

## Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

### Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund projects 2016-17



**Small Woods Association - Social Forestry in the Shropshire Hills:** Social Forestry is about connecting people with woodland environments for mutual benefit. The Small Woods Association will train 12 people in Social Forestry OCN Level 3 in the Shropshire Hills, and then work with a steering group of course participants who will use the training to form a Social Forestry community. Participants will be fully educated and skilled to run Social Forestry projects professionally and form a steering group for a local Social Forestry network, building partnerships, improving working practices and developing and sustaining projects connecting people with woodlands.

**Grant £3,000, total project value £6,600, rate of grant 45.45%.**

**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 two more primary schools (Kinlet and Shrewsbury St. George's). The John Muir Award is an environmental award focused on wild places. It encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration (more information can be found at <http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp>). The project will engage 54 primary school children and school staff, to help them learn about the amazing Shropshire Hills landscape and wildlife on their doorstep. Kinlet School will focus on Catherton Common and Shrewsbury St. George's will focus on the Stiperstones. A video will be produced, following the children as they undertake their Award, including interviews with children and teachers showing what they have learnt. Wildlife Watch groups will also be set up in 10 schools and training provided for teachers so they have the confidence to run groups on their own. **Grant £3,000, total project value £5,600, rate of grant 53.57%**

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

Cardington Hill (Wondrell Coppice) - removal of large stand of cherry laurel and box from native woodland.

Clunton - Much of the site has become scrubbed over with gorse. Acid grassland has been lost and more is threatened. All but 10% of the gorse will be flailed then raked into discrete piles for burning. Removal of 3.57 ha of gorse will allow grazing stock to access the whole area, grazing the regenerating sward and nibbling on any new gorse. RSPB guidelines for Gorse Management for birds will be followed.

North-west of the Gore - Much of the species-rich mesotrophic grassland on this site has been lost. It is very undergrazed as one side of the meadow is unfenced. Fencing will enable secure grazing and thus restoration of the sward to species-rich grassland. The 3 sites are all in Biodiversity Priority Areas for Action in the AONB: Cardington Hill in the Stretton Hills, Clunton in the Clun Catchment and North-west of the Gore in the Clee Hills.

**Grant £3,000, total project value £4,950, rate of grant 60.61%**

**Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership - Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons:** This national project, led by the Foundation for Common Land (FFCL), will celebrate and conserve the natural heritage of upland commons in five areas of England, and the cultural heritage of commoning and its associated landscapes. The Shropshire Hills AONB is one of the five areas,

and the AONB Partnership was closely involved over 2015 in a national steering group pulling together a Stage 1 Heritage Grant application which was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February 2016. The upland commons of the AONB are likely to benefit significantly from the project, and this application is seeking funding of £2,000 as a match funding contribution from the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership towards the two year Development Phase of this project. The two year Development Stage will carry out some vital foundation work in the identification and agreement of this common ground. It will provide detailed surveys of the environmental and cultural assets of each common, develop a vision and action plan for the selected commons and establish a Charter for Common Land Management between the project partners.

**Grant £1,800, total project value £528,200, rate of grant 0.34%**

**Upper Onny Wildlife Group - Invasive plant control in the Upper Onny catchment:** The project follows up on the survey and control work carried out last year. The project aims to continue the control of Himalayan balsam within the catchments of the East and West Onny extending its work to the Crifin Brook. This will deliver the required control detailed in last year's action plan. This work will continue the use of local community volunteers through supervised work parties and will use the good links that were made last year with riverine landowners. The project aims to maintain the increased awareness of the issue of invasive plants and empower the community and landowners to make a difference by reversing the spread of Himalayan balsam and ideally eliminating existing colonies and hence preventing the further spread of this invasive species.

**Grant £2,000, total project value £2,760, rate of grant 72.46%**

**West Midlands Butterfly Conservation - Stiperstones Butterfly Trail:** The aim of the project is to develop a circular butterfly trail starting and finishing at the Bog Mine car park on the Stiperstones. This is an important landscape for butterflies and moths with significant populations of a number of species like Grayling, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Dingy Skipper, Small Heath, Green Hairstreak, Forester and Emperor moth which are very local and, in some cases, declining within the Shropshire Hills AONB and the wider region. The walk will be approximately 8 miles with the option of a shorter route more suited to families with younger children. A launch event will be held and an interpretation panel and trail leaflet produced. **Grant £900, total project value £2,263, rate of grant 39.77%**

**South Shropshire Youth Forum - Taste for Adventure & Clee Young Rangers:** Building on previous success, activity days will be held for the Taste for Adventure group in Church Stretton and Clee Young Rangers. 40 young people, aged 10-16, will be actively involved in a series of conservation tasks, outdoor adventure activities and in turn gain an understanding and appreciation of the landscape. Working with the National Trust and other local partners such as Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Farafoot, Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust, Hawkeye Falconry, Long Mynd Walking and Live the Adventure, educational elements will include learning about the history of the landscape, the impact of social and business use on the landscape and the work that is involved to protect and conserve it. Young people will be encouraged to play an active part in the development of each programme and help to design and choose future activities that continue to help them and others appreciate their local landscape.

**Grant £2,500, total project value £4,046, rate of grant 61.79%.**

**CJ & MJ Davies - Gorse Removal at Lawley East Local Wildlife Site:** Lawley East is a Local Wildlife Site located to the east of The Lawley. Local Wildlife Sites, of which there are over

600, represent some of the best ecological areas in Shropshire. They take into account the most important, distinctive and threatened species and habitats. Lawley East is a mosaic of wet rush pasture, bracken, gorse scrub and mixed woodland with some acid grassland and small patches of heather and whinberry. Gorse and bracken encroachment was identified as the main reasons for a decline in the condition of the site. The aim of the project is to remove a large area of gorse that has encroached over the years onto the site and therefore open up the vegetation to grazing by Highland Cattle. Gorse re-establishment and invasive scrub will be controlled by grazing, following stocking levels recommended by Nature Conservancy Council. A botanical survey and management plan will be produced for the site by Shropshire Wildlife Trust. **Grant £750, total project value £1,150, rate of grant 65.22%.**

**Jean Atkin, Poet in Education & Community - In woods we forget things; at the wood edge we tell stories:** The project will focus on delivering better knowledge, understanding and awareness of the AONB and its conservation, in particular with regard to native woodlands. Participants will discover aspects of the local environment which will be new to them, and the project will ask them to consider the human connection to these places, raising awareness of both historic changes to actual land-use and woodland work, and also the bonds of myth and story to particular woodlands. They will learn a practical conservation skill appropriate for the wood they visit. Through poetry, creative writing and performance, they will be enabled to respond sensitively and with increased knowledge of these environments. The project will benefit children and adults from three different groups, who will visit three different woodlands. The groups are from Bishop's Castle and Bucknell Primary Schools and Working Together (Ludlow) Ltd – a charity working with people with learning disabilities and their families. The project will also benefit people managing the three woodland locations, by providing opportunities for activity, skills teaching, potential future volunteers and a fee. The woodland locations are: Brineddin Wood, Redlake Valley; Tru Wood, Bucknell; and Brook Vessons Nature Reserve, Stiperstones. Films and a project blog will be produced to record and review the process, and act as a legacy at the end of the project. **Grant £1,800, total project value £2,630, rate of grant 68.44%.**

**Lucy Grove - Stanway Dormouse Project:** The family running this farm near Wenlock Edge want to manage their land to help improve the habitat for wildlife, in particular the nationally rare Hazel dormouse. The woodland provides some suitable habitat for dormice and there is evidence of their presence. The project will contribute to a landscape scale management approach; increasing knowledge of dormice locally, increasing the total area of suitable habitat and importantly enhancing the connection of this land to neighbouring woodland, aiding the movement and dispersal of this species. Importantly, the project also aims to demonstrate how managing the land for this species and other wildlife can work alongside other land management practices. The farm's ground is used both for farming and shooting, and the family passionately believe the land can be managed for wildlife simultaneously. Through the project 50 dormouse nest boxes will be erected, a corridor of trees/shrubs planted and enhanced to link Stanway Woods to neighbouring woodland, reinstate coppice rotation, glade creation, understory planting and ride scalloping and explore links with local schools with the aim of engaging local pupils in the project. **Grant £1,500, total project value £2,679, rate of grant 55.99%.**

**Land, Life & Livelihoods - Celebration & Consultation in the Upper Clun:** Land, Life and Livelihoods (LLL) is a community initiative operating within the parishes of Newcastle, Bettws y Crwyn, Mainstone and now also Llanfair Waterdine in the Clun Forest – an area that forms a rurally isolated part of the Shropshire Hills AONB. Its purpose is “to care for all life, the unique environment of the Clun Forest, and to promote thriving, healthy farms and communities.”

Now in its tenth year, LLL aims to mark this landmark with a programme of community events and activities that celebrate not only the birthday, but the unique landscape and wildlife, farming and communities of the Clun Forest. "We wish to look back but, importantly, also look forward to the future for the Clun Forest. We will hold an anniversary weekend – 'Fields, Farming & Food', involve school children, plant future veteran oak trees in each parish and/or a hedge or copse linking existing habitats around Newcastle village, produce a river information leaflet, produce a special anniversary newsletter to celebrate our first decade, explain our purpose and tell our story from AONB beginnings onwards. We will also hold a celebration supper for farmers with a talk entitled 'Practical Farm Ideas' with Mike Donovan of *Practical Farm Ideas* magazine."

**Grant £2,750, total project value £6,732, rate of grant 40.85%.**

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

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