

RVCBS Final Report, April 2016

(Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund 2015/16)

The Redlake Valley Community Benefit Society, based in Chapel Lawn, Bucknell, has been pleased to be funded by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnerships 'Conservation Fund' during 2015/2016. Our project was entitled 'Brineddin Community Woodland: engagement, learning and conservation'. We were pleased to attend the short presentation about the Shropshire Hills AONB on 6.10.15. It helped raise awareness and understanding of the Shropshire Hills and the work of the AONB Team and Partnership. It gave the opportunity to meet and network with other project coordinators.

WHAT WE DID

Shows

We attended 2 shows: Clun Show (1.8.15), Bucknell Show (5.9.15). Unfortunately the Craven Arms Discovery Centre Wood Fair was cancelled, so after discussion with Cath Landles we chose to attend the Knighton Community Market instead (24.10.15 and 23.1.16). Our claim includes a re-imbusement for shared car mileage to shows.

Clun Show was quite busy with a lot of passing traffic. We held approx 25-30 conversations about the RVCBS and woodland. We had several positive comments about the quality of the display. Notably we were visited by an adjacent quillet owner and his son and our agreement to manage his quillet was discussed and renewed. 8 children took part in making bug hotels, god's eyes' or bug pots to take home.

Bucknell Show was much quieter with fewer numbers passing the stall. It was noted that 19 people held discussions about the woodland and the RVCBS while looking at the boards. Notably a local Forestry Commission officer visited the stall. 5 children took part in making bug hotels, god's eyes' or bug pots.

Knighton Community Market (1) was quite busy; the stall was by the door. We noted that 10 folk stood and read the boards and discussed woodland and the RVCBS. Notably we met 4 people that came from local sister organisations: Knighton Tree Allotment Trust and Knucklas Land Trust and a bat ecologist. No children's activities were organised as we didn't expect children to be there. (Indeed only 3 children passed all under 5 years old).

Knighton Community Market (2) was quieter, maybe as the stall was in the body of the hall competing for attention. 11 people spent time in conversation with us about the wood and the Society. 2 visitors showed interest in joining the next work party. No children's activities were organised.

School sessions

St George's School, Clun visited the wood on 21.10.15. The activity provider had a meeting with the Head teacher and business manager to decide on the activities that would be provided on the visit. They took part in a range of woodland activities including finding out about the wood, the RVCBS and AONB, listening and writing poetry, making tree seed bombs and leaf bingo. They watched a demonstration of coppicing by RVCBS volunteers. A class poem was composed later; that it is hoped will be available to see at the quillet.

Bishops Castle Community College visit took place on 10.11.15, shortly after a visit to school to discuss the logistics of the visit, production of risk assessments and instructions on coppicing. Members of the Eco-school group and Year 9/10 BTEC Construction students together with 2 staff members used their own minibus to travel to the wood. After introductions to the project, the AONB, the woodland and coppice work, the students got to work. They showed great enthusiasm for the work and coppiced about 20 hazel stools in total. They said they would like to return in the future.

Hosting Bucknell School visits The RVCBS was pleased to be asked to collaborate with the SH AONB and Shropshire Wildlife Trust by hosting 4 visits for children and staff to work upon their John Muir Awards. Various activities were organised with woodland themes and most notably another day of coppicing work took place.

After consulting our insurance policy it was discovered that the Society did not need to take out additional cover for the sessions for school children in the wood.

Autumn/winter quillet work parties

We planned a programme of five work parties to run on Sundays from late October 2015 to the end of March 2016. We advertised them by making an A5 flyer that was inserted into the leaflet. We also encouraged our shareholders to come along and take part by emailing them prior to each monthly session. Please see the table below that explains the tasks undertaken at each work party, along with the hours worked. The hours worked is lower than planned, but a lot of other volunteer work has been achieved on the school visits and when attending the shows/events.

Date	Event	Hours	Tasks completed	Volunteers
25.10.15	1 st work party	15	Filling in trip hazard behind steps, removing debris on steps, some coppice work.	ML, KL, OH, MG
22.11.15	2 nd work party	14	Creating dead hedges/habitat piles from brash, after schools coppice work.	ML, KL, OH, MG
3.1.16	3 rd work party	0	Cancelled –very wet weather	
31.1.16	4 th work party	10.5	Cutting up tree that had fallen across upper steps. Further dead hedging / habitat piles with brash left over after school visits	ML, MG, KL
6.3.16	5 th work party	13	Protecting hazel stools with bicycle tyres, coppice wood and brash, cleaning out bird boxes	PC, OH, MG, KL
10.4.16	6 th work party	24	<i>To replace cancelled date Protected hazel stools with bicycle tyres etc.</i>	<i>PC, OH, KL, ML, AM, CM, MG,JC</i>

WHAT WE DID IT WITH

Tools for conservation work on quillet

We needed a range of tools and safety equipment for the coppicing work that we undertook on the quillet. Tools for Self Reliance were able to supply many tools at a much reduced price, as they were recycled and safety checked. We purchased 3 bow-saws, 2 spare blades, 2 pruning saws, 1 pair loppers, 4 secateurs, 2 goggles, 5 adult and 4 children work gloves and pipe lagging for bow-saw H&S covers. We are pleased to have a better supply of tools to offer to volunteers who come to our work parties without their own.

Promotional materials for the shows

We commissioned designer Sarah Jameson to produce our A5 colour leaflet about RVCBS, We printed 250 and 150 A5 flyers advertising our autumn / winter woodland management work parties. We purchased table-top display boards, an RVCBS banner, and a range of A4 laminated photographs, plans and sheets to populate the display, together with sundry stationery items e.g. spray glue. The promotional materials have been used at the shows to great effect with many people absorbed in reading information, discussing what we are doing in the wood, learning about the history of quillets, and finding out about the Society. Some leaflets have been left at community venues and each of our shareholders has had copies to read and pass on.

Interpretation panel for the quillet. After liaising with Fiona Gomersall of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Board member Anthony Morgan used computer software to compile the contents of the interpretation board. He consulted all other board members for content and photographs before sending the design to the

Trust for production. Funding for the casing and posts had not been negotiated with the SWT, so that part of the production of the board remains to be completed.

How the AONB's purposes and sustainable development principles relate to the achievements of the project.

To quote from the AONB's conservation priorities: *To conserve and enhance natural beauty: **Biodiversity and natural environment**- maintaining in good condition best quality sites e.g. County Wildlife sites, Priority habitat: native woodland Also: **Involving People** Improving understanding of the special qualities of the AONB most people's enjoyment will be enhanced by greater knowledge. There is a need to do more for young people across all areas, from schools work / a need to increase active involvement with the AONB's countryside through volunteering.*

The woodland management work that the RVCBS does in its portion of Brineddin Wood (County Wildlife Site) fulfils priorities that the AONB has highlighted for conserving and enhancing the AONB's natural beauty. We have been: coppicing hazel so that it would grow with renewed vigour after being neglected too long and hence correcting the imbalance between the species of native trees in the wood; Creating dead hedges to provide more shelter for animal life; Tidying up the edge of the wood to allow more light to enter and thus encourage the diversity of spring flowers which grow there. We have run 4 conservation work parties and hosted 3 school groups undertaking hazel coppicing work during 2015/6 and will continue to run more conservation sessions in the future.

We have recycled tools from Tools for Self Reliance, shared car journeys to shows/events, used local businesses to supply materials and services e.g. banner and leaflet printing from Shrops. companies, & sourced the leaflet on recycled paper using vegetable based inks.

The RVCBS set up a display of photographs/links to our website, handed out leaflets and ran children's activities at 4 local shows/events. The RVCBS has shown local people, including children, what looking after a woodland entails and it encouraged them to take part through work parties and children's activities in the wood.

We have a new interpretation panel for the woodland as an ongoing information point for visitors, pointing to wildlife to spot and the special nature of the woodland. It is to be placed in the Society's quillet very soon.

Summary of lessons learned from the project.

- The stalls at shows and events were a success, as we spoke to many local people, but we didn't manage to recruit any new volunteers to help at work parties in the wood. As a result we didn't achieve the number of volunteer hours we had planned to. As we have hosted visits and built links with other local woodland groups this year, (Church Stretton Tree Group, Knighton Tree Allotment Trust), we may be able to pool resources with other like-minded people in the future.
- The school visits were successful, with children and staff wanting to return for other sessions. The woodland holds great appeal for children and adults alike and we hope to invite other groups to experience the wood in the future.
- We ordered the optimum number of leaflets for publicity purposes. We were complemented on the display boards being clear and attractive.

Match funding breakdown

Our project has included 'In kind' donations of materials such as fencing mesh, young native trees, timber for interpretation boards. Members of the RVCBS have donated many hours of their time to make the project a success and details of these donations are listed on the 'In kind' record sheet.

The cash match of £240 came from the RVCBS's own financial resources.

KPL 9.4.16