

Example of a Heritage Grants project that meets our aims relating to: conservation, participation and learning



Project title: The Sturts
Applicant: Herefordshire Nature Trust
Grant awarded: £193,000 (89%)
Project length: 4 years



A fungus workshop

1. Summary

The Sturts is an area of lowland hay meadow in Herefordshire which includes some of England's rarest grasslands. This type of hay meadow relies for its survival on a unique combination of appropriate management and environmental conditions. The Sturts was under threat due to poor management. The grant enabled Hereford Nature Trust to buy 34 acres of land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) together with 27.5 acres of adjacent buffer land. The project also involved a programme of capital improvements to the site, and activities to involve volunteers in conservation works and to inform the public about the SSSI's importance.

2. The aims of the project

The project had three main aims:

- to secure the long term future of The Sturts by acquiring the SSSI and an area of buffer land and putting in place an appropriate programme of management;
- to conserve and restore the site through a programme of capital works including hedge improvements and pond clearance; and
- to enable the public to learn about the site and take part in a range of volunteering opportunities.

3. Benefits for heritage

- The Sturts is recognised as an area of prime biodiversity importance. It has Herefordshire's largest area of meadow foxtail-greater burnet, which is a threatened habitat of high priority for conservation in England. The Sturts also supports a

number of other rare species of vegetation associated with grassland, marshland, ditches and ponds and provides habitat suitable for birds such as curlew and snipe which are uncommon in the county. The Sturts was considered to be in an 'unfavourably declining' condition but this has been reversed thanks to the project and the site now has a long term future.

- The project contributed to UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

4. Benefits for people

- There were at least 230 days of volunteering on the project. Volunteers led guided walks, replaced fruit trees, installed barn owl and bat boxes, and mended fences and hedges. Around 15 long term volunteers were recruited.
- Staff and volunteers received vocational experience and training which could be put towards a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), including survey techniques, species identification, habitat management, first aid, leadership and team working.
- 60 children under 14 learnt about the environment through indoor and outdoor activities run by Wildlife Watch, a junior branch of the Trust.
- Guided walks, workshops, lectures and on-site interpretation helped the general public learn about the site.

5. Lessons learnt

- Working on a wetland site prone to flooding can lead to delays in works. Perversely the summer of 2006 was extremely dry and this caused a delay in installing (moling) the water pipes and some fencing because the ground was so hard.
- For conservation reasons it was not possible to carry out two key tasks as planned - installing a pond dipping platform and hedgerow gapping; you have to formally agree with HLF that the money for this work can be put to other uses.
- Uncertainty about securing other funding can lead to severe delays; you have to have a contingency plan.
- Good contractors are always busy - obtaining quotes for works and subsequently getting invoices can take longer than anticipated.
- It is invaluable to have support from a body like Natural England.

6. Long term benefits

- The long term conservation of The Sturts and public access to, and involvement in, the site has been secured. See www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/hereford

7. The budget

Main project costs	£	Funding	£
Land acquisition & fees	114,650	Cash	15,277
Capital costs, equipment, education materials	45,497	Non cash contributions	8,000
Staff/recruitment/training (inc volunteer training)	29,655	Other	225
Consultancy/expert advice	8,350		
Overheads and travel	4,032	HLF grant (89%)	193,000
Volunteer labour and contingency	14,318	Total costs	216,502