

Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund 2016-17

Final Project Report

Lawley East Local Wildlife Site (Gorse Removal)

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The project is located to the east of The Lawley, grid ref: SO 505 978, on Lawley East Local Wildlife Site

The aim of the project was to remove a large area of gorse that has encroached over the years onto the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and therefore open up the vegetation to grazing by Highland Cattle. The grazing should then keep the gorse, and any other invasive scrub species, in check.

Matt Marston of Seed and Spur undertook 4 days of gorse removal by chainsaw/brush cutter followed by herbicide application to cut stumps to prevent regrowth and burning of arisings. This was charged at £250/day, amounting to a total of £1000. 25% of the total was match funded from two sources; the landowners who contributed £150; and Shropshire Wildlife Trust that contributed £100 using money from the Wildlife Sites Project. The remaining £750 was from the AONB Conservation Fund.

A botanical survey will be carried by Kate Singleton and Fiona Gomersall to assess the success of the project in helping to restore the diversity of the grassland and rush pasture. This will be carried out in July 2017 (payment in-kind of £150).

The gorse removal was checked by Kate Singleton after two days. It was realised that the process was going to be slower than expected owing primarily to the need for burning the arisings. The working method was adjusted so that the final two days concentrated on gorse cutting and herbicide treatment leaving the burning of arisings to the landowner.

Regular photographs were sent in by the landowner ensured that stocking levels were kept low and no poaching or overgrazing was occurring following clearance of the gorse. Photographs below show areas of gorse clearance and the small herd of highland cattle that graze the site.

The daughter of the landowners hopes to set up a local meat box scheme, which will help to sustain the maintenance of this habitat in the future.





The following article appeared in the spring 2017 edition of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust members' magazine



Wildflower-rich fields on a farm on the eastern flank of the Lawley are being munched into shape by a herd of Highland cattle. When our Wildlife Sites team visited the wet rush pasture last summer they found a great variety of plants including star sedge, carnation sedge, marsh pennywort, slender St John's-wort, creeping forget-me-not, lousewort, devil's-bit scabious, bilberry, marsh violet, lesser skullcap and sneezewort. However, bracken and gorse were also found to be encroaching. If left alone, this more dominant vegetation would eventually engulf the field, wiping out the mosaic of wildflowers.

The Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund came to the rescue with a grant to pay a contractor to remove much of the gorse. As luck would have it, Jess Davies, daughter of Rob and Sarah Davies who run the farm and her grandfather, Jim, had always fancied the idea of keeping native-breed cattle. They returned from a sale in Shrewsbury with three Highlands. They were so pleased with them that they have grown the herd to 23 and have their own bull; thirteen of the cows will calve this spring. The cattle are doing a great job, eating the rushes and other tough vegetation. Jess, who is studying food marketing & business economics at Reading University, is keen to set up a box scheme to sell this conservation-grade meat.