

Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund
Projects supported 2018-19
Grants awarded from the Shropshire Hills AONB Trust



Clun Memorial Hall – Clun Space, landscape enhancement around Clun Memorial Hall:

This project aims to rediscover an neglected recreational site in the middle of Clun with a view to making it a valued and accessible resource for the community in terms of wildlife, natural beauty and heritage. The project will survey the site to establish a baseline of what exists, what's the potential and what can be sustained and developed. This will include landscaping and planting recommendations of local native species and plants to increase biodiversity, and fit with the surrounding landscape. This, along with an audit of the heritage, access and current uses, will form the basis of a plan for the site. Local events and activities will be held to raise awareness of the project and encourage people to get involved in creating an accessible and inclusive wildlife friendly area. **Grant £1,500, total project value £2,492.62, rate of grant 60.18%.**

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership – Crayfish surveyor training and equipment: This project will survey watercourses in the Clun area to generate up to date records of crayfish populations to obtain a baseline distribution of Crayfish in the Shropshire Hills. Due to declining habitat and the invasive American signal crayfish white clawed crayfish are now on the IUCN red list of endangered species. The project will engage a Natural England licenced crayfish professional to supervise (under licence) a number of student ecologists and/or Community Wildlife Group Volunteers to undertake 5 days of field survey on selected rivers and streams in the AONB. The data will be used to inform conservation strategies going forward. Landowners who host native populations in their watercourse could also use this information to support and reinforce Natural England Countryside Stewardship applications. **Grant £1,500, total project value £5,480.18, rate of grant 27.37%.**

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – Curlew Country, trial habitat management and farmer engagement: The project focusses on close working partnerships with farmers and land managers to reverse the decline in the local curlew population. The project will trial habitat intervention, based on findings from the first three years' nest monitoring. It will work with farming partners to manage grassland in different ways to find what best suits curlew nest and chick survival. The trial will be close to a nest site and will consist of phased cutting of grassland in strips around the area in which curlew are nesting. The project will also trial a 'natural capital' initiative to investigate whether hay products can become a sustainable option to replace intensively managed agricultural grassland in the longer term, so that curlew and other wildlife can be supported from the land on which they nest. Curlew Country's work has become relevant at a national level because it is the only comprehensive lowland UK curlew recovery project. It is now advising on UK lowland curlew recovery. **Grant £3,000, total project value £77,486, rate of grant 3.87%.**

Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership – Shropshire Hills Hay Meadow Festival: The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, alongside other partners, will organise and deliver the third annual Hay Meadow Festival event at The Bog on Saturday 7th July 2018. This coincides with National Meadows Day, a national celebration of meadows aimed at raising awareness about the importance of meadow preservation and playing a vital role in educating the public about this fast-disappearing habitat. The event is an important opportunity to raise public awareness of one of the AONB's most valuable habitats, to promote their sensitive and appropriate management, and to encourage their restoration and re-creation. The festival will include a mixture of demonstrations, guided walks, competitions including scything, hay bale lobbing and build a hay rick competition, as well as kids activities and a range of trade stands. This year the event will also

host a 'Bee in your bonnet' tent, with short presentations on conservation issues and projects. **Grant £1,450, total project value £6,404.50, rate of grant 22.64%.**

A Pettitt – Bucknell Youth Club outdoor activities: The project will provide activities for Youth Club's members (18 young people aged 10-16). These will have the underlying theme of being outside, exploring wildlife, the environment and conservation, and aim to connect the young people to their local environment and wildlife. The project aims to change the young people's perceptions of typical rural industries by connecting them to a range of different people who all have a deep connection with the rural environment and landscape in different ways. These people, such as Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, The Fabulous Cob Oven Company, Danielle Flowers, have been carefully selected to appeal to the young people, and get them captivated with outdoors and teach them good practical skills. **Grant £1,400, total project value £2,458, rate of grant 59.96%.**

Lucy Crowther – The effectiveness of Entry Level Stewardship Schemes: This research project will evaluate the effectiveness of agri environmental schemes (entry and higher-level stewardship schemes) on the conservation of wild bee populations, through the abundance of individual bees and the variety of bee species present on farms within the AONB and surrounding areas. A report will be compiled that can be supplied to farmers and land owners involved in the study and who farm in the surrounding areas. A guideline of wildlife and environmentally friendly actions will also be identified that will aid in the conservation of bees on a national scale and preservation of local populations. Based on the findings, an educational program, including presentations and workshops, will be delivered to local groups, such as academic groups from the University Centre Shrewsbury, Women's Institute, Young Farmers Clubs and Girl Guiding groups. **Grant £1,000, total project value £3,705, rate of grant 26.99%.**

Shropshire Wildlife Trust - Local Wildlife Site gorse clearance at The Riddings: The aim of the project is to restore acid grassland at the richest local wildlife site in the Clun valley, The Riddings at Crossways, Newcastle on Clun. The acid grassland has become invaded by gorse scrub and is losing its value. Acid grassland is a priority habitat in both Shropshire and the UK. It is a habitat comprised of fine grasses, small uncommon herbs with anthills often present. A good acid grassland can be home to numerous invertebrate species e.g. the Small Heath butterfly, the Yellow Meadow Ant, grasshoppers and crickets. Birds that feed off these invertebrates like the Green Woodpecker and Skylark (nestlings) are supported by such grasslands and are priority species. The project will use a 'Robocut' to manage the gorse on the steep slopes only. Elsewhere on the site, the landowner is able to use a tractor or brush cutter. **Grant £600, total project value £1,000, rate of grant 60%.**

South Shropshire Youth Forum – Taste for adventure with Church Stretton Secondary School: This project will deliver six sessions for 10 young people aged 13-16 who have been referred onto programme. Pupils will be referred from Church Stretton Secondary School and all activities will take place during term time on the Long Mynd (Cardingmill) and/or Rectory Woods. Activities will include learning about the historical context of the landscape, the impact of social and business use on the landscape and the work that is involved to protect and conserve it. The young people are encouraged to play an active part in the development of each session and help to design future activities that continue to help them appreciate their local landscape. SSYF are working with the National Trust and other local partners to deliver a flexible, adaptable programme of activity that responds to the needs and interests of young people. **Grant £1,000, total project value £3,898, rate of grant 25.65%.**

Shropshire Wildlife Trust – Shropshire Hills Wildlife Watch Network: The project aims to secure the legacy of the Shropshire Hills AONB Wildlife Watch Network by increasing the confidence and sustainability of the current participating groups, which include 17 schools and 1 volunteer led informal group. Since launching in September 2016, 285 children have taken part in over 79 Wildlife Watch sessions in local schools in and around the AONB. The grant will ensure the Network receives the full support it needs to make sure group leaders are confident and able to deliver high quality activities. This includes creating four Wildlife Watch leader schools, supporting schools to organise 'Walks 4 Wildlife' fundraising events within the AONB, encouraging schools to participate in twice yearly meetings, and to undertake one to one 'check in sessions' at participating schools staff meetings. **Grant £1,350, total project value £1,850, rate of grant 72.97%.**

Edgton Parish Meeting – Edgton Village Verges Project: The project will work in partnership with Myndtown Parish Council, Green Shropshire Exchange and Shropshire Council Highways department to improve the diversity of flowers and habitat along wildflower-rich roadside verges by engaging local communities in the restoration and maintenance of the verges. Through surveys and task days, the project will identify and enhance existing 'high quality' verges in Edgton Parish and target locations where verges need improving by proactive planting with wildflower seeds and plant plugs, together with hand pulling undesirable plants. The project hopes to enhance wildlife with specific attention to butterflies and bees, create an attractive setting for Edgton which is on the Shropshire Way and improve road safety and visibility by reducing the amount of tall undesirable weeds. **Grant £1,813, total project value £3,780, rate of grant 47.96%.**

Myndtown Combined Parish Council – Life on the Edge, Myndtown Verges Project: The project will continue to work with farmers and residents to maintain the work undertaken in the first year of the project. This will include increasing local awareness and volunteers through consultation events and through local signs, publications and publicity events. The project will work with Shropshire Council and their verge maintenance contractor to develop a local management experiment; ultimately, to demonstrate that different management can lead to better outcomes for local wildlife, residents, visitors and reduced costs to the Local Authority. **Grant £1,000, total project value £4,105, rate of grant 24.36%.**

Nick Fogg & Mike Smart – Hills Stories pilot, working with young people: This project is a pilot. It aims to work with a small group of young people, people with local knowledge, youth leader, and creative digital media practitioners, to offer the young people opportunities to explore and engage with AONB landscape, wildlife, and heritage in different ways. The project will offer the young people the chance to really look at, and experience, some of the aspects of the special places in their local area, working with people with detailed local knowledge, and using digital media to capture and share their responses. The young people will use digital technology that's likely to be accessible to them (eg iPods / smartphones). Working with digital media practitioners, they'll reflect on their experiences, and create their own digital media responses (stills, audio and/or video pieces) to share online for a wider audience. **Grant £1,000, total project value £1,625, rate of grant 61.54%.**

Upper Onny Wildlife Group - Invasive plants project on Upper Onny: This project will encourage, train and coordinate the work of volunteers in the Stepping Stones Project (SSP) area to carry out plant surveys that will ground truth SSP aerial vegetation mapping, improve knowledge of existing habitats and locate wild plants which are special to this part of the Shropshire Hills. It will also continue the Himalayan balsam survey and control work carried out over the last three years on the Upper Onny catchment. Both parts of the project aim to increase awareness of the issues of

habitat loss and invasive species and empower the community and landowners to make a difference through survey and/or helping to reversing the spread of Himalayan balsam in this part of the AONB. **Grant £1,137, total project value £4,930, rate of grant 23.06%.**

Lightfoot – All About Woods, woodland sessions with Bishop’s Castle Community College: The project will introduce secondary school pupils to the richness and diversity of woodland species, and demonstrate how woodlands can be simultaneously managed for enjoyment, for maintaining biodiversity and for wood fuel production. The activities will form part of Bishop’s Castle Community College’s enrichment programme. 12 young people will carry out various activities over 7 sessions including building shelters, making things out of found objects in woodlands, woodland management (cutting and logging), exploring the diversity of a woodland, a fungi foray and other activities involving looking at creatures that live in woodlands.

Grant £1,500, total project value £2,830, rate of grant 53%.

Knighton Tree Allotments Trust – Woodland Management Training Course: This project will protect and enhance woodlands within the AONB by increasing the knowledge and understanding of local people of traditional woodland management. This will be achieved through offering 15 subsidised places on an Introduction to Woodland Management training course to local people aged under 25 and those who are unwaged or on a low income. Day 1 of the course introduces participants to the history and theory of woodland management and gives 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. Day 2 & 3 participants receive practical training in how to select wood for extraction, how to safely cut small trees using hand tools, how to safely extract and season wood and how to process wood into logs. **Grant £750, total project value £1,020, rate of grant 73.53%**

Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group – Wildlife on your Doorstep, community conservation tasks: The project aims to carry out practical management work on sites of special ecological or heritage value, through the Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group. Five main sites will be targeted by the project; Poles Coppice, Nils Quarry, The Bog, Snailbeach and Earls Hill. Their former mining and quarrying heritage provides some very specialist and rare habitats, of high biodiversity value. All are accessible to the public, meaning that management work will benefit local communities who use them recreationally. Habitat work for specialist declining species will contribute to securing their presence for the benefit of future generations. This work will encourage volunteers to take part in outdoor activities, which offers health benefits, as well as opportunities for people to learn, engage and come together. **Grant £1,500, total project value £6,481.50, rate of grant 23.14%**

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