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# 1

## Project summary

This report is the final evaluation of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) Marsh Fritillary Project and demonstrates how the project met the original targets specified in the funding bid by providing detail about outputs and outcomes achieved against original intention, and demonstrating impact for individuals and communities.

The report was compiled by the Conservation Officer with support from an external freelance evaluator. Data was collected using post visit feedback forms from visitors which consisted of multiple choice questions and opportunities to give open feedback (Annex 1.). The external evaluator also conducted a series of qualitative evaluation interviews using structured questions to provide comparison and consistency. All interviewees were encouraged to be honest to celebrate success but also, importantly, drive out lessons learnt. To ensure this openness all interviewees were offered the option to have their transcripts presented anonymously. All interviewees were happy to have names and organisations identified. These interviews are available within this report to demonstrate impact, and also within the separate independent evaluation report.

The Shallowford Trust is a Charitable Trust based at East Shallowford Farm (ESF), Dartmoor, founded in 1976 by Elizabeth Braund and Rosemary Bird. Miss Braund was a visionary youth worker, who established Providence House Youth Club in Battersea, London in 1963. Here she recognised the disconnect of these young people from farming and green spaces. It was this observation that prompted the purchase of ESF, which since the 70's has continued to provide day and residential respite and education opportunities for disadvantaged young people from inner cities.

The work carried out by the Trust has been vital in a time following the release of the Glover Review which highlights the absence of urban communities from Britain's protected landscapes. However, following the

outbreak of Covid-19 and its associated restrictions, the Trust experienced the cancellation of all school trips in 2020, with the additional barriers of limited funding for schools for extracurricular activities and increased transportation costs.

The Trust recognised the opportunity that the GRCF presented to develop the impact of its work to conserve the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, as well as expand and increase the work it undertakes with young people. Moreover, this funding would enable the Trust to reach new local audiences; adults, the elderly and those who are less able, creating a project that would engage a new community with green spaces and farming, whilst supporting activities that will improve Dartmoor's nature and heritage.

ESF is part of The Postbridge Cluster (a Community Interest Company), a group of eleven farms working collaboratively to create landscape scale change. Between them, these farms possess a large area of rhos pasture habitat within the catchment of the West Webburn River, providing a vital stronghold for the meta-population of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly (a UK red listed species). The post Brexit landscape has seen an agricultural transition as current support for landowners is being reviewed, creating a period of uncertainty and therefore potential risks for rare habitats including rhos pastures. The GRCF has further facilitated this partnership as well as creating opportunities to work with other local organisations including Butterfly Conservation, The Duchy and the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project.

# 2

## Aims and objectives

The aim of this project was to deliver actions that would have lasting positive impacts on the wellbeing of nature and community, creating a legacy that would continue to improve the biodiversity of Dartmoor for years to come.

This project aimed to conserve and restore nature with a focus on the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly through actions including:

- Carrying out species surveys and generating data, which would contribute to national biodiversity data sets.
- Carrying out habitat creation and restoration through scrub clearance, plug planting of native wildflower species, initiating a tree nursery and hay meadow restoration.
- Delivering training and guidance to landowners on habitat management.

 Restoring and improving heritage on Dartmoor through the repair of traditional boundaries and improvements to the curtilage of ESF that will reduce its environmental impact.

These actions were carried out with a strong focus on community engagement. Delivering training and or education to a wide range of audiences to upskill and empower members of the public to take actions to contribute towards nature and climate recovery.

## 3

## Partnership working

This project required the Trust to deliver a range of new activities outside the experience of its existing team. Therefore, the development of partnerships would be the key to its success. Some partners already had well established relationships with the Trust enabling this project to strengthen outcomes and relationships through the creation of new opportunities for collaboration.

A significant number of these partnerships, however, were new, thereby helping the Trust to build stronger connections within the local community, so increasing its future resilience. Additionally, the appointed Conservation Officer was new to the Dartmoor area having relocated for the role, making partnerships essential for the effective facilitation of activities.

Key partners included:

- Butterfly Conservation: Jenny Plackett provided the Conservation Officer with technical advice on species survey techniques and habitat management. Using a 'train the trainer' method, the newly recruited Conservation Officer was provided with the necessary skills to further train volunteers and landowners. Butterfly Conservation volunteers also assisted with practical habitat management tasks and surveys.
- The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project (HFP): David
   Attwell facilitated the building of relationships with
   local landowners as well as providing technical
   advice on grassland restoration and habitat

- management. He also consulted on the original application process to Heritage Lottery.
- The Duchy of Cornwall: Tom Stratton facilitated the building of relationships with local Duchy tenants, as well as providing general input and advice. The Duchy has agreed to continue to support the project post completion date through the continued protection of planted scabious via tenancies as well as supporting the development of the tree nursery.
- The Postbridge Cluster and Other Landowners: Vital partnerships were developed within and outside the Postbridge Cluster to enable landscape scale conservation activities, ensuring quality and connectivity of habitats for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly whilst also increasing access to a range of sites to deliver public workshops.
- The Eden Project: Provided the Conservation
   Officer with training and technical advice on the
   propagation of Devil's Bit Scabious. This training
   was passed on to volunteers and other staff at ESF.
- **Devon Wildlife Trust:** Assisted with hay meadow restoration through the provision of technical

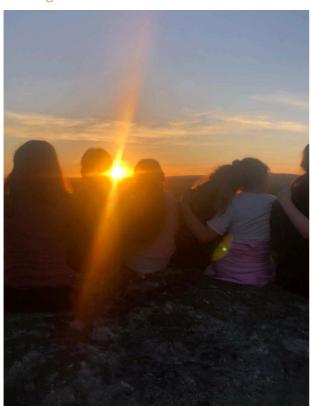
- advice, finding suitable sites and providing contacts for local contractors to carry out works. DWT also advised and assisted in the APHA license process.
- Moor Trees: Delivering workshops for volunteers and offering ongoing specialist advice for future development of the tree nursery after project completion.
- **Devon Moth Group:** Facilitated the delivery of two moth night events. These were highly successful events resulting in an exciting new partnership for the Trust.
- Local Ecologists: Two local ecologists were used to provide workshops to the public on topics outside the experience of the Conservation Officer. This allowed for really strong delivery of educational sessions for members of the local community and landowners.
- Local Volunteer Organisations: These organisations provided the Trust with groups of volunteers to complete habitat management tasks:

- Dartmoor Preservation Association scrub clearing at two sites.
  - **Papillon Gin Distillery** scrub clearing, seed planting, adult and larval web surveys.
  - **Butterfly Conservation** scrub clearing, adult and larval web surveys.
  - **Dartmoor Youth Rangers** scrub clearing and plug planting.
  - Plymouth University Ecology and Wildlife Society – scrub clearing and tree planting.
- **Local Businesses:** Local businesses collaborated with the Trust to deliver the objective of the project by giving their time to carry out conservation tasks such as surveys and habitat management. Special thanks is given to:
  - Papillon Gin
  - Francis Clarke
- Local Schools and Youth Groups
- Local Community Groups



# Communities Connected with Nature

The historical focus of the Trust has been connecting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds with farming and nature. However, in light of recent times, it is clear that there is a much wider range of people whose wellbeing would benefit from engaging with nature and the farming environment.



The GRCF enabled the Trust to reach a wider audience including local landowners, adults with mental health needs and learning difficulties, the elderly and more (Graph 1.). We hope that this project has enabled people within the local community to have greater wellbeing, as well increasing their knowledge about and involvement with Dartmoor's unique heritage.

**Aim:** To connect a total of 1,000 members of the community with nature through the project activities. With 700 involved in the seed collection programme and 500 to discover grasslands and develop their identification skills.

**Output:** A total of 1,580 members of the community engaged with the project through a range of activities (Table 1.). With 133 involved in the seed collection programme and 1002 discovering grasslands and developing their identification skills (Table 2.).

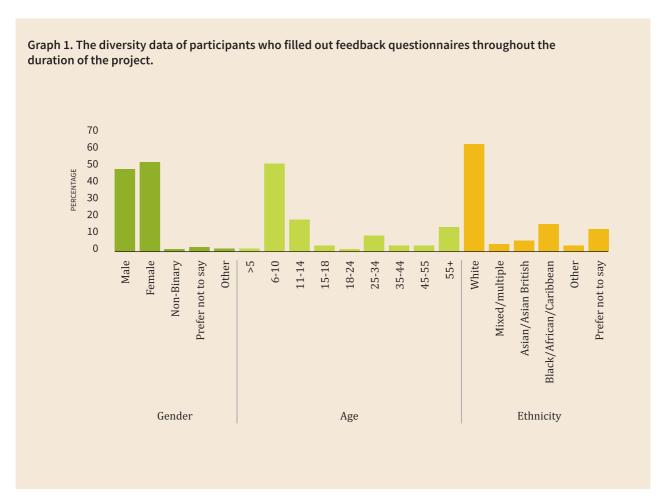
Table 1. A breakdown of the interactions of this project with the community.

	Number of events	Number of people attended
Community workshops	20	175
Landowner workshops	2	12
School/youth group day visits	28	685
Conservation Club	4	17
Residential Visits	15	278
Volunteer days (including social prescribing)	64	173
Care home/elderly events	2	16
Adults with learning disabilities	2	24
Open Day	1	200 (approx.)
Total	137	1,580

Table 2. A breakdown of engagement themes.

Seed collection and propagation programme				
Propagation of seeds	15			
Hay meadow restoration	60			
Seed drying	30			
Plug planting	18			
Total	123			
Discover grasslands and develop identification skills				
Wildflower ID workshop	16			
Wildflower ID workshop for landowners	2			
Hay meadow restoration walk	10			
Hay meadow restoration talk	6			
Rhos pasture ecology walk	5			
Identification skills developed as part of school/youth day visit	685			
Identification skills developed as part of residential visit	278			
Total	1002			

The activities of the project did not allow for the engagements to follow the exact breakdown laid out in the proposal due to limitations with the project timeframe and the logistics of engaging these numbers in these activities across a short period. However, the project significantly exceeded the target for overall engagement.





The following sections of this report demonstrate the impact this project has had on different local audiences in more detail.

# 4.1 Social Prescribers

Recent discussions have revealed the importance of spending time in green spaces for peoples' mental health. The new polytunnel and growing area provided the perfect setting for the Trust to support this group of people all year round. Consequently, the Trust registered with the local Social Prescribing network to seek out those who might benefit from spending time in this space.

In January 2022 one man was referred to ESF to support his mental health. He had previously spent little to no time working in the farming environment or with nature, but has visited most weeks throughout the duration of the project, spending approximately 68 hours working with ESF on a solo basis, but also attending many of the workshops. He has taken part in a wide range of activities, most of which were completely new experiences; participating in butterfly surveys, tree planting, working in the vegetable

garden, planting wildflower seeds, working with livestock and even helping to decorate the Christmas tree for the local Christmas tree competition! His contributions as a volunteer have been invaluable, as has the improvement to his mental health. He intends to continue with ESF after the completion of the GRCF project as often as possible even though he is now in full time work. Further funding has already been secured to allow the Trust to continue to subsidise his transport costs and so support his journey.

## 4.1.a. Independent Evaluation Interview: Social Prescriber

### What have you enjoyed about your time at East Shallowford Farm?

The people: the sense of community has been really important, the welcome has been phenomenal. Previously I had not been that interested in nature – over my time at Shallowford I have developed a far greater interest in and care for the natural world. I moved from a city where I had little contact with nature and had struggled with my mental health; social prescribing has changed all that for me. My previous background working with young people has meant I felt I had something to contribute and I now feel a greater sense of life purpose and I now feel that I am part of something; Shallowford is a place where I have a sense of belonging.

## Can you recall any significant events that are particularly important to you?

Widecombe Fair: was really, really busy – a bit mad really – lots of volunteers from both East Shallowford Farm and Providence House pitching in together, each contributing their own skills, working together as a team. A real success and highlight for me.

Moth Night: reinforced the importance of connecting to nature for mental health. It was inspiring to work with knowledgeable experts. It means I am now more likely to say 'yes' to new experiences where previously I would have been reluctant.

The Veg Patch: has been important to me over a longer timeframe. I have enjoyed working there and seeing change over the seasons and over the time of the project.

### Have there been any challenges or difficulties for you?

Only personal challenges. Previously 'trigger moments' could lead to strong emotional reactions – these are now massively reduced. At Shallowford I am the calmest I have ever been and this is in great part due to the caring people around me and the contact with nature.

## Have you noticed any long-term changes in yourself?

To some extent answered by the two previous questions – but I have also noticed that I have had space to learn, to grow and develop as an individual. The people at Shallowford are great role models and inspire me to a new way of being and contributing in the world.

### Is there anything else you would like to say?

East Shallowford Farm is an amazing project changing many peoples' lives. With additional funding there would be scope to reach more people – from different demographics, for those with mental health issue and for those with addictions. My experiences here have changed the way I feel, the way I am in the world and this opportunity could be extended further.

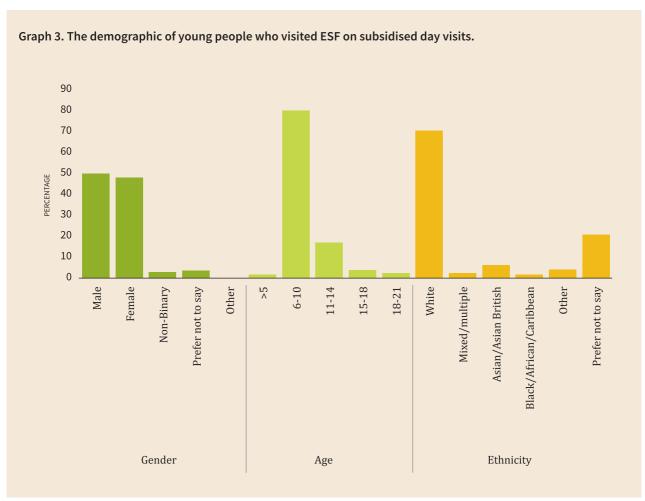
## 4.2 Day Visits from Local Schools and Youth Groups

Across the duration of the project, 27 subsidised day visits for school and youth groups from Devon took place, including three visits to schools by the Conservation Officer.

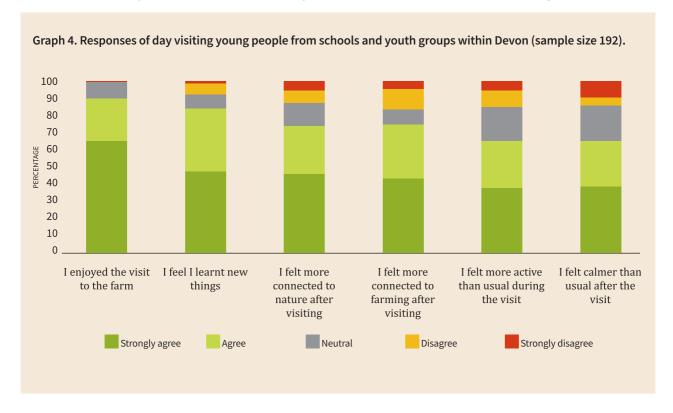
These visits engaged with a total of 685 young people including their supporting staff across 12 organisations. The demographics of these visiting groups are shown in Graph 3.

Historically, the majority of young people engaging with the trust have been from inner city areas outside Devon. This project funding enabled the Trust to offer subsidised day visits to local schools with the aim to deliver education, and improve connectedness to farming and nature via hands on activities. Programmes were also designed to be as close to the national curriculum as possible, including elements of STEM based learning such as quadrat sampling techniques and comparing the skeletal structure of farm animals.





The impact of these days was monitored through the completion of post visit evaluation forms. The overwhelmingly positive responses received (Graph 4.) demonstrates not only the effectiveness of these days at increasing levels of connectedness to nature and farming, but also evidences the importance of these experiences for young people in a time where many are disconnected from nature and food production.



Upon reviewing the open feedback responses, the most popular activities were those where young people were able to have hands on interactions with livestock. For many of these young people, despite living within close proximity to rural areas, this was the first time that they had visited a farm or had had the opportunity to get close to livestock. These sessions were full of excitement and wonder, especially when getting to stroke the pigs and see the sows with their suckling piglets.

"I loved it when we (got) to herd in the sheep. The co-operational skills from my class were amazing. I also loved it when we were given the quadrat task as I had so much fun, but most of all the soil sampling was my favourite."

"I got to smooth Dragon the pig. She felt hard and prickly."

Feedback showed that river dipping sessions and nature hunts also had a high impact on groups. Providing a safe environment where young people could explore the river or the marsh, discovering the abundance of wildlife resulted in great surprise at what could be found once knowing where and how to look – especially when discovering monster like dragonfly and damselfly nymphs in the rivers! During the summer months, the marsh is buzzing with life,

with grasshoppers jumping everywhere as you move through the environment. Many had never been somewhere with such a profusion of life.









For those that came during the flight period or the larval web stage of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, sessions would include butterfly surveys or discussions about their life cycle. The young people marvelled at seeing the tiny clusters of caterpillars in the webs of the leaves of Devil's Bit Scabious.

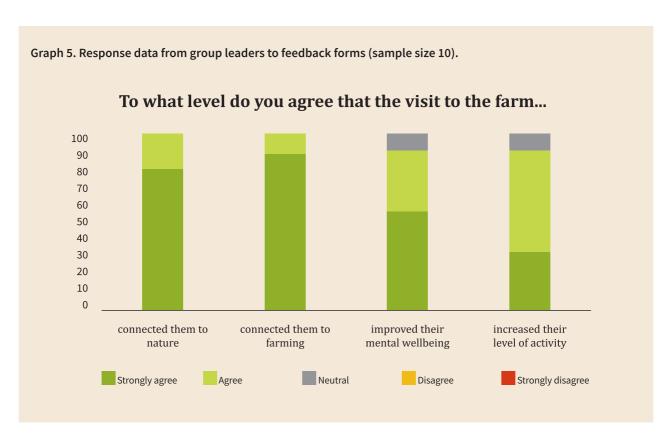
"when we saw little caterpillars from the plant. I enjoyed every moment.
I would love to come again."

One student visiting from Millbay Academy, a SEND Secondary School in Plymouth left an independent review on the Shallowford Farm Facebook page:

"Just left and I can say that this is better than any other farm I have been too. With more information in my brain than pictures of animal(s) on my phone I would definitely suggest this to you with amazing farmers willing to answer an(y) questions you have and the amount of activities to keep you busy all day so from me (and the others) thank you for your fun educational experience." The greatest challenge was engaging with secondary schools. Despite designing the programme to fit to the National Curriculum and to include as much STEM as possible, only two of the visiting schools were of secondary level. The same is true of the usual residential trips offered by the Trust. Moving forwards, this is an audience that the Trust will continue to attempt to increasingly engage with by continuing to improve the variety of STEM based activities it offers, something that the current Conservation Officer can assist with due to their background in teaching.

When young people were asked if they felt that there was anything we could have done better, the most common response was "no". However, there were requests for more hands on experiences with animals. This was a challenge at times over the duration of the project due to intermittent restrictions from bird flu outbreaks as well as working on a 282 acre farm; for much of the year livestock are long distances from the main farmyard. However, the new construction has allowed for the creation of a space where temporary pens will be installed allowing small numbers of animals to be held for close interactions. Further funding will also be sought for small milking animals to increase hands on practical activities.

Feedback was also sought from 10 group leaders to give a more rounded picture of the impact of the day visits. Response data showed that leaders also felt that the visits were effective at achieving the outcomes of increasing connectedness to nature and farming (Graph 5.).



Leaders were invited to provide examples of any particular success stories or special moments from the visit. These responses confirmed that for many of the young people these were their first interactions with the farming environment, but also highlighted the value in allowing the freedom to explore the natural world on their own terms - something that the Trust encourages and will continue to do so in light of this positive feedback.

"The hands on activities with the pigs were a special moment for many of our group who had never had that close contact with farm animals before"

"Having the time and freedom to explore in the peace and quiet"

When leaders were asked what they felt the greatest impact(s) of the visits had been, they reported that visits complimented classroom learning,

demonstrating the value of designing programmes to support the National Curriculum.

"First hand experience of some of the things we'd learnt in school, which many of them wouldn't have the chance to experience if we hadn't gone to the farm"

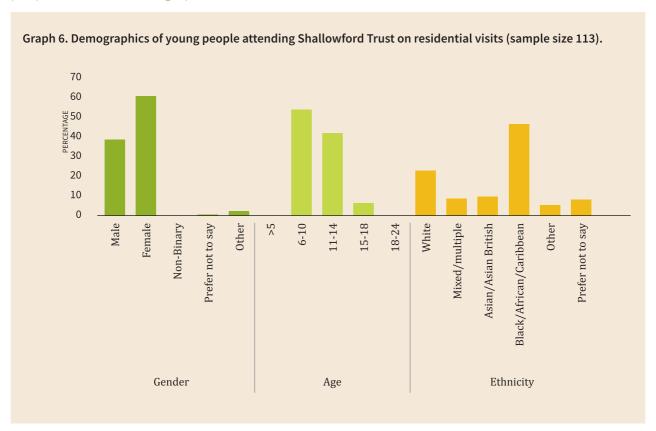
"linked to our topic animals including humans about lifecycles"

When asked whether cost is usually a barrier to extracurricular trips, 89% of the organisation leaders responded 'yes'. 100% reported that the removal of cost was a deciding factor for their visit to the farm. This demonstrates how vital this funding has been in the Trust's ability to reach these schools and youth groups, and the continued need for further funding to subsidise future visits to maintain the momentum generated by this project to connect young people with the environment.

## 4.3

## Residential School and Youth Groups

A total of 278 young people and their group leaders were engaged by the GRCF project through the Conservation Officer as part of their residential visit to ESF. The demographics of these young people are illustrated in graph 6.



The addition of the Conservation Officer to the ESF team meant that the usual programme of activities delivered to visiting groups could be extended and enhanced through a more robust educational approach on conservation as planned in the Trust's 2020 Five Year Strategy.

Conservation sessions organised for Residential Groups were similar to those delivered during the day visits. However, their addition has created a more rounded residential programme where ESF can confidently demonstrate symbiosis between farming and conservation to young people.

The majority of these residential groups came from inner city areas outside Devon (central Bristol, London) and Plymouth. Bristol groups were mostly funded by the Ernest Cook Trust as part of the Outdoor Weeks of Learning Collaboration. This was developed as a response to the trauma experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged young people during COVID-19. The funding has also been a lifeline to the Trust in the year leading up to the GRCF project allowing the Trust to remain viable through these challenging times.

The extra staffing provided by the employment of the Conservation Officer has also been a lifeline for the small team at ESF delivering residential visits. As the Trust progresses and increases the number of visiting groups per year, continuing to grow its team will be vital for long term sustainability.



# **4.3.a.** Independent Evaluation Interview: Felicia Lazar, Subject Lead for Geography, City Academy Bristol

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2023** 

### Introduction

City Academy Bristol visited the farm in March of 2022 as part of the Ernest Cook Trusts Outdoor Weeks of Learning Collaboration. The visiting group were aged between 13 and 16 from a deprived area of central Bristol. The main purpose of the visit was to include urban young people with rural environments, to improve their connectedness to nature and farming and improve their wellbeing. This group was from a Secondary School, therefore there was an increased focus on STEM learning in order to facilitate the Trusts support of the delivery of the National Curriculum

### **Evaluation interview results**

### What worked well? What was most successful?

The whole experience was really great; amazing and inspiring. The Shallowford staff went 'above and beyond' to make sure everyone was welcomed and involved. Students found the range of activities offered really engaging. Ellie's activities were a particular highlight being more 'studious' which teachers really valued – these higher-level intellectual activities really brought out the best in students and helped them grow and develop. Thus students had high levels of learning as well as engagement. An example of this was the use of the quadrat in a 'real world' setting; students were familiar with quadrats from science classes in school but being able to apply skills for a purpose helped demonstrate to students the value of learning.

The most extraordinary thing was the way in which students accepted the 'mobile phone amnesty'. At the start of the residential mobile phones were' surrendered' by students and yet, after an initial period of 'mourning', the loss of connectivity was not an issue. On return to school students talked about the positives of a 'life without phones' and the value of being able to focus on learning, socialization and experience in the here and now. Teachers had been concerned about this aspect of the trip beforehand but were delighted by the way in which students responded.

The food was a real plus. Physical activity during the day increased appetites and many students tried new foods based on their experiences in the garden with many taking this further to trying out preparation of new foods in the cooking classes. One student was 'so full' of this experience he couldn't wait to tell his parents how many different things he had tried when he got home.

As an example of success and engagement: the first Year 9 group went to the farm in March, it rained the whole time, students were dressed for the whole week in 'unfashionable' green waterproofs – but still reported loving the experience and all committing to a second trip in the July.

### What was less successful?

Aspects of the residential: the girls slept in the barn and were very happy with facilities, the boys slept in the farmhouse and did struggle with shared facilities – particularly bathrooms.

### What would you change?

The activities delivered by Shallowford staff during the day were excellent – the only change could be to provide resources – games, self-led activities or puzzles - that teachers could use in the evening 'downtime' that would help continue the relationship and engagement with East Shallowford, farming and Dartmoor.

### What surprised you ... about yourself? ...about others?

The biggest surprise was without doubt the students' ability to live without mobile phones for a week.

The other surprise which grew throughout the week was the way in which students took increasing responsibility for themselves; quickly learning the daily routines, getting up early and undertaking tasks before breakfast. There were no behavioural issues and no 'moaning' about tasks allocated.

"Captains" for boys and girls were appointed from within the student body and this additional 'layer of control' worked extremely well, self-regulation evolving naturally.

## Can you recall a personal triumph ... again either for you or for others?

Personal triumph: Bringing back 30 very happy students who have been begging to go back. Personally the whole trip was very relaxed and surprisingly calm.

## What changes have you noticed as a result of the visit to East Shallowford Farm longer term ...in yourself? In others?

We have definitely noticed that the two cohorts who went to East Shallowford Farm are more mature. None of the students who attended have been in detention since – we would have expected some to have been before this residential. All who attended have been more willing to participate at school – both formal studies and wider school life. The boys' and girls' captains in particular have become more involved in school life taking on leadership roles in social and other activities.

All students have shown an increased engagement with and interest in nature. They have repeatedly asked for more opportunities for learning outdoors, trips and 'real world' learning.

### Anything else you would like to add?

We would love to visit again. We valued the full financial support provided by funding which meant that this school, which has 51% pupil premium, 45% free school meals, 23% SEND and 26% EAL, could access this transformative learning experience where otherwise cost would have limited some students' attendance. We are currently exploring support funding from the Earnest Cook Trust to repeat the visit.



# 4.4 Conservation Club

The proposal for the GRCF project suggested that the additional staffing of the Conservation Officer would allow for a Saturday club to be set up for local young people.



Due to personal commitments of the Conservation Officer, however, and the ambitious targets of the project, this was sadly not possible. As a compromise, a Friday afternoon 'Conservation Club' was run for four consecutive weeks throughout the school summer holidays. Each afternoon a different theme was presented, butterflies, rivers, flowers and bugs (Table 2.). The sessions were impactful and thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended, but numbers were low. A total of six young people were engaged through these sessions (some attending multiple sessions). This may be due to the location of ESF and the need for parents to travel relatively long distances for drop offs and pick-ups.

In light of this, the Trust has agreed that it is necessary to look for future funding to allow for the purchase of a mini bus to alleviate time and travel cost limitations. A mini bus would also reduce the costs of transport for other visiting groups, through the provision of a 'pickup/drop off' service, thereby providing a solution to the rising costs of vehicle hire, which has been evidenced to be a limiting factor for many visiting groups.

# 4.5 Community Visits

The additional staffing provided by the Conservation Officer meant that the Trust was able to reach audiences within the local community who had not been previously engaged.

This included the elderly and adults with mental health needs and learning disabilities. The project aimed to engage with two local care homes.

The Conservation Officer visited a local care home to deliver a wildflower seed planting session. The session was well received and sparked many interesting conservation amongst participants about their past engagements with nature and gardening.

Due to the success, it was hoped that there would be a follow up visit to the farm by the same group. However, this was not possible due to visiting restrictions being limited by Covid 19. Further visits into other care homes were attempted, however Covid-19 continued to create a barrier due to continuing intermittent outbreaks within care homes.

An alternative route was pursued by contacting a local support group for those suffering with memory loss and dementia who take their clients for trips out and therefore were less restricted by Covid. Ten members of this group visited the farm with huge success. This is evidenced in the independent evaluation interview in section 4.5.a.



# **4.3.a.** Independent Evaluation Interview: Kate Bath, Head of Business Development, Ness Care Group at Chudleigh

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 6 JANUARY 2023** 

### Introduction

The additional staffing through the employment of the Conservation Officer meant that the Green Recovery Project funding allowed for the Trust to engage with an audience it hasn't previously engaged with – the elderly. The Ness Care group is a support group for those suffering with memory loss and dementia. This organisation provides group therapy sessions and uses Cognitive Stimulation Therapy to help treat early to moderate dementia.

The visit was designed to be a short light touch visit due to the limited mobility of the visiting audience. Activities were simple, allowing opportunity for participants to engage with the animals in a safe environment. The visit included a visit to see the pigs with their piglets, the lambs and chickens.

The visit was successful, with the accessible design of the farm allowing for easy movement of the participants around the main farm yard. The visitors were visibly delighted to see the animals and in some cases have hands on encounters. Many recalled stories from their younger years about their experiences of being on or near farms. An independent evaluation interview was carried out to determine the success of the visit to the farm.

### **Evaluation interview results**

### What worked well? What was most successful?

The ability for this client group to get close to a wide variety of animals. The new-born piglets were especially popular. The time with the animals was relaxed, not rushed, and this was important for this client group. The opportunity for time to really engage with animals was in some cases transformative.

The walk length and pace was well judged for these people who have mobility issues and who for other reasons are unused to walking any distance. The walk was followed by a refreshment stop in a warm space that allowed reflective discussions to reinforce some of the key highlights.

Great staff at East Shallowford – really empathetic, 'held' the space for the group with calmness yet an energy and enthusiasm. Visiting staff with the group felt 'safe' undertaking an activity (farm visit) that had previously caused some concern/anxiety for these visiting staff with this client group.

What was less successful? What would you change? Surface dressing on the path up to the sheep and chickens: stony gravel on steeper gradients presented a problem for the less mobile and for wheelchair users – yet all were able to access this area with a bit of determination.

Wash hand-basins were not accessible by all – could consider different heights or use of hand-wipes or hand gel.

## What surprised you ... about yourself? ...about others? During and after your visit?

There were many small moments where both clients and visiting staff had memorable encounters with the animals but the absolute stand out experience: one of The Ness' clients was very 'in his shell' and people had previously found it difficult to communicate with him while at The Ness but he 'opened up' when with the sheep because he had strong memories of growing up



on a farm. He became really talkative and expressive during his time at East Shallowford and this communication with others has remained post-visit.

Overall – the farm visit was talked about by staff and clients for weeks and weeks afterwards; this is very unusual for this group of people, most 'activity visits' are quickly forgotten.

### Can you recall a personal triumph ... again either for you or for others?

One member of the staff team reported to be previously 'terrified' of chickens – but overcame this fear with Ellie's support, guidance and patience.

### What changes have you noticed as a result of the visit to East Shallowford Farm longer term ...in yourself? In others?

The staff team have grown in confidence – now much more prepared to undertake farm visits and subsequently took clients to a Reindeer Farm a few weeks after their experiences at East Shallowford; would not have considered this before the East Shallowford experience.

Staff and client interactions have become deeper as a result of this shared experience. Staff, clients and families often referring back to the visit through a closed Face Book group and use of photos. This process has deepened rapport.

The Ness Staff Team have also developed stronger relationships through the shared experience at East Shallowford.

In light of the success of this visit, the Trust wishes to continue to carry out further work with this audience whose wellbeing clearly benefitted greatly from being in the farming environment. The visit was also a fantastic opportunity to trial the new facilities that had been installed to improve the accessibility of the farm completed over the last four years, as many of the visitors had limited mobility, using walking aids or wheelchairs.

Unfortunately, the Trust was not successful in engaging wheelchair users, either through this project or any other to date. Several groups including Active8 and

Activities 115 were contacted, but within the time frame of the project, no actual visits were secured. The Trust will continue to try to build these connections as the new facilities at Shallowford Farm could provide a unique opportunity for those with physical disabilities to engage with farming and conservation. As mentioned in the feedback from the Ness Care Group, there were initial concerns that the farm may not be accessible for their clients, therefore the Trust has discussed seeking funding to support the production of a video tour of the farm to waylay access and mobility concerns.

## 4.6 Opening Ceremony

## An 'Opening Ceremony' was held on the 3 May 2021 to showcase the recently completed building works at ESF.

This included the multipurpose corner barn, polytunnel and growing spaces funded by GRCF as well as the newly converted accommodation in the East Barn funded by the EU RDPE Fund and various private donors. The event allowed the Trust to demonstrate its work with local communities and those in central London through a series of activities around the farm. Activities included a dry-stone walling course, a Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop for landowners, a sheep herding demonstration with pupils from the local Widecombe primary school, vegetable garden tours and much more!

Invitations were sent out to key supporters of the Trust, local dignitaries, key stakeholders as well as the Earl and Countess of Wessex who were asked to officially open the new accommodation barn at the event.

Over 200 people attended, with DNP, local farmers, volunteers and neighbours networking to build further relationships which have been strengthened and extended since the event. Feedback surveys from the event indicated that 90% of those asked strongly 'enjoyed' the event with a...

"sense of occasion and seeing the wonderful new buildings finished and in operation with those who enjoy and benefit from coming to visit."

Subsequent media coverage enabled the Trust to increase its visibility and to inform a wider audience of its work with disadvantaged children from inner city areas. 95% of those asked said that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the opening ceremony gave them a deeper understanding of the work and long-term vision of the Shallowford Trust and its work with children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

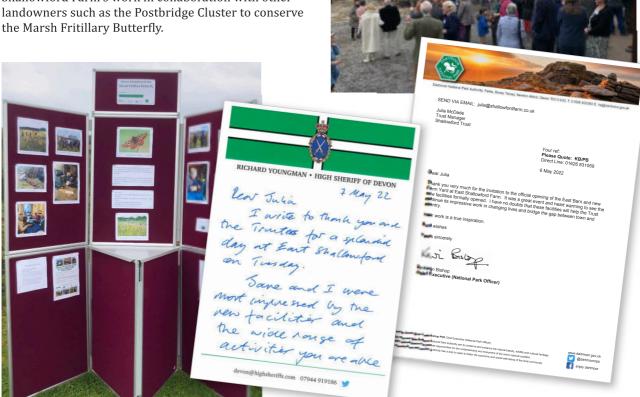
"We enjoyed looking at the scabious plugs, the garden area and new barns. Everyone at East Shallowford has worked so hard to make this an exciting and engaging farm for young people to enjoy. We were really impressed."

The success of the event is also demonstrated by the letters of thanks received from Kevin Bishop, Chief Executive of Dartmoor National Park Authority, and Richard Youngman, High Sherriff of Devon.

An area for Lottery players was set up providing refreshments with an information board to showcase both the Trusts Green Recovery Project and other local beneficiaries of this funding which included Dartmoor National Parks 'Dartmoor Youth Rangers' and Butterfly Conservations 'All the Moor Butterflies'. 85% of those surveyed said they either strongly agreed or agreed that the event gave them a better understanding of Shallowford Farm's work in collaboration with other landowners such as the Postbridge Cluster to conserve the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.







## 4.7 Workshops for Volunteers and the Community

The funding for this project enabled the delivery of a range of workshops by the Trust to upskill the local community and landowners.

Targets included improving skills surrounding habitat restoration, encouraging connection with nature, improvements in local heritage and long lasting positive environmental impacts. A total of 20 workshops were delivered engaging 175 people (Table 3.). Workshops were advertised as free of charge to all levels of experience using the Shallowford Farm social media account. See Graph 7 for a breakdown of the demographics that attended.

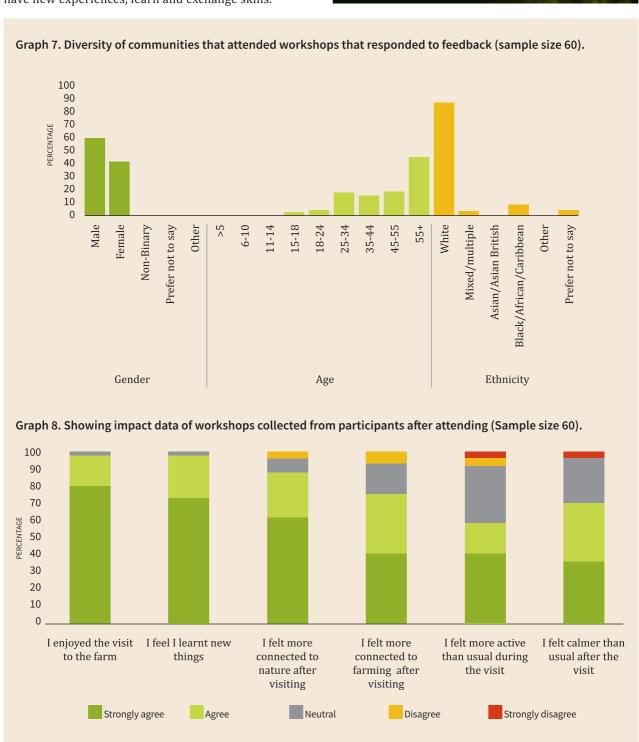
Table 3. Workshops held throughout the project.

Workshop	Event Presenter	Date	Attendees
Wildflower propagation	Eden Project	10/12/21	5
Training for Marsh Fritillary larval web surveys	Butterfly Conservation	23/02/22	11
Training for adult Marsh Fritillary butterfly surveys	Butterfly Conservation	10/06/22	11
Moth night	Devon Moth Group & Butterfly Conservation	27/05/23	9
Moth and bat night	Devon Moth Group & Devon Wildlife Tours	22/07/22	21
Hay meadow restoration	Devon Wildlife Trust	15/07/22	10
Hay meadow restoration	Moor Meadows	01/10/22	6
Wildflower ID for landowners	Hannah Gibbons	11/06/22	2
Wildflower ID	Hannah Gibbons	11/06/22	16
Conserving Marsh Fritillary Butterfly for landowners	Butterfly Conservation: volunteer	02/05/22	10
Tree seed collecting and propagation	Moor Trees	24/11/22	8
Winter tree ID	Moor Trees	23/02/23	13
Beautiful Butterflies	Dartmoor National Park Authority	04/08/22	7
Harvest mouse survey	Devon Wildlife Tours	15/11/22	5
Rhos pasture ecology	Devon Wildlife Tours	19/06/22	5
Boundary repair course 1: Dry stone walling	Martin Stallard	02/02/22	6
Boundary repair course 2: Dry stone walling	Martin Stallard	02/05/23	4
Boundary repair course 3: Dry stone walling	Martin Stallard	13/07/22	12
Boundary repair course 4: Hedge laying	Martin Stallard	30/11/22	7
Boundary repair course 5: Dry stone walling	Martin Stallard	24/02/23	7

The aim of these workshops was to increase the level of connectedness to nature and farming for local communities, the success of this is demonstrated in Graph 8. These workshops were also successful at increasing the visibility of the Trust within the local area and has created many new connections and support for its work. Beyond the completion date of this project, the Trust will continue to seek further funding to continue to deliver these workshops. These workshops created spaces for people to meet, have new experiences, learn and exchange skills.

"I have never done survey work before - really interesting and enjoyable experience. Good to be playing a small part in protecting the Marsh Fritillary and Small Pearl."

"The first sighting of Marsh Fritillaries was so exciting"



## 4.7.a. Case Study: Moth and Bat Workshop



This event was attended by a mixture of adults and families with children of various ages. The group was led on a bat walk by a local ecologist who engaged with the young people, asking them to help by holding the bat detectors.

Both young people and adults were amazed at hearing the echolocation sounds and learning about the unique ecology of each species. Following this, Devon Moth Group set up several moth traps on the marsh, here people had the chance to see moths up close and marvel at their intricate patterns, even holding some of the more docile specimens. The feedback from the evening was glowing and demonstrated the importance of these events and their ability to inspire the public to engage with nature:

"...After this event, my daughter has become even more interested in insects and British wildlife. We have made our own moth trap and ordered a book on insect identification. I really enjoyed hearing about the farms mission and the work they do with inner city children. I grew up in London and if a program like this had been available to me as a kid it would have been life changing. Well done guys!"

## 4.8

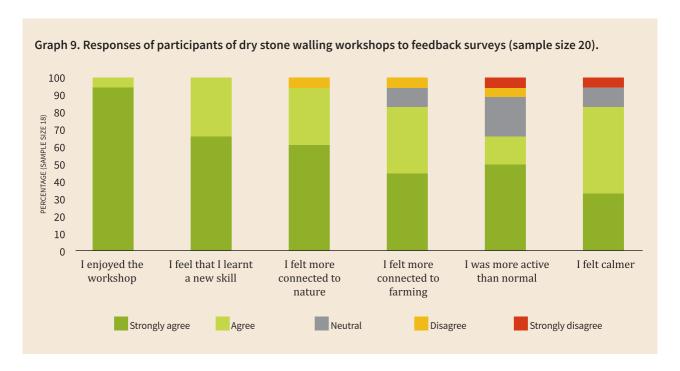
## **Boundary Repair Workshops**

The most successful training events were the boundary repair workshops.

The aim was to improve the condition of local heritage and upskill community members in traditional agricultural skills. Participants attended the courses for a range of reasons. Some were looking to improve their skills, whilst others simply wanted to experience a new skill.

A total of 36 members of the public took part in these workshops of which 20 responded to feedback questionnaires which evidence the overwhelmingly positive impact on participants (Graph 9.).





"Martin was a first class trainer and the training was delivered in a stunningly beautiful environment. It was great to meet a really nice group of people to share the training with. Many thanks for the experience."

"Both days were spent in friendly company with individuals from different backgrounds who shared a common interest and focus. I think everyone derived a lot of satisfaction from working together and learning the skills from Martin Stallard whom we were lucky to have as our instructor."

100% of those surveyed said they would be interested in future workshops indicating tangible value within the local community and opportunities for developing the conservation of Dartmoor's heritage. In light of this positive feedback, the Trust would like to source further funding to enable the continuation of these events. However, the audience that attendee was not particularly diverse. Therefore, efforts in the

future would be made to recruit a wider variety of participants. The majority of participants were male (79%) and aged over 55 (40%). The importance of improving diversity is illustrated by feedback from one female attended:

"as a woman I battled some pretty severe imposter syndrome in the days before but it was completely misplaced and at no time did I feel like I shouldn't be there or didn't belong. It was really empowering to be given such free reign on a project that you'd never normally attempt, with guidance throughout."

There was also low attendance from people who were not previously engaged with Dartmoor and the countryside environment. A more targeted approach might be needed to reach a wider audience to include younger adults and those from ethnic minority groups. Attendance was also challenging due to a high number of 'no shows', necessitating the introduction of a fully refundable £50 deposit system to secure a place, solving the problem for the last four workshops.



# 4.9 Apprentices

The project aimed to work with four apprentices, however this was not achieved due to the overall ambitious targets of the project.

Appointing four apprentices would have diverted the Conservation Officer from community engagement targets and prevented delivery of the remainder of the project. The Steering Committee discussed and agreed that this target would not be addressed to ensure other targets could be met. However, the Conservation Officer did work closely with the residential volunteer at ESF who joined the team in August 2022 and a second member of staff who had no conservation experience and joined in many of the workshops and activities.

The resident volunteer aims to start a career in conservation and therefore attended training on species surveys, boundary repairs, hay meadow restoration, took responsibility for the poly tunnel watering and daily care and many more of the activities throughout the project. To prevent activities not being realised in future funded projects, these bids will be written with more critical targets, or have more staffing factored into them.

# 4.10 Landowners

**Aim:** 18 landowners receive training and guidance on habitat management and grassland restoration including survey and monitoring skills. Local contractors will develop new services and expertise in habitat restoration on Dartmoor.

**Output:** 20 landowners were engaged with the project through a variety of activities described in more detail in table 4.

Working with these landowners will create a better outcome for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly. The close

geographical proximity of most of these sites enables landscape scale conservation to take place and improved habitat connectivity for the butterfly - vital for a species with such short migration distances. These partnerships will also increase the resilience of the Trust through the shared resources and knowledge of these experienced landowners.

The gained knowledge through training opportunities and the provision of habitat management guidance will continue to improve habitat conditions beyond the project completion date.



Table 4. Landowners engaged through the project and the activities in which they were involved.

Farm name	Engagement activities		
East Shallowford	Species surveys, habitat management advice, attended wildflower ID workshop, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop, boundary repair, plug planting, scrub clearing, provided site for various workshops		
Broadaford	Species surveys, habitat management advice, scrub clearing, plug planting, provide site for rhos pasture ecology workshop, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop, boundary repair		
Challacombe	Species surveys, habitat management advice, scrub clearing, plug planting, provided site for hay meadow restoration workshop, provide wildflower seeds, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop, attended wildflower ID workshop		
Middle Merripit	Species surveys, habitat management advice, provided site for wildflower ID workshops		
Blackaton Manor	Species surveys, habitat management advice, plug planting, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop		
Bowden	Species surveys, habitat management advice, scrub clearing, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop		
Runnage	Species surveys, habitat management advice, scrub clearing, provided wild-flower seeds, donor site for hay meadow restoration, carrying out ground preparation works for hay meadow restoration, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop		
Grendon	Species surveys, habitat management advice, provided site for moth night workshop, donor site for hay meadow restoration, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop		
Soussons	Species surveys, habitat management advice, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop, attended wildflower ID workshop		
Huccaby	Species surveys, habitat management advice, attended Marsh Fritillary conservation workshop		
Greyhound	Species surveys, donor site for hay meadow restoration		
Sky Garden	Recipient site for hay meadow restoration		
Northway	Recipient site for hay meadow restoration		
Dunstone Court	Recipient site for hay meadow restoration		
Berrycoombe	Donor site for hay meadow restoration		
Kingshead	Recipient site for hay meadow restoration		
Beechwood	Donor site for hay meadow restoration		
Higher Hurston	Species surveys, scrub clearing, plug planting		
Furzemeads	Species surveys, assisting with hay meadow restoration		
Lower Hurston Species surveys			

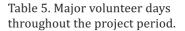
# 4.9 Volunteers

## The project supported 64 volunteer events which totalled 173 volunteer days donated to the project.

These volunteers carried out a wide range of activities and learnt new skills. Most activities were conservation based. Examples include:

- Marsh Fritillary surveys (adults and webs)
- Collecting and planting wildflower seeds
- Habitat restoration (scrub clearing)
- Planting wildflower plugs
- Hay meadow restoration green hay moving
- Construction and maintenance of the vegetable garden

Some volunteers were recruited independently, others contributed via partnerships with other local organisations. Major volunteer days and the activities achieved are shown in table 5.





### Table 5. Major volunteer days throughout the project period.

Farm name	Activities completed	Date	No. attended
ESF volunteers	Seed planting	05/01/22	6
Papillon Gin	Scrub clearing at Shallowford Farm	18/01/22	8
University of Plymouth Ecological Society	Scrub clearing and tree planting	07/02/22	9
Dartmoor Youth Rangers	Scrub clearing at Shallowford Farm	24/02/22	18
University of Plymouth Ecological Society	Scrub clearing and tree planting	27/02/22	7
ESF volunteers	Marsh Fritillary Surveys	Various throughout June 2022	8
ESF volunteers	Marsh Fritillary Surveys	Various throughout August 2022	8
ESF Volunteers	Green hay spreading at Shallowford Farm	29/08/22	4
Dartmoor Youth Rangers	Green hay spreading Shallowford Farm	30/08/22	17
ESF Volunteers	Green hay spreading at Dunstone Court	31/08/22	9
ESF volunteers	Plug planting out at Blackaton Manor	18/10/22	6
Francis Clarke	Scrub clearing and vegetable garden maintenance	20/10/22	6
ESF volunteers	Plug planting out at Shallowford Farm	21/10/22	7
Papillon Gin	Plug planting at Challacombe Farm	09/11/22	4
Dartmoor Preservation Association	Scrub clearing and plug planting at Broadaford Farm	08/12/22	14
ESF volunteers	Seed planting	13/01/23	5
Dartmoor Preservation Association	Scrub clearing and plug planting at Higher Hurston	30/01/23	9
<b>Butterfly Conservation</b>	Scrub clearing at Bowden Farm	11/02/23	9
Dartmoor Youth Rangers	Scrub clearing at Shallowford Farm	14/02/23	23

# 5

## Nature Conservation and Restoration

This project had ambitious targets to improve nature and heritage on Dartmoor, with the aim of making it a better place to live, work or visit.

**Aim:** Expansion in species rich grassland and rhos pasture by 3 Ha.

**Output:** 18.88 Ha of species rich grassland was expanded through seed application on areas that would not previously have been considered to be species rich. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.1.

## **5.1**

## **Rhos Pastures**

Species rich grasslands have declined rapidly in Britain since the Second World War, but Dartmoor retains pockets of grassland types that are nationally scarce such as rhos pastures, of which just 8% remains of what was thought to have existed in 1900.

The importance of this habitat is recognised as a priority habitat by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. These habitats are vital for the conservation of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, as these sites are often populated by the butterfly's food plant – Devil's Bit Scabious.

This project has improved conditions on thirteen rhos pastures on Dartmoor, measurable through either species surveys following scrub clearing or plug planting as well as the provision of tailored habitat management plans for ten landowners within the Postbridge Cluster (produced with guidance from Butterfly Conservation - an example can be found in Annex 2.). These management plans focused on improving grazing regimes, identifying sites for plug planting and giving advice on scrub management in order to maintain the grasslands in suitable conditions for the butterfly for many years.



## 5.1.a. Species Survey

Species surveys were carried out on thirteen sites (listed in table 5) in the months of June (for adult Marsh Fritillary Butterflies) and again in August (to look for the presence of larval webs). These surveys were carried out by the Conservation Officer with the assistance of volunteers. Data collected was submitted to Butterfly Conservation, contributing towards national biodiversity data sets.

Training was provided for those who were new to surveying (including the Conservation Officer) via two workshops led by Jenny Plackett from Butterfly Conservation as mentioned in section 4.7. These workshops successfully brought together a range of knowledge creating spaces for discussion and skill sharing.

"Jenny's teaching was informative , interesting and relevant. Ellie and Jenny's field exercise was enjoyable and helpful."

## **5.1.b.** Scrub clearing

Aim: Clear 1 Ha of scrub.

Output: 1.1 Ha of scrub cleared.

Rhos pasture habitats, if not properly managed, can scrub over with saplings and gorse. Whilst this is a valuable habitat in its own right, if not controlled, could result in the loss of the little remaining rhos pasture in the UK. The clearance was achieved across four different sites (Map 1, Table 6.) with the help of adult volunteer groups, youth ranger groups, school groups and university groups. It is possible that more could have been achieved should additional man power have been provided and more time been available for organisation. Partnering with other volunteer organisations was an effective way of increasing the visibility of both the Trust and the project.

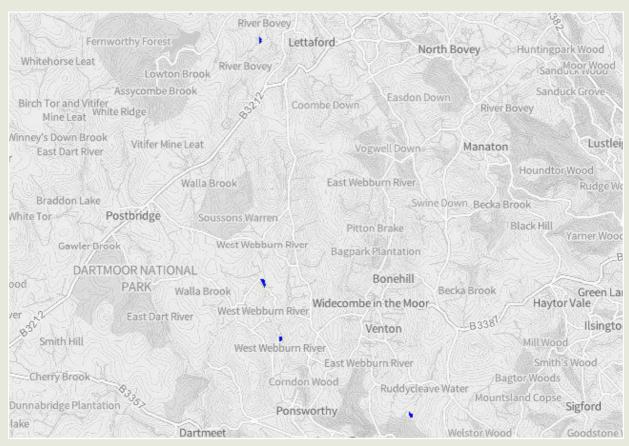
"It was fascinating to find out about the butterfly project, and the scale of work that goes into protecting such a small creature"

Table 6. Site name and area of scrub cleared

Farm name	Area of scrub cleared (Ha)	
East Shallowford	0.6	
Broadaford	0.2	
Bowden	0.2	
Higher Hurston	0.1	



Map 1. Areas of scrub cleared are outlined in blue.



## 5.1.c. Plug Planting

Aim: Plant 20, 000 wildflower plugs.

Output: 20, 000 wildflower plugs planted.

The planting of 20,000 wildflower plus was achieved across two rounds of planting. The first took place in January 2022 when 10,000 plugs of Devil's Bit Scabious seeds were sown and then planted out across five sites in the Autumn/Winter of 2022 (Table 7, Map 2.). Sites were selected because they had no (or very little) Devil's Bit Scabious but were adjacent to or connected to sites known to be populated by the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.

The hope is that this work will help to support future populations of the butterfly by extending and connecting its available habitat. All of these plugs were planted by volunteers. They will take 2-3 years to mature, by which time, surveys will determine whether these sites have been populated by the butterfly. Landowners were keen to be involved and the remaining plugs will be planted out on more sites throughout the autumn of 2023.



Table 7. Number of plugs planted on different sites.

Site name	No. plugs planted (approx)	Planting group	Date
East Shallowford	1,000	Dartmoor Youth Rangers	30/08/2022
	1,000 V		04/10/2022
	4,500	Conservation Officer, social prescriber, residential volunteer	Various
Blackaton Manor	1,500	Volunteer group	21/10/2022
Challacombe	1,500	Papillon Gin	18/10/2022
Higher Hurston	500	Dartmoor Preservation Association	30/01/2023

Although the propagation process was successful and straightforward due to the advice and training received from the Eden Project, the planting out process was more challenging than anticipated. The weather created a significant challenge, the extremely hot and dry summer of 2022, followed by a period of extremely heavy rainfall was unsuitable for taking volunteers out to plant apart from a few occasions. This was then followed by a period of very cold weather meaning that the ground was frozen and unsuitable for planting. Some plugs were therefore planted in suboptimal periods in the year. The planting out process took a lot longer and was more time consuming than initially anticipated. The Trust will ensure that enough time is allocated and sufficient volunteers recruited to make the sessions time effective in further rounds of planting. The Dartmoor Youth Rangers have already been recruited to assist with the planting out of the second round of plugs in September of 2023.

Map 2. Areas where plugs were planted out are highlighted in red.



# 5.2 Hay Meadow Restoration

Aim: 7 Ha of seed application.

**Output:** 18.88 Ha of seed application.

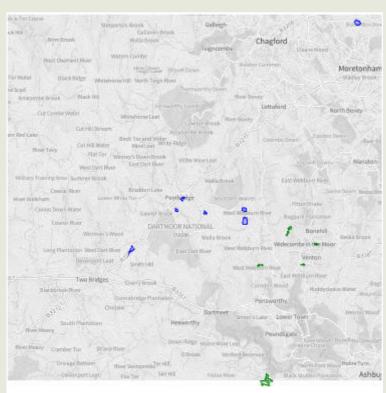
Species rich grasslands have declined dramatically in Britain since the 1900's, with the national resource currently estimated at 15,000 Ha of which 450 Ha survive on Dartmoor as upland hay meadows. To

improve heritage, the project aimed to restore 7Ha of upland grassland through seed application. This was a new activity for both the Trust and the Conservation Officer, meaning support and guidance was sought from both the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project and Devon Wildlife Trust. This collaboration resulted in a much greater area of seed application being achieved than originally expected (Table 8, Map 3.).

Table 8. Recipient and donor sites for hay meadow restoration.

Donor site	Seed harvested (kg)	Recipient site	Recipient site area (Ha)	Seed mix received	Seed received (kg)
Berry Coombe	82	Great Dunstone	0.7	Berry Coombe/ Powdermills	8
Beechwood	9	Northway	1.01	Berry Coombe/ Powdermills	16
Grendon	59.5	Sky Garden	13.07	Beechwood	9
Runnage	10.5	Kingshead	2.93	Berry Coombe	8
Powdermills	Bales of green hay	East Shallowford	1.17	Berry Coombe/ Powdermills	8

Map 3. Sites involved in hay meadow restoration. Donor sites are outlined in blue, recipient sites are outlined in green.



Restoration was carried out using two techniques spreading of brush harvested seeds and/or green hay moving. These works were carried out by local contractors. Donor sites were selected using the local and technical knowledge of the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project whilst recipient sites were selected in collaboration with Devon Wildlife Trust who were also carrying out hay meadow restoration across Dartmoor at the time of this project. Devon Wildlife Trust carried out some of the seed spreading works, as well as offering technical advice, supplying an ecologist for botanical surveys of both recipient and donor sites as well as support with APHA registrations. A five year plan has been written for the ongoing management of the sites restored at ESF to ensure their development and legacy beyond the Conservation Officers posting (Annex 3.).

This element of the project produced a number of success stories. Partnership working enabled the Trust to overshoot the target by 37% so meaningfully contributing to national efforts to restore wildflower meadows. The collaborative work with Devon Wildlife Trust and the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project has increased the credibility and resilience of the Trust moving forwards. Additionally, the starting of two hay meadow sites on ESF (a habitat not previously represented on the farm) will also add to the educational possibilities of the farm.

However, there were also some significant challenges. The short time frame over which the original bid was written meant that there was a shorter timeframe to select sites for restoration. Therefore, soil samples were not able to be taken to ensure the best possible matching of donor and recipient sites. Additionally, it was originally hoped that the majority of the hay meadow restoration could take place within the Postbridge Cluster group. However, this work clashed with a herbal lay project developed after the writing of the GRCF proposal, making the selection of recipient sites more challenging. Successful engagement within the partnership enabled these issues to be addressed as well as providing opportunities to build connections with more local landowners. For future bids, the Trust will ensure that more time is given to the pre project development stage and that partners for work are secured in advance.

Green hay movement is very labour intensive, meaning many hands are vital. As the work is often limited by weather this made planning difficult as dates for works to take place were decided just days in advance. Unfortunately, one of the days fell on a bank holiday, meaning recruitment for volunteers was challenging. The work was completed successfully, but it was very physically demanding for those taking part due to the heavy nature of the work and the heat wave that was in full force at the time. It also meant that the project wasn't as successful at creating the community effort that was hoped on one of the days. The second day which was not on a bank holiday was much better attended, but still very challenging.



Farmer preparing site for receiving seed with a harrow



Volunteer moving green hay



Volunteer hand broadcasting harvested seed

# 5.3 Tree Nursery

Aim: Propagate 500 trees.

**Output:** Over 500 tree seeds collected and propagation process started.

The establishment of a tree nursery is a new venture for the Trust. Therefore, advice and guidance was sought from local charity, Moor Trees. The trees grown will be used to enhance habitats on Shallowford Farm or within the Postbridge Cluster. Seeds of blackthorn, hawthorn, oak and alder were collected from ESF by a combination of volunteers as part of a workshop led by Moor Trees and young people from the Trusts sister charity, Providence House. These young people return year after year for many years, inspiring the beginning of a legacy project in which each young person collected, planted and labelled an acorn. We hope that in following years, they will plant their seedlings into the beds of the new tree nursery and eventually onto a chosen site on East Shallowford Farm, enabling a family to track their trees growth for years to come. The Trust hopes to continue this work by replicating this with other groups of young people from within the local community.





# 5.4 Boundary Repair

**Aim:** 30 metres of boundary repair delivered across five workshops.

**Output:** 174 metres of boundary repair delivered across five workshops.

Granite dry stone walls are an iconic part of Dartmoor's heritage. These features provide stock proof boundaries and depict the history of the landscape in many places. These stone walls also provide important habitats for a range of species of plants, invertebrates and small mammals. Many are now in disrepair as these traditional land management techniques are being lost within the community due to the prevalence of more recent practices.

The boundary repair works were focussed on ESF and Broadaford (Map 4 & 5). These workshops enabled one full time member of the ESF staff and one full time volunteer to gain the skills to continue repairing more walls across the farm beyond the completion of this project. The restoration of this wall will enable better control of grazing on this site, benefitting

the population of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly. It is currently not possible to deliver more targeted grazing on this particular site due to the degradation of the wall meaning that overgrazing prevents the butterfly from completing its lifecycle. The community impact of these workshops is discussed in section 3.10. of this report.



Maps 4 & 5. Lengths of boundary repaired across five workshops. Red: dry stone wall, green: layed hedge.





The proposal had a target of five workshops, however, the original budget line for this part of the project only supported the delivery of four workshops. Due to an underspend in other budget lines and following approval from HLF, the fifth workshop was able to take place. The Trust intends to seek funding to continue to deliver these workshops as well as to continue to the rebuilding of afore mentioned wall beyond the completion date of this project.

# 5.5 Classroom Resources

The purchase of high quality classroom equipment such as pond dipping kits, bat detectors for night walks, hand lenses and ID guides has improved the level of education and experience that the Trust can offer visiting groups.

This equipment will continue to benefit visitors to the Trust for many years beyond the completion of this project.

## 5.6 Capital Works

The Trust has undergone a major period of capital works in recent years in order to allow it to move into a phase of extended and greater impact.

£38,737.50 from Green Recovery has contributed to this through the construction of a multipurpose corner barn as well as a vegetable garden and polytunnel. All of the new facilities have been designed with accessibility in mind in order to broaden the Trusts audience to include those that are less physically and mentally able.



## 5.6.a. The Multipurpose Corner Barn

The multipurpose corner barn has revolutionised the way the Trust can deliver activities by providing an outdoor yet covered space that can be used to host talks, demonstrations and activities in all weathers. So far it has provided a space to carry out activities in heavy rain/wind or a space for respite from the sun during heatwaves. Previous to the erection of this barn, all activities were outside or in the animal barns limiting activities during bad weather. This building will continue to increase the resilience of the Trust for years to come. It has also improved the heritage asset of the grade 2 listed curtilage of the farm yard, for which planning permission and listed building consent were gained prior to building.







## 5.6.b. Polytunnel and Growing Space



The polytunnel and vegetable garden have enhanced local heritage by providing a space where native wildflower plugs can be grown to improve the biodiversity of species rich grasslands as well as native tree species and seasonal produce. The construction of this space was a community effort with four dedicated volunteers providing a considerable number of hours to the building of the raised beds and their filling with compost. To date, 20,000 wildflower plugs have been sown, and over 500 tree seeds have been collected.

The Trust hope that as the years progress these assets will become increasingly productive. Many of the young people that have come to the farm have been amazed by the experience of picking strawberries to eat with their pudding or pulling on green fluffy plants to find a carrot beneath. The educational benefits have been clear. The increased willingness to try new and healthy foods when they or their peers have helped with the harvesting has been wonderful to witness. In addition to this, the polytunnel and vegetable garden has also helped to increase the sustainability of the Trust by reducing food miles. These resources have now become an integral part of the educational trips for young people, whilst also providing hours of pleasure for volunteers or those experiencing poor mental health.

These capital works came with their own challenges. The unexpected increases in costs due to inflation of building materials with the unforeseen change of the status of the corner barn from agricultural to domestic by Building Control (due to the high volume of people that would be using the space during its lifetime) increased costs by approximately £8,000.

There were also significant delays in the construction of the polytunnel and vegetable garden due to weather. Heavy rainfall meant that the prepared area was waterlogged for a long period of time, making it unsuitable for any heavy machinery. This caused concern that the works would not be completed in time for the opening ceremony. However, dedicated volunteers and the dedicated staff at ESF ensured that it was completed for the event.







# 6 How the Project was Managed

# **6.1** The Steering Committee

During the concept phase the value of a Steering Committee to oversee the project to ensure local accountability, technical support and quality implementation was seen as vital. The Committee was elected by identifying those who would be able to provide technical and local support to the project. Representatives were selected from Butterfly Conservation, The Dartmoor Hill Farm Project, the Duchy of Cornwall, and three from the Shallowford Trust. Quarterly steering group meetings took place across the duration of the project to monitor progress, give technical advice and manage risks. Meetings were chaired by John Dracup, (a Trustee of the Shallowford Trust) and were well attended by most members.

On reflection, the Steering Committee was well appointed. Members had a unified vision for the outcomes of the project. It provided strong support for the Conservation Officer both within meetings and on an individual basis. The success of the Steering Committee has solidified relationships between the supporting organisations and the Trust. It is hoped that the same Committee will be used for future legacy projects. The knowledge gained by the Trust from the Committee members has also improved the technical knowledge of ESF on how to deliver habitat management in the future.

# **6.1.a.** Independent Evaluation Interview: David Attwell, Dartmoor Land Management Adviser, Dartmoor Hill Farm Project: Steering Committee Member

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2023** 

### Introduction

Throughout the writing of the project proposal, the Trust recognised that many of the planned activities were outside of its current level of knowledge and experience. Therefore, it was necessary to recruit a Steering Committee from a range of external partners who would be able to provide technical support throughout to the Conservation Officer and other members of staff involved in the delivery.

### Evaluation interview results - for steering group members

Thinking about the outcomes from project as a whole and the functioning of the steering group...

### What worked well? What was most successful?

A key success factor for the whole project was the steering group's recruitment process. It was robust and rigorous from the outset, resulting in the identification of three excellent 'potential appointees.' Ellie was the top choice – vindicated by her considerable skills and ability to deliver across a wide spectrum of project aims. People engagement was particularly good across a wide range of activities and demographics with excellent social media engagement.

The steering group worked well, having a group with representatives from different disciplines and backgrounds was helpful.

The small team (steering group and delivery staff) had advantages: strong personal commitment, good at supporting each other, fleet-of-foot in reactive situations; and disadvantages: the smaller team lacked the resilience of larger work groups, some people, through personal choice and commitment, ended up working over-long hours. This concern picked up as a legacy question.

#### What was less successful?

The short timeframe to write the original bid meant that a priori consultation with key partner and landowner stakeholders did not take place. This meant much of the engagement work with these stakeholders had to happen once the bid was approved. As an example, the haymeadows element achieved a fairly good result but it would have been better with a longer consultative lead time.

At times, as a member of the steering group, it would have been helpful to understand more about the Trusts general activity programme and objectives. It was not always clear where overlaps existed or how the wider offer integrated into the GRCF objectives.

We would have liked to see local schools involved but perceive that this was a block or barrier coming from the schools rather than a problem or criticism of the project officer who tried on numerous occasions to engage.

#### What would you change?

The steering group had significant representation from East Shallowford Farm Trust. One external steering group member played a less active role. Overall, the steering group worked well but would have benefitted from more stakeholder representation and especially in terms of educational experience.

## Have there been any longer-term changes in your work as a result of your involvement with East Shallowford Farm longer term?

As one of the co-authors of the bid and a delivery partner there was perhaps less change to be expected because the work of the DHFP is already embedded within the local farming community. That said, there was an increase in joint working and mutual understanding with Devon Wildlife Trust – particularly around the 'Upstream Thinking,' Green Hay and seed harvesting aspects of the project.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

Overall, the project has delivered excellent results and the experience has been positive – especially given the ambition expressed in the GRCF bid but, as with all short-term funded projects, there is a concern about legacy. Legacy for infrastructure and capital investment is well planned, the area of concern is the legacy for public engagement and conservation activity; much more difficult to 'secure' in just one year.

As a steering group member, the time needed to support the project was significantly more than expected in order to deliver in a calendar year and to support Ellie. The small team at Shallowford have a wonderful work ethic but the demands on time and capacity are clearly challenging and may be further stretched if Ellie's post cannot be maintained in the short term.

# **6.1.b.** Independent Evaluation Interview: Jenny Plackett, Conservation Manager South West, Butterfly Conservation: Steering Committee Member

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2023** 

#### Introduction

The same information applies here as found in the introduction to the previous Impact Case Study

#### Evaluation interview results - for steering group members

Thinking about the outcomes from project as a whole and the functioning of the steering group...

#### What worked well? What was most successful?

#### PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE

Ellie was great – absolutely the right person for this role; worked really well and got lots of people to engage with nature – especially school groups; some fantastic outcomes. The impact for some individuals was really inspiring

and was a very positive experience, making a significant difference to people's lives. These outcomes were both for the project and for Butterfly Conservation as an organization. The polytunnel was a game changer – both for conservation outcomes (plug planting) and the opportunity this provided for people to engage in meaningful conservation related activity.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The partnership created 'added value' for conservation organisations who may have previously desired to work together but lacked capacity, opportunity and impetus. This partnership approach resulted in lots of joint training opportunities with partners all 'pulling together' – with more activity 'on the ground' and with greater reach than previously.

There was lots of informal and anecdotal feedback from volunteer conservation groups about the 'inspirational' nature of the project and the clear and tangible outputs for nature achieved.

#### What was less successful?

The balance between setting ambitious targets for a funding bid and being realistic. This was evident in a couple of areas of activity: there was lots of really good conservation delivery at East Shallowford but not quite as much as had been planned across the 'cluster farms' and the wider network; similarly the ambition to have four apprentices was not realized and was, in hindsight, far too much for a single project officer to manage alongside all the other project activity.

School engagement – a question about whether numbers reached original project outputs...but this has to be balanced with the qualitative feedback and experience; those schools and colleges who were able to attend clearly had meaningful and transformative experiences. There is also a question for me about whether there was representation from significant new numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.

#### What would you change?

Future projects and funding bids would benefit from setting more realistic objectives. This project was short term with just one funded post – longer term funding and / or more staff would have meant some of the more ambitious targets may have been achieved.

#### What surprised you ... about the project? ... about working with others on the steering group?

#### PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE

Seeing the way in which the activities at East Shallowford Farm really made a difference to young peoples' lives – the 'inspiration in action' was amazing.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Working with others on the steering group was inspiring and a very rewarding experience; I enjoyed working with supportive and encouraging, knowledgeable and passionate people. We achieved more collectively than any one partner could have on their own.

## Have there been any longer-term changes in your work as a result of your involvement with East Shallowford Farm longer term?

The relationships established through the partnership and steering group will contribute to continuing conservation activity, especially for the Marsh Fritillary. This is a significant legacy.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

From a Butterfly Conservation perspective, the links between conservation activity and farming/landowners has been really important. The landowner workshops in particular helped to create shared understanding and value. Butterflies as a theme were a good way to connect people with nature – for increased understanding, nature connectedness and for mental wellbeing.

Overall, the project had a very wide remit with multiple objectives and limited project officer time.

## **6.2** Impact on Local Economy

The Trust was aware that in order to meet the targets of the project that there would be a need to use external providers with specialist skills.

A significant amount of the budget was put aside for the employment of technical specialists. The Trust felt strongly that it should support local businesses where possible. Projects like this are vital for the local economy of rural areas such as Dartmoor where job opportunities are limited. Major injecting of revenue into the local economy included:

- Capital works completed resulted in the employment of a number of individuals from the local area injection approximately £30,000 into the local economy.
- Haymeadow restoration increased the value of hay crops through the harvesting of their seed. The use of local contractors to carry out ground preparation and driving the brush harvester employed four people, contributing approximately £4,780 to the local economy.
- Workshops were often led by specialists who were from other organisations or self-employed.

The project also supported the full time employment of the Conservation Officer who was recruited by the Steering Committee.

## 6.3

## Adaptability and Risk Management

#### **6.3.a.** Covid

It was predicted in the original proposal that COVID could be a major risk for the success of the project. However, this did not cause a significant impact. The only major barrier occurred when trying to engage two local care homes which would not accept visitors other than family due to ongoing cases of COVID. One visit into a care home was completed, but the target was met successfully by working with Ness Care group, who engage the elderly with memory loss and dementia and have transport for outdoor activities as discussed earlier in the report.

#### 6.3.b. Short Term Contract Recruitment

It was predicted that it might be difficult to appoint the Conservation Officer – due to the short term nature of the contract. However, the job advert had an unexpectedly high response rate of good quality applications. From these applications, four final candidates were chosen for interview, from which one final candidate was selected by the already appointed steering committee.



#### 6.3.c. Weather

Weather posed the greatest challenge for this project.

- **Hay Meadow Restoration:** The significant heat through the summer of 2022 meant that the ground was hard and therefore difficult to prepare for the hay meadow restoration. It also delayed the seed/hay event as rainfall is required shortly after being spread in order to improve germination success rate. The works happened at very short notice making it difficult to recruit many volunteers. Other members of the public who were closely associated with the Trust were recruited to assist (Intern, Trustees, partners of employees).
- **Plug Planting:** This was due to take place in September through to December 2021, when the UK faced heavy and constant rainfall and piercing cold. Opportunities for planting with volunteers were limited. To resolve this, assistance from other organisations working in the local area who were also interested in Marsh Fritillary conservation were recruited to plant plugs on additional sites to make sure that they were fully utilised.
- **Polytunnel construction:** Following significant rainfall, the completion of the polytunnel was delayed until May. This meant that many of the crops including the wildflower plugs were started later than planned and initiated outside the polytunnel in various temporary locations around the farm and on neighbouring farms. Managing this situation was a logistical challenge and generated a lot of extra work travelling to and from and moving plants around. Again, the dedicated staff and volunteers who support ESF enabled these challenges to be overcome.

# 6.4 Social Media

The use of the Trusts social media pages had been on pause for some time before the beginning of the Conservation Officer's role.

Since their appointment, both the Instagram and Facebook pages have been in consistent use. These sites have been used to promote the work of the Trust as well as the progress of the Green Recovery Challenge through the use of the project hashtags #greenrecoverychallengefund and #togetherforourplanet. The use of these hashtags and promotions has increased the following from approximately 70 to 494 on Instagram and from approximately 110 to 726 on Facebook.

These are powerful tools to communicate the actions of the Trust and therefore improve the image of the Trust within the local community, but also for advertising workshops and events.

These sites can be found by searching for the Trusts handle on Instagram @shallowfordfarmdartmoor or by searching for Shallowford Farm on Facebook.

# **6.5** Website

The project funding allowed a budget to redesign the website. This has largely been completed with the exception of some additions to be completed in the future.

The project funding allowed a budget to redesign the website. This has largely been completed with the exception of some additions to be completed in the future. The website will enable more detailed information on the Trusts current five year strategy and conservation. It will enable the team to regularly upload information on workshops and visiting groups

etc. to advertise 'what's on' at the farm. The new website now reflects more effectively the aims and objectives of the Trust.

To view the website click on the below link:

shallowfordfarm.co.uk

# 7 Next Steps



# 7.1 Lessons learnt

Although the project was an overwhelming success, meeting or exceeding almost all the targets, there were some significant lessons learnt, which will be carried forwards by those involved.

Large targets in limited time frame: The targets of the project were challenging, and at times required longer working hours by many partners than initially expected. The Conservation Officer's role was planned for twelve months only. However, fortuitously, following the re-allocation of the VAT which had been calculated as a payment but could be reclaimed through ESF's Charitable status, enabled the Conservations Officer's role to be extended for four months. If this had not been the case, it is unlikely that the targets and objectives of the project would have been met. From this, the Trust has learnt that future bids should be less ambitious, and to make sure that the level of work required is more sustainable. Moreover, the project could and should not have been written in isolation of the normal work ESF conducts with residential groups as this was a significant increase on the expectations of the Conservation Officer role.

Valuable partnerships: The ambitious aims were due to the quick writing of the project proposal. However, targets were fortuitously met due to the strong partnerships that were progressively developed throughout the project. Without the time and advice of the many partners involved, the project would not have been possible. For this, the Trust and the Conservation Officer are very grateful.

This project has also made it clear the value of having good partners and how this increases the reach and scope of projects as well as their legacy. Working with additional landowners such as the Postbridge Cluster increases the environmental impacts of conservation work and allows for landscape scale restoration works to take place. The Trust hopes to continue working alongside the Cluster for years to come.

Targeting different audiences: It was not apparent until later in the project that there was little representation from the audiences within the age bracket of 20-45. In future projects, a greater effort will be made to ensure that this age group is engaged with the project. From observations made throughout the GRCF project and from speaking to other organisations delivering community projects, the best way to reach this audience is through the delivery of family events. The bat and moth evening was a good example of this. Therefore, a stronger focus on similar events in the future would hopefully see better representation of this demographic.

Additionally, this project has demonstrated that the Trust is able to have a positive impact on other members of the community, such as the elderly and adults with mental health needs. This has resulted in the

Trust wishing to continue to build on this work in the future and continue to reach a wider audience.

**Project duration:** The impact of this project has been strong, as shown in the response data from those who were engaged. However, the relatively short length of the project period limits the reach of this impact somewhat. The Trust will strive to increase the length of future projects to maximise their impact and legacy.

**Project launch:** Prior to the employment of the Conservation Officer, the small team employed by the Trust had limited time to dedicate to the permission to start process alongside its usual commitments and activities. In the future, it may be worth outsourcing this process to reduce the pressure on the ESF team.

**Inflation and increasing material costs:** This project took place across a difficult period, where inflation has increased the costs of transport, materials and tools. As previously discussed, there was also an unforeseen change in the specification of the building works

creating a significant increase in costs. From this, longer term projects should have increases in costs should be factored into the budget ahead of time to avoid the risk of large overspends or works not completed.

#### Clashes between capital works and project targets:

Some of the targets such as the growing of the wildflower plugs were dependent on the completion of the capital works (polytunnel). Due to the seasonal nature of the propagation process, it was necessary to plant the plugs in January, despite the polytunnel not being completed until May. This meant that the plugs had to be planted and stored off site due to lack of appropriate space on ESF at the time. Although the propagation was successful, it made the process much more laborious due to the difficulty of transporting the trays. Although the delay in the polytunnel erection was due to weather, it still would not have been in use in time for the initial seed planting without the delays. For future projects, these timelines need to be considered more carefully to ensure that actions can be carried out with as few complications as possible.

# 7.2 Legacy

**Direct programme facilitation:** The Conservation Officer role has been successful, providing a beneficial addition to the Trusts existing programme of activities. In light of this, further funding has been sought through FiPL to extend the role until the end of July 2024 through the delivery of the 2023 Farm2City event. Following this, the Trust has agreed to fund the role internally until March 2023 in the hopes that by this time it will have been successful in securing additional funding. The Trust recognises that without a Conservation Officer, momentum on the achievements through this project may slow, or come to a complete stop. It is vital that the relationships started through this project are now nurtured and strengthened into the future. Without the continuity provided by maintaining the Conservation Officer in post, the future of targeted conservation and educational activities may be limited.

Stronger curriculum based programme: The educational experience of the Conservation Officer has allowed for the development of a programme of activities with stronger links to the National Curriculum, therefore making the educational offering of the Trust more resilient and attractive to school groups in particular. The Trust will continue to develop its curriculum links with the help of the Conservation Officer and through consulting educational providers.

The support of the visits to the national curriculum were recognised by the leaders of visiting groups. Further evidence of the impact of these links is discussed in the independent evaluation interview in section 3.3.a.

**Biodiversity:** The conservation activities of this project will continue to benefit the biodiversity and habitats of Dartmoor for many years to come:

- The increased numbers of volunteers confident to carry out species surveys for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly will provide Butterfly Conservation with more complete data sets for future monitoring.
- Plugs of Devil's Bit Scabious planted will continue to self-seed and spread therefore increasing the amount of habitat available for the butterfly as well as improving connectivity between sites.
- Tree seeds will contribute to future carbon sequestration and habitat restoration efforts.

Connectedness of communities to nature and

## **farming:** More people have learnt about nature and feel a stronger connection to it and farming as a result of this project. We have that these experiences will

feel a stronger connection to it and farming as a resul of this project. We hope that these experiences will lead them to become custodians of the natural world for future years.

Heritage: The repair of dry stone walls and the experiences of those who gained these traditional skills will maintain these historical land features for years to come as well as creating increased levels of enthusiasm and appreciation for these traditional rural skills. The Trust plans to continue to seek further funding to continue these workshops. The training of one member of staff at the Trust will ensure that more walls around Shallowford Farm will continue to be restored after the completion of this project.

Continued outreach: This project has acted as a springboard for future projects and continuation of the works started. The Ashburton Bank Youth Project which supports local youth (many of whom do not engage with Dartmoor and farming) has realised the benefit of bringing their young people to ESF, and actions are underway to find future funding to ensure that they can continue to visit. It is hoped that regular trips can be set up in order to allow the young people to work towards gaining their John Muir Awards. The Conservation Officer has made plans beyond the completion of this project to continue to work with volunteer groups including Dartmoor Youth Rangers, Dartmoor Preservation Association and Butterfly Conservation to improve habitats for the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly and other species.

**Legacy tools:** The completion of the project brings about a reduction in funding for activities. However, the investment of the project in tools and equipment such as a trailer, scrub clearing tools and garden tools, will enable the Trust to continue to deliver habitat improvement works on rhos pasture sites with the help of volunteers due to low on-costs beyond this initial purchase of equipment.

Capital works: The completed capital works will provide significant legacy of the Green Recovery Project by improving the resilience of the Trust and what it can offer to local community members. These structures will provide spaces to hold events and activities for many years to come continuing to improve lives and nature on Dartmoor. It is hoped that the polytunnel will be utilised in partnership with other conservation organisations as a space to grow wild flower plugs in the future which will be cared for by the Conservation Officer and volunteers.

Stronger partnerships: This project has introduced the Trust to a number of new partners resulting in the inspiration for a number of new partnership projects for the future. We hope that these ideas will grow into future projects that continue to benefit the local community and wild spaces for many years to come, reaching new audiences and having an even greater positive impact on the environment and education. For example the Devon Moth Group were inspired by the work of the Trust with young people, therefore, plans have been made for future collaboration, as well as legacy initiatives to carry out a full moth survey of the farm in the summer of 2023.

The following series of independent evaluation interviews of the Trust Manager, Trustee of the Trust (also Chairman of the Steering Group and the Conservation Officer) focusses on the both the successes of the project and discusses how this project has developed stronger partnerships for the Trust moving forwards.



# **7.2.a.** Independent Evaluation Interview: Julia McDade, Trust Manager, Shallowford Trust: Steering Committee Member

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 2 MARCH 2023** 

#### **Evaluation interview results**

Thinking about the outcomes from project as a whole, functioning of the steering group, partnerships and longer-term outcomes...

#### What worked well? What was most successful?

Partnerships: Putting the bid together was a great process because it brought East Shallowford Farm and the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project into a much closer working arrangement. This would not have happened without the opportunity provided by project funding. As a result of the project partnerships and relationships have been more widely developed; now partners are much more willing to collaborate

People engagement with nature: There has been a significant increase in the numbers of people engaging and in the quality of that engagement. Public engagement has also seen a large increase in the diversity of participants – new activities have created opportunities that were not present before resulting in the attraction of new audiences. The increased capacity created by a dedicated staff position (Conservation Officer) has resulted in a much more structured and thoughtful approach to monitoring and evaluating public and school engagement. This did not happen systematically previously.

Conservation objectives: Successful recruitment of the Conservation Officer realized a number of conservation objectives that would not otherwise have taken place. This increased capacity in the team also allowed for wider communication about these conservation objectives to the public and schools.

Capital investment: The considerable investment in infrastructure will leave a lasting legacy with increased opportunities for year-round activity and provision that was not possible prior to this project. Activities will include – food production through an extended growing season, tree nursery and Devil's Bit Scabious plug propagation.

#### What was less successful?

Nothing specific...apart from the over-ambitious target of taking on four apprentices.

#### What would you change?

More time! Now realise that the original bid had stretching targets and ambitious aims but in too short a time-frame.

We should have included a mini-bus (plus driver and fuel) in the original bid to facilitate group attendance – for many, especially schools, transport costs remain the most significant barrier to participation.

Similarly, a future bid could benefit from the inclusion of a dedicated Volunteer Co-ordinator role on the staff to create a more coherent approach to volunteering and volunteer support.

#### What surprised you ... about the project? ...about working with others?

The independence and capability of the Conservation Officer – was amazing and this was significant in achieving the original objectives.

The regularity of the same volunteers for different tasks – the willingness people had to offer their time. The funder's flexibility – for example reviewing budget lines and project objectives in the light of changing circumstances; this flexible approach has ensured more legacy.

#### Have there been any longer-term changes as a result of this funded project?

Yes! The project funding enabled delivery of the longer-term strategic aims of East Shallowford Farm Trust in addition to building new working relationships that will ensure longer-term outcomes. Specifically, the strengths have been: new and developed partnerships, new core volunteers, increased relationships with schools and significant infrastructure investment creating new opportunities for the future.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

Useful to have had an independent external evaluator to advise, support and undertake the processes of evaluation and reporting.

The East Shallowford Farm 'core team' have very much appreciated the Conservation Officer's dedication, hard work, skilled communication and rapport building skills. The Conservation Officer's personal ability and confidence have grown over the project period and have seen development of new and important relationships between East Shallowford and partners.

It is important to emphasize that East Shallowford Farm sees itself as part of the wider Dartmoor community – providing opportunities for volunteers, local people and local schools to feel a part of the locality's cultural and natural heritage.

## **7.2.b.** Independent Evaluation Interview: John Dracup, Trustee, Shallowford Trust: Chairman, Steering Committee

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 2 MARCH 2023** 

#### **Evaluation interview results**

Thinking about the outcomes from project as a whole, functioning of the steering group, partnerships and longer-term outcomes...

#### What worked well? What was most successful?

The project has been a huge success. The recruitment and appointment of the Conservation Officer was a master-stroke resulting in multiple outcomes: developing deeper relationships with the farming community, delivering conservation objectives, increasing visitor activity and engagement. Management programming and delivery have been exemplary – and all delivered with a huge energy and enthusiasm. This all leaves a significant legacy. The ambitious targets have raised the profile of East Shallowford Farm and it is now perceived widely amongst the farming community and stakeholders as more than just a 'visitor centre'.

#### What was less successful?

The project as a whole was very positive but there was an initial challenge of integrating a new member of staff into a very small team which required development of confidence and trust.

#### What would you change?

There were possibly too many steering group meetings - it became a 'rubber stamping' exercise rather than a meeting of stakeholders to identify policy and direction of travel. The steering group was supportive and is essential for accountability and focus but once the project was successfully underway there was no need of 'meeting for meetings sake'.

Nothing else to change – almost too good to be true!

#### What surprised you ... about the project? ...about working with others?

The level of engagement with and implicit trust that the Postbridge Cluster had with the Conservation Officer and her suggestions for activities was amazing. It became a case of "If Ellie is leading something we will join in and it will all work well." The Cluster has developed confidence and trust as activities at East Shallowford Farm have grown and evolved. There is a real confidence in Ellie's ability to deliver.

The recruitment process surprised me - the quality and number of candidates applying made for a very competitive interview and selection process; there were some very dynamic applicants. The consistency of attendance by a broad spectrum of groups and an increase in the breadth of audience has been very impressive.

#### Have there been any longer-term changes as a result of this funded project?

This was always planned as a 'legacy project' – with clear intention from the outset for longer-term gains with more people involved in partnerships, more opportunities for engagement and greater conservation activity on the ground. These longer-term changes are now dependent on future funding – it is clear we have appointed the right person for the job - we now need to develop our ambition for the future and currently the East Shallowford Trust are working on funding bids to ensure this legacy can be secured.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

Reflecting on the past year the green recovery project was a bit of inspiration in recognizing an opportunity for East Shallowford Farm to raise profile within a community it had previously been slightly 'apart from'. It was a major step for the Trust to undertake and deliver this project but the relationships built will now become a significant part of the Trust's work into the future.

## **7.2.b.** Independent Evaluation Interview: Eleanor Baker, Conservation Officer, Shallowford Trust

**INTERVIEW HELD ON 2 MARCH 2023** 

#### **Evaluation interview results**

Thinking about the outcomes from project as a whole, functioning of the steering group, partnerships and longer-term outcomes...

#### What worked well? What was most successful?

Personally: This has been a huge learning curve – tough at times but I have gained skills, knowledge, experience and connections. There have been no negative experiences. When I look back over the whole project it feels that the team delivered against all targets - important to say that everybody has been supportive throughout: the steering group, East Shallowford Farm staff and project partners. I have felt well informed and communicated with. There is no doubt that the original aims were ambitious and it has been stressful at times but overall really good and fun!

Project: The scope of the project enabled people to engage who would otherwise not have had the opportunity – this as a result of a clear budget line (particularly transport) to facilitate this engagement.

The diversity of provision created more connections with the local community and schools. It also increased public awareness and understanding through new activity days and workshops.

Funder's flexibility was important – allowing the Conservation Officer post to be extended by 4 months meant that objectives could be met.

For the organisation: The project has created long-lasting and deeper relationships with plans for future collaboration, for example with Moor Trees and Ashburton Bank Youth Project. This would not have happened without a funded and high-profile project. The strength of this partnership working has been instrumental in developing and then delivering new opportunities for conservation activity and public engagement. significant infrastructure investment creating new opportunities for the future.

#### What was less successful?

The large scale of the project with the multi-faceted targets was over-ambitious for one dedicated (funded) project officer, specifically:

The apprentices part of the project was not entirely clear at the outset and was not delivered; would have been virtually impossible to mentor and support four apprentices in addition to all the other activities undertaken. Similarly, volunteering was poorly defined – so, pragmatically, rather than recruit dedicated volunteers for this project synergies with other organisations who used volunteers enabled people to give their time.

Overambitious targets took a personal toll and created stress – I worked long hours to bring many aspects of the project to fruition.

Some parts of the project, for example Haymeadows, were heavily dependent on other people for delivery (local knowledge and contacts) – although this was successful in the event there was some jeopardy.

#### What would you change?

More realistic objectives and target setting at outset.

With hindsight and now with more experience I would have liked to engage my own age group (20s – 30s) who now appear very much a 'missing cohort'.

Similarly, I would have liked to do more with more elderly groups; the visit by the dementia group was one of the most rewarding with participants benefitting most – both during and after the visit.

#### What surprised you ... about the project? ...about working with others?

I didn't anticipate the impact that spending time with animals and outdoors would have on people – the feedback forms showed significant changes: amazing.

I was surprised by the number of children who had never been to a farm or to Dartmoor before.

The number of people who wanted to help, who wanted to give up time was humbling.

Partnerships and shared purpose between stakeholders became a very important feature of this project and the developing relationships inspiring.

#### Have there been any longer-term changes as a result of this funded project?

Project: The legacy of tools, equipment, buildings and infrastructure will ensure that future cost of delivery will be far reduced – thus increasing accessibility.

The knowledge, skills and confidence gained by volunteers will help future surveys of new sites. Community engagement and relationship building as a result of this project, specifically the Postbridge Cluster, will provide benefit for years to come.

Deeper relationships with school and youth groups alongside an increase in the East Shallowford Farm educational offer will maintain and increase young people's engagement in the natural world and in farming. Personally: I have gained a huge amount through my work as Conservation Officer: knowledge, skills, experience and confidence.

#### Anything else you would like to add?

This has been an inspiring project and it is important not to lose this good work which depends so much on relationships with communities. Further funding into the future is necessary to maintain these working partnerships and to continue to provide opportunities for public and school engagement and the achievement of conservation objectives.



## 8

## Conclusion

As demonstrated by this project, increasing peoples connectedness to nature and farming is hugely beneficial for the wellbeing of a wide range of community members as well as the UK's biodiversity.

However, for organisations such as ESF to deliver these outcomes, funding is vital. To be able to provide subsidised activities allows for marginalised audiences who may not otherwise be able to engage with spaces such as Dartmoor. The Trust is committed to continuing the work that it has started through this project and will continue to give people both within and outside Devon opportunities to experience farming and nature, and to work with landowners to conserve Dartmoor's wild spaces.

To Ellie and all at
Shallowford Farm
A huge Thank You for
the two visits you have
organised for BYP members
This year. Both were fautastic
experences and opportunities for
young people to learn about farm
life, and also how it relates to
the natural environment. Depite
living in a rural area, many of our
members have had little direct
experience of this before. They,
and their pavents, have been
very enthusiastic about the trips.
On behalf of your people,
statt, Tivstees and all - Thank you.
Resele. Booker BYP Administrate

Dear Ellie.

Thank you for straing your knowledge about nature and showing us how to build bird boxes for the suights. It was very interesting making for balls for them.

from

Serena, mya'e. Shana serena, what serena, what serena, mya'e. Shana serena, what serena, who serenastive for the serenastive serenasti





#### Annex 1.

## Example Feedback Form



### Green Recovery Challenge Visit to Shallowford Farm Feedback

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoyed the visit to the					
Farm					
I learnt new things					
I felt more connected to					
nature after visiting					
I felt more connected to					
farming after visiting					
I was more active that					
normal during the visit					
I felt calmer than normal					
during the visit					

Were there any special or interesting moments from this day you would like to
share with us?
Was there anything you feel we could have done better?
·



#### Diversity

What is the name of your school?		

What is your gender? Please tick	
Girl	
Boy	
Non-binary	
Prefer not to say	

How old are you? Please tick	
Under 5	
6-10	
11-14	
15-18	

What is your ethnic group? Please tick	
White	
Asian / Asian British	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	
Other	
Prefer not to say	

Thank you for filling out this form! It helps us to evidence the impact of the funding that we have received from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund.





The National Lottery Heritage Fund





#### Annex 2.

## Habitat management plan for East Shallowford Farm

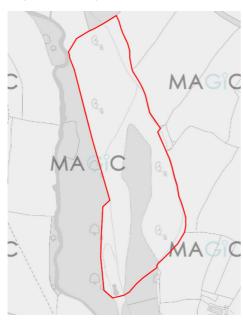


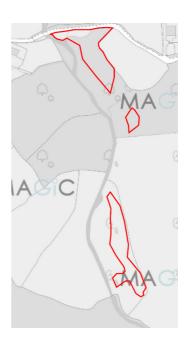
#### **Marsh Fritillary Green Recovery Project**

Farm name: East Shallowford Farm

Landowner(s) name: The Shallowford Trust

Map of area surveyed





#### **Adult Butterfly Survey Results**

Date of Survey	Surveyor	Type of Survey	Duration of Survey	Primary Species Recorded, number
09/06/2022	Eleanor Baker, Nigel Bowie	Timed count	102 mins	11

#### Web Survey Results:

Date of Survey	Surveyor	Type of Survey	Duration of Survey	Number of webs found
11/08/2022	Eleanor Baker & Nigel Bowie	Timed search	75 mins	10





**Habitat Condition:** The habitat is mostly suitable but would benefit from lighter grazing in following years

Frequency of Devil's Bit Scabious: ranging from frequent to occasional

**Sward Height:** The recommended sward height is between 8-25cm. The sward height was varied, with some areas below the recommended 8cm and others over 25cm.

**Scrub:** There is some encroaching scrub in the centre of the main area of marsh which is successing into young wet woodland in the more mature sections

#### **Habitat Improvement Recommendations**

- Works to reduce the area of gorse in the centre of the northern section of the marsh by cutting south facing channels into the gorse and the removal of the young birch trees growing within. Approximately 1/3 of scrub should be removed annually where it is beginning to encroach on suitable marsh fritillary habitat outside of the bird nesting season. This will help to maintain the habitat as well as providing benefit to other species
- Encouragement of livestock to the areas where the sward height is over 25cm and more tussocky by the potential instalment of a clapper bridge to allow cattle to reach this area more easily
- Reinstating the dry stone wall on the southern area of the marsh to allow more controlled grazing on the lower section which is suitable habitat for the marsh fritillary butterfly but is currently over grazed
- Planting of devil's bit scabious plugs to increase the density of the food plant available to the target species





The National Lattery Heritage Fund





## Annex 3.

# Five-year grassland restoration plan

# Shallowford Farm

Five year grassland restoration plan

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
May – Jun		Pull or spot spray	Pull or spot spray	Pull or spot spray	Pull or spot spray
		perennial weeds	perennial weeds	perennial weeds	perennial weeds
		(creeping	(creeping	(creeping	(creeping
		thistle/common	thistle/common	thistle/common	thistle/common
		nettle/hogweed/dock)	nettle/hogweed/dock)	nettle/hogweed/dock)	nettle/hogweed/dock)
Jun – Aug	Create short sward				
	(grazing/cutting) and				
	pare ground (narrow)				
July		Once yellow rattle has	Cut for hay late	Cut for hay late	Cut for hay late
		flowered and set seed	July/early August	July/early August	July/early August
		cut for hay/control			
		regrowth with topping			
Aug –	Broadcast seed on	Mow/lightly graze	Mow/lightly graze	Mow/lightly graze sward	Mow/lightly graze sward
Sept	prepared	sward to around 5-	sward to around 5-	to around 5-10cm for	to around 5-10cm for
	ground/spread green	10cm for remainder of	10cm for remainder of	remainder of growing	remainder of growing
	hay – follow with	growing season	growing season	season	season
	grazing to aid seed soil				
	contact (if spreading				
	green hay allow two				
	weeks before				
	introducing stock)				
- Bny	Graze when necessary				
Sept	to keep sward height				
	short				
March	Remove stock by end		Remove stock by end of Remove stock by end of	Remove stock by end of	Remove stock by end of
	of March		March	March	March





East Shallowford Farm, Widecombe in the Moor, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 7PW

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