

Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme 2013-2018



A Summary of Our Achievements

The **Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS)** ran between June 2013 and April 2018. The LPS was led by a Partnership of organisations, managed by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and with Shropshire Council as the accountable body. It was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside funding from a wide range of other national, regional and local funding partners. The total Scheme value was £2.32m with £1.35m from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Here is a short summary of the Scheme's achievements over a 5-year period under the Approved Purposes as set out by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Conserve and restore elements of built heritage, ensuring the area is recognised as a centre of industrial heritage.

Eight built heritage sites are in a better condition or will be better managed as a result of the Scheme, including:

- Pontesford 1784 Engine House – significant repair project was completed in 2017 funded by Historic England to safeguard this important Scheduled Ancient Monument into the future and to remove it from the Heritage at Risk Register.
- Snailbeach lead mine – the Scheme contributed to the significant restoration project at this Scheduled Ancient Monument completed by Shropshire Council in 2014-15, including funding restoration of particular features on the site.
- Castle Pulverbatch – improved management of the motte & bailey through community-led management.
- Pontesford Hillfort - improved management of the hillcamp through community-led management.
- Callow Hillfort – management plan produced and significant vegetation clearance to reduce the level of risk at this site, through volunteer effort.



- Cothercott barytes mill – consolidation of the structure, vegetation clearance, survey and recording of this important but undesignated and little-known site.
- Hyssington castle – vegetation management to safeguard the site alongside survey and recording work.
- Roundton hillfort – a management plan has been produced for this important Welsh hillfort site.

Three of these sites – Pontesford Engine House, Snailbeach mine and Cothercott barytes mine - are historically significant mine sites and are key in explaining the industrial heritage of the area. Alongside the conservation elements under this heading valuable access and interpretation work has also taken place which is reported on below.

Deliver conservation outcomes for natural heritage.

Significant **habitat creation and restoration has been completed across six key sites**, for specific BAP habitats and species, through the WREN-funded 'Rescuing Rocks & Overgrown Relics' project, working with partners Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the Forestry Commission. Including

- Restoration of 'inland rock outcrop and scree' and management of 'low dry acid grassland', 'open habitat mosaics' and 'calaminarian grassland' across 17ha
- Management of 'broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland' across 39ha
- Removal of invasive gorse and bracken across 1ha
- Management of 'ponds' and peripheral habitats across 0.5ha

20 hectares of flower-rich hay meadow are under better management as a result of engagement in our 'Wildflower Meadows, Pastures & verges' Project and through involvement in the Marches Meadow Group. The Group was instigated by the LPS and supported by our Countryside Officer – and continues to run as a membership organisation. It supports local meadow owners with advice, plant surveys, training and events.



The Group has also been gifted a set of small-scale meadow management equipment which it runs cooperatively for the use of group members. **27 meadow sites have benefitted** from green hay or seed provided from species-rich donor sites within the Scheme area.

All roadside verges were surveyed and the most species-rich verges mapped. Two Parish-based projects have arisen as part of this work and are taking forward management and restoration work.

As part of the 'Ground-nesting Bird Recovery' project, LPS staff worked with at least **53 farmers across more than 2,500ha** in an effort to maintain suitable nesting habitat for breeding curlew. Nest monitoring and protection has been completed over three years, showing early indications of improvement in fledgling success in the third year. Significant new funding was sourced to grow the project and there were three years of very successful delivery between 2015-18. The project has been leading the way in terms of UK curlew recovery at a grassroots level and has received a lot of attention and support from national partners. The project has confirmed a new hosting arrangement starting April 2018 to take it forward into the future. See www.curlewcountry.org

55 hectares of land are under improved management as a result of advice to private landowners through our 'Farming & Smallholding' project. Four farmers were supported into the Uplands Entry Level Scheme in England and two into Glastir in Wales.

£60,000 has been given in 43 small grants to landowners and community groups for natural and built heritage conservation work, and this has been matched by £41,000 in private contributions to this work.

This has helped to fund:

- Invasive species control along 25km high quality riverbank
- 175m riparian coppicing
- 2.3km hedgerow restored and managed



- 3.2km new boundary fencing to protect high quality sites
- 1.7ha new meadow created, 0.6ha meadow enhanced
- 4 ponds created, and 2 restored
- 2650 trees planted in the Scheme area
- Bracken and gorse clearance across 5 high quality sites
- 6 County Wildlife Sites have had work directly funded to a value of £8,000
- 2 built heritage features secured
- Compensation scheme for land managed sympathetically for curlews (only farms with curlew nest sites, not under current agri-environment schemes)
- 1 community wildlife garden
- 3 community wildlife survey/monitoring project
- 3 community access and interpretation projects.



Increase volunteer and community led activities throughout the scheme area.

A total of **491 individual volunteers** have supported the Scheme in many different ways and over £150,000 worth of voluntary effort has been contributed in support of the Scheme.

206 volunteer practical tasks, survey and fieldwork days have been completed over the lifetime of the Scheme, and this does not include the individual efforts of volunteers such as the Community Wildlife Group, Down to Earth or Accessible Records volunteers carrying out work largely on their own following engagement and training events.

Volunteer and community participation has been one of the Scheme's biggest successes:

- **Tuesday Task Team** – a wide range of local people have taken part in regular practical conservation tasks to manage and restore a range of different habitats across the six Rescuing rocks sites, as well as at mine sites and at hillfort and castle sites. During the Rescuing rocks project alone, 117



different volunteers have undertaken practical habitat works amounting to 280 days of volunteer labour with a value of £14,000!

- **Community Wildlife Groups** – Through three Community Wildlife Groups, 75 local people have completed annual wildlife and vegetation surveys over four years which has contributed massively to better knowledge about the populations of different species and habitats within the Scheme area, and providing evidence to influence policy and practice. With small legacy grants and the ongoing support of core volunteers all these groups are continuing following the completion of the Scheme.
- **Open Hills community archaeology volunteers** – 17 volunteers undertook training and then used their new skills to carry out archaeological fieldwork and survey to better understand and record the area's man-made heritage resulting in six Gazetteers for key sites and incorporation of the new records into the HER in Shropshire and Powys. This volunteer effort will continue via the Shropshire Hills & Marches Community Archaeology Group which has formed to take the work forward after the LPS completes.
- **Meadows Management Group** – meadow owners came together to form a new membership group, which coordinates meadow management in the area, shares machinery and offers support and advice to fellow meadow owners. The group involves about 45 local meadow owners. A small legacy grant from the LPS is helping the group to continue alongside income from membership fees.
- **Down to Earth community volunteers** – across 9 villages local people have given of their time to develop, lead and contribute to 15 community-based natural and cultural heritage projects incorporating conservation of heritage features, social history, arts projects, access and interpretation including publications, community remembrance and celebration.



Training in heritage trades and skills for young people, providing opportunities for them to stay in the area through an increase of professions available.

- A **Heritage Careers event** was held for 70 students from three secondary schools in 2014 to illustrate the range of heritage-related careers available locally, and a Heritage Building Skills event was held in 2016 to allow students to experience taster sessions in a range of traditional skills with local craftspeople.
- Through the 'Dynamic Hills Training' project **four 12-month traineeships** in City & Guilds Level 2 Work-based Environmental Conservation have been completed by local young people, who have all successfully gained a relevant work-based qualification, certificated technical skills and relevant ongoing employment. In three cases they have gained further employment with their placement providers – Shropshire Council, National Trust, Curlew Country through GWCT – or in the other case with local businesses.
- The Landscape Partnership staff team has been able to offer five summer **work experience placements to young people** from local secondary schools covering practical and office-based work experience, and one longer undergraduate student placement during 2016-2017.
- We were also able to offer an **eight-month Heritage arts bursary** to one young person in connection with the collaborative arts project 'Heartland'. Danni Flowers was selected from the artists who applied for the arts commissions, as a local young artist with huge potential. She was mentored by Ben Osborne Photography and supported the project with events organisation, promotion and social media, and recording using photography.



- 47 one and two-day Skills in the Hills courses have been delivered through the 'Dynamic Hills Training' project, as well as other projects, to 390 people covering everything from species identification, archaeological fieldwork skills, Keeping Livestock, Meadow condition survey, Scything, Wildlife gardening, Hedge laying to Business advice for farmers, Safe Application of Pesticides, Safe Application of Slug pellets, Sustainable Pheasant release, to Green woodworking, Cleft Oak fencing, Horse logging, Blacksmithing and Working with lime.
- Two six-day City & Guilds Level 3 accredited Care & Maintenance of Pre-1919 Traditional Buildings courses have been delivered to 24 participants, mostly local builders or those with their own traditional buildings to restore/maintain.



Improved access to and learning about built and natural heritage.

- Ten sites are better **interpreted** as a result of the Scheme including 1784 Pontesford Engine House, Snailbeach mine, Tankerville mine, Cothercott barytes mill, The Bog Centre (ropeway trestle), Poles Coppice, Nills Hill, Pontesford Hill, Castle Pulverbatch and Callow Hillfort. Interpretation has been delivered via a mixture of panels, installations, promoted route leaflets/downloads (as below) and guided/accompanied events.
- Eleven sites have **improved or increased access** as a result of the Scheme including the 1784 Pontesford Engine House (by arrangement), Tankerville mine, Cothercott barytes mill, The Bog mine (all ability trail), Stapeley Common, Poles Coppice/Nills Hill, Pontesford Hill, Castle Pulverbatch, Wilmington Castle and Roundton hill. Improved access has been achieved via a combination of permissive or arranged access agreements, improved site infrastructure, new paths/trails including all ability



routes, and car park improvements. The Bishops Castle Walking Festival has also been supported over 5 years with walks taking place each year linked to LPS themes. Creation of eight **Promoted routes** including three new Open Hills & Old Ways walks – Stapeley Historic Trails, the Nipstone Wanderer and Three Hills Hike - and three new Products from the Landscape routes, a Poles Coppice-Callow Hillfort waymarked trail and a Stiperstones Butterfly Trail (via small grant to Butterfly Conservation).

- The Scheme has supported the creation of two new **Local History Groups** in Hope and Hyssington, and a collation of material on old buildings in the Powys part of the Scheme area through Vanishing Buildings - all three through the 'Down to Earth' Project. Printed publications have been produced and distributed for Vanishing Buildings, Hyssington Histories and Hyssington Memories, and Helping Hillforts & Earthwork Castles.
- The **Accessible Records** project has involved a small team of volunteers in helping Shropshire Archives to identify, digitise, link and geo-reference new records such as photographs and postcards and make these available to the new Layered Landscapes website (www.records.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk). The website combines LIDAR imagery, alongside access to Historic Environment Records data for 12 key sites within the LPS area allowing users to easily access these records and relate them to this area.
- **129 public events** have been delivered by the Scheme, involving at least 3,450 people. Examples of larger events or programmes include 'Open Hills, Old Ways & Commons' LIDAR exhibition and talks in 2014-15; 'Buzz in the Borders' Wildlife on Your Doorstep events and courses in 2015 and a series of Wildlife Gardening visits and talks in winter 2017; two Hay Meadow Festivals in 2016 and 2017 and a wide programme of events and courses offered through the 'Meadows, Pastures & Verges' project; Curlew Country arts events in 2016; the Impressions of the Past interpretative design events in 2017; and the Heartland collaborative arts programme in 2017 alongside partners including the National Trust and Arts Alive.



- **12 programmes of work** were delivered, engaging **324 primary age** children from seven schools, as well as home educated children and their families. These included two sets of Buzz in the Borders pollinator activities, as well as themed work around local landscapes, key species and habitats, and archaeology.
- **9 programmes of work** delivered, engaging **299 secondary age** children from three schools involving themed work around LIDAR and archaeological fieldwork, industrial heritage and the local cultural and natural environment.
- 15 young people have been involved in the **Young Rangers** programme including a trip to the Europarc Federation's Youth Ranger summer camp in Switzerland in summer 2017 for two of our Young Rangers; and 49 children, parents and teachers have achieved the **John Muir Award** linked to our 'Buzz in the Borders' pollinator project.



Investment in the local area as a result of the Landscape Partnership Scheme

- Over the lifetime of the LPS, we were able to invest **£665,000** into the local economy by contracting the services of 144 different local businesses and individuals. A further £209,000 was spent with contractors from further afield. In addition, around £10,000 was spent using local venues and refreshment providers.
- As a result of funding for the LPS, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership through Shropshire Council, was able to offer employment to a **new team of 7 people** (in full and part-time roles), all but one of whom lived locally.