant £1,000, total project value £10,615, rate of grant 9.42%.

Caring for God's Acre – Wildlife in God's Acre: Churchyards within the AONB hold fantastic wildlife, in particular species-rich grassland. The project will set up a botanical surveying group of 10-15 volunteers who will be trained using a bespoke burial ground survey system. Training will also be given in other taxonomic groups (recognising grassland fungi such as waxcaps and surveying veteran trees for example). The survey group will travel to different churchyards within the AONB, starting within the Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership and Stepping Stones project areas. New potential Local Wildlife Sites will be identified along with good grassland sites for potential seed donor or green hay provision. Following the grassland survey, Caring for God's Acre will write a management brief for each participating churchyard and support them by providing the assistance of the Churchyard Task Team volunteers.

Grant £1,000, total project value £6,418.80, rate of grant 15.58%.

Corvedale Primary School – Wildlife Pond Area: The school plans to create a safe fenced area that contains a pond to attract and enhance wildlife around the school grounds. The pond will be lined and planted with native species. The whole area will be fenced for safety and accessed through a gate. Access to the edge of the pond will be child-friendly and the children will be involved in planting. A working party of staff and parent volunteers will dig out and prepare the site. Pond-dipping activities will encourage careful observation and exploration increasing knowledge of ecology and a growing knowledge of wildlife and environmental issues.

Grant £550, total project value £1,550, rate of grant 35.48%.

Footloose – Biodiversity and Music Project with Stokesay Primary School on the Long Mynd: Children from Stokesay School, Craven Arms, will learn about wildlife and biodiversity by visiting the Long Mynd and being shown around by one of the National Trust ranger's. They will learn about the ecology of the area, which species are endangered and the importance of protecting biodiversity. They will make notes and sketches, which will be taken back to school, to form the basis of a visual score and piece of music. The resulting musical piece will be performed for the rest of the school children and their families and be recorded. There will be an accompanying exhibition in the school that will then tour to libraries and/or other local public community spaces. It will feature the children's writings and sketches, with information about biodiversity, both specific to the Long Mynd, and also more generally about how we can protect and conserve our local plant and animal species. **Grant £750, total project value £1,097, rate of grant 68.37%.**

Grow Cook Learn – Shropshire Hills Discovery Walks: The project will establish a new set of six walks from the Centre out into the landscape of the AONB, interpreting the natural beauty, landscape, wildlife and heritage for the walkers. The walks will educate and raise awareness of the Shropshire Hills through encouraging more people out into the landscape and delivering interpretation on these themes. The leaflets will be particularly targeted at less regular/confident walkers and thus bring the special qualities of the AONB landscape to many more people than currently. **Grant £2,000, total project value £3,610, rate of grant 55.40%.**

Four & Twenty Arts CIC – Blakemoorgate Wild Art Museum: The project will raise awareness of the rich heritage of the Stiperstones and wider Shropshire Hills. Over a period of 4 days in August, Blakemoorgate Squatters' Cottages will be transformed into an artistic take on a Natural History Museum and Art Gallery exploring the wildlife, geology, and heritage of the Stiperstones. Visitors will be invited on a self-led wildlife and heritage family walk to the cottages. The cottages will contain artistic displays and tables on the project themes; these will grow and evolve as the programme progresses. Visitors will have a chance to take part in a series of interactive hands on art workshops to make responses to their journey and the site-specific installations. The Museum and Gallery will be hosted by a resident Artist Curator supported by volunteers and a trainee artist. **Grant £1,000, total project value £2,450, rate of grant 40.82%.**

Lightfoot Enterprises – Woodlands for All: Working with Bishop's Castle Community College, the project is aimed at teenagers living in and around Clun and Bishop's Castle. A series of training and awareness raising events will introduce participants to the theory and practice of woodland management. This will give them a greater appreciation of how we can utilise woodlands for the sustainable growth of products, such as wood fuel, whilst protecting and enhancing biodiversity. People benefitting from the project will include young people and other volunteers who help with the management work, and owners who have their land 'improved' and firewood produced. **Grant £1,000, total project value £3,530.12, rate of grant 28.33%.**

Marches Meadow Group – Storage barn for equipment and hay: A pole-barn will be built for storage of MMGs tractor and hay-making machinery. The small-scale hay making equipment was funded by the Heritage Lottery through the Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme to improve and restore flower-rich meadows in the Scheme area. Meadow owners have struggled to store the hay they produce and this potentially valuable product is often lost through poor storage conditions. Existing storage has been investigated by members of MMG but without success. The landowner who has agreed the siting of the pole-barn on their land will enter a legal agreement to ensure MMG had continued use of the barn. **Grant £500 offered, total project value and rate of grant to be confirmed.**

Myndtown Combined Parishes - Verges Project: The Project aims to improve the diversity of habitat along wildflower-rich roadside verges by engaging local communities in the restoration and maintenance of them. Partners include Natural England and the Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Landscape Partnership Scheme. Through surveys and task days, the project will enhance existing 'high quality' verges in the Parish Council Area and target locations where verges need improving. This will enhance wildlife, create an attractive setting for local villages and provide a focus for local community activities. The project is also a model for the management and creation of wildflower-rich road verges that can be promoted to and adopted by other Parish Councils in the AONB and ultimately beyond.

Grant £1,000, total project value £7,025, rate of grant 14.23%.

Redlake Valley Community Benefit Society – Community Engagement in Woodland

Management: Brineddin Wood is semi-natural ancient woodland once managed as an oak coppice by local people. To improve the woodland habitat deer fencing will be erected through part of the wood. Members of RVCBS will monitor the change in flora, which results and paves the way for selective coppicing. The long-term aim is to encourage the other owners of the quilletts which make up the wood to see the benefits of excluding deer and carrying out selective coppicing in order to gradually return the woodland to its traditional character. A Woodland Fair planned in the autumn will promote the value of the woodland environment and gain support for restoring what was once a traditional feature of the Shropshire Hills landscape. Visitors will be able to compare the deer protected area with the rest of the wood.

Grant £500, total project value £1,420.24, rate of grant 35.21%.

Severn Rivers Trust – Restoration of the Upper River Teme: The project will provide river enhancement works through fencing, tree planting, natural revetment and wetland creation focused on the Upper River Teme. Areas/holdings have been identified and farm plans written where riparian improvements are needed. The River Teme SSSI is failing due to excess sedimentation and its associated flora and fauna are suffering decline due to poor water quality and lack of riparian habitats. **Grant £1,000, total project value £15,940, rate of grant 6.27%.**

Shropshire Mobile Farm – Farms and Flowers, educational visits in schools: The project will involve children and young people in hands on activities focusing on the farmed countryside of the AONB. Farm animals are physically brought to the schools, so children can learn about them and their role on the farm. This will extend existing knowledge to help participants recognise the wide variety of flowers that grow in these habitats and the importance they play in our local environment and to the agricultural industry. Participants will find out how they can play a part in conserving and enhancing natural environments in their own educational setting and homes. Where possible the project will support the development of a small wildflower meadow or area within the school setting, providing the seeds for them to grow.

Grant £1,200, total project value £2,600, rate of grant 46.15%.

Strettons Area Community Wildlife Group – Improving access and biodiversity of Stretton

Wetlands: The Stretton Wetlands is an area of wet, marshy grassland with willow scrub and seasonal ponds. The project will increase community awareness of the wildlife value of this site by providing an information board and improve access by creating a boardwalk through some of the wetter areas. Volunteer help will be enlisted, which will help encourage a sense of community 'ownership' and awareness of the area. Habitat improvements will also be made to enhance the biodiversity of the site and surveys will continue supported by Community Wildlife Group members. **Grant £1,500, total project value £31,625, rate of grant 4.74%.**

Shropshire Wildlife Trust - Discover Shropshire Hills (John Muir Award and Wildlife Watch): Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership staff will deliver the John Muir Award with Farlow and Clunbury Primary Schools. The John Muir Award encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration <http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp>. 60 primary school children and school staff will learn more about the Shropshire Hills landscape and wildlife on their doorstep. The Project will also support the set-up of Wildlife Watch groups in 10 new schools in the AONB. Appropriate training and resources will help them to integrate into the existing Wildlife Watch network.
Grant £2,000, total project value £4,650, rate of grant 43.01%

Shropshire Wildlife Trust - Local Wildlife Site Restoration: The following necessary restoration work will be carried out at three Local Wildlife Sites in the AONB:

- a) **Coronation Meadow** - The aim for Coronation Meadow is to keep the meadow in good condition by cutting and baling it in mid-July so that it can continue to be used as a free source of green hay to create other meadows around Shropshire, with a particular aim at using it in the Stretton and Clee Hill areas in future years.
- b) **Cwm Ffrydd Local Wildlife Site** - This site, in the Clun Forest, comprises a very steep dingle and it is the upper slopes of this which offer the main interest. Here there is very good species-rich grassland with beautiful anthills, as well as pollinators, uncommon wild flowers and green woodpeckers. Scrub removal is needed as it threatens to overtake the grassland.
- c) **Caer Din Bank** - The aim is to reduce the amount of scrub and bracken on this Local Wildlife Site, to restore unimproved grassland. The best classification of this BAP habitat is: 'semi-improved upland rough grassland'. There are also wet flushes.

Grant £1,000, total project value £1,477, rate of grant 67.70%

Upper Onny Wildlife Group - Invasive plant control in the Upper Onny catchment: The project continues its excellent progress of controlling Himalayan balsam within the catchments of the East and West Onny. Survey and control work will also extend to the Crifftin Brook and Plowden estate. Much of the practical work is done by local volunteers on supervised work parties. The project raises awareness of the issue, and encourages landowners to continue to control these invasive species. As Himalayan balsam seeds are viable for 18 months, the project hopes to see a notable reduction in the catchment this year. Any changes to the distribution of the invasive species will be recorded and the whole site will be re-walked to ensure any stray plants are removed.

Grant £1,000, total project value £2,760, rate of grant 36.23%

For more information please contact Catherine Landles, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, on 01743 254742.

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