



DECEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 3

# GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS

PROJECT NEWSLETTER



## Another busy summer

Despite all the restrictions that Covid-19 has instigated, and an unusual growing season, we have had another fantastic seed harvesting season, collecting over 1500kg of seed from 24 donor sites. Nearly all this has now been distributed to over 78 recipient sites across the Cotswolds, totalling another 81 hectares. We have already smashed our 3-year project target of 100 hectares on the way to restoration, and we are only at the end of year 2 - so we are absolutely delighted. The logistics of our restoration work have been helped hugely this year by two generous donations which have enabled us to purchase a new trailer for the seed harvester, making loading and unloading a much less perilous process, and a scarifier which can be towed behind the Land Rover to provide ground preparation services to sites which don't have their own machinery.

We carried out botanical surveys at all our donor and recipient sites, and have now recorded 249 plant species since our project began, adding a further 31 species to 2019's total. One of our sites had the most remarkable variation of Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra* present – the attached photo collage shows just a fraction of them. Many of our donor sites had a fantastic array of butterflies present too, with Chalkhill Blue, Adonis Blue, Small Blue, Small Copper, Small Heath, Brown Argus and Clouded Yellow all recorded along with commoner species. A local entomologist, Charles Dewhurst, also joined us on a couple of occasions and helped identify some of the other invertebrates present including a number of species of crickets and grasshoppers. **We are now looking for recipient sites for 2021 so if you are interested, or know of anyone who might be, please do get in touch.**

## Equine Workshop 2021

We are delighted to announce our Equine Land Management workshop will be on **24 May 2021**. Expert Frances Clayton will lead sessions on horse nutrition and health, practical pasture management, and landscape and biodiversity benefits of species-rich grasslands. There will be several outdoor sessions to look at soil health and examples of restoration in progress and established wildflower grasslands. The event will be at the impressive Farm-Ed centre near Milton-under-Wychwood and **[tickets can be purchased on their website](#)**. Please do share this with friends or colleagues who may be interested.



## New grant scheme

Our small grant scheme, which is designed to provide support to landowners with grants of up to £500 for capital items or works to assist with wildflower grassland projects, has been up and running since the summer. We have already offered two grants, one to support ground preparation and livestock fencing as part of a meadow restoration in Stanley Mount near Winchcombe, and another to support livestock fencing as part of a meadow restoration in Swainswick near Bath. Both are super projects with a huge amount of work being put in by the landowners. If you have a wildflower meadow project which needs financial support please do get in touch and visit the grant section of our [website](#).



## Volunteering update

With the first half of our winter works programme drawing to a close, we'd like to give a **huge** thanks to all our volunteers. Although we had a break from volunteering during Lockdown 2 we have still been able to carry out work on a number of sites. In September we joined forces with Chalford Biodiversity Group to work on a community wildflower area in the village. We also cleared and seeded a south-facing slope of a disused railway embankment near Andoversford, to provide a warm and sheltered habitat for butterflies and other invertebrates once the wildflowers have established. And our latest project has been to cut and rake off a large area of tor-grass from an old quarry near Woodmancote that was smothering all the delicate wildflowers underneath. This should give the wildflowers a new lease of life in spring. We have plenty of new projects to work on in 2021 so if you'd like to get involved, please do get in touch – everyone is welcome!



## And finally...

A bit of good news: in 2020, Windrush Village voted to leave their village green uncut for the first time in many years. The result? A fantastic display of calcareous wildflowers just waiting for their chance to grow including cowslips, lady's bedstraw, wild marjoram and these superb bee orchids. **Wishing all our volunteers and supporters a very happy Christmas break – see you in the New Year!** (photo: Rich Tyler)

