



**Cotswolds
National
Landscape**

DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024

GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS



PROGRAMME NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We've had a busy few months - with challenging weather and conditions, but a consistently high level of participation - from landowners and managers, to volunteers and partner organisations. Read on for all the details!

Payment rates increase

We are delighted with Defra's recent announcement that the payment rate for GS6 (management of species-rich grassland) has been increased from £186/ha to £646/ha – a significant increase which is a positive step towards valuing landowners who look after good quality priority habitat. This rate will also reward landowners who are able to increase the species-richness of any existing grassland sufficiently to become eligible for GS6. Our project (run by the Cotswolds National Landscape) can help with all aspects of grassland restoration and management – from advice and assessment of existing grassland (to establish if it already qualifies as priority habitat for GS6 or if it is suitable for restoration) – to ground preparation and seeding with local brush-harvested wildflower seed. We have a number of funding sources available which can help with capital costs of restoration (which is outside the scope of GS6) and, in some cases, management costs until the restored grassland is eligible for GS6. Please get in touch to arrange a site visit or discuss your grassland plans with us.



Valued priority habitat

Habitat management

The current autumn/winter habitat management programme is off to a fantastic start. In September we worked with the Miserden Estate to cut green hay from some species-rich banks to spread on nearby areas that were less species-rich. We have also worked with the Buckinghamshire, Berkshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust to open up a wildflower-rich quarry nature reserve on the Oxfordshire border, the National Trust at Sherborne Park Estate to manage an area of overgrown species-rich grassland, and with several private landowners to manage habitat for rare wildflowers such as the fly orchid. We are out most Wednesdays until late March, so if you'd like to join us, please get in touch with Anna.



Budgehill before and after habitat management work

Windrush floodplain

Throughout summer 2023, we were involved in an exciting project with FWAG, the North-East Cotswold Farm Cluster Group & the Floodplain Meadows Partnership, looking at restoration potential for floodplain meadows along the River Windrush. Landowner engagement has been fantastic, with a near-continuous ribbon of land from Stow to Burford (and beyond) surveyed. A number of meadows containing the rare 'MG4' floodplain meadow plant community were identified and we are currently working on restoration plans for the area to join up existing and create new areas of this important habitat.



Floodplain meadow

Huge thank you!

Our team would like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped us in our surveying, seed harvesting and seed spreading operations in 2023. The wet summer made the conditions for seed harvesting quite tricky, and we had to charge out to collect seed on the dry days, with sessions often requiring last minute changes because of the forecast and conditions. Despite this, we managed to go out harvesting 55 times over the summer, often with two seed harvesters running, and collected approximately 1856kg of seed. This allowed us to sow 84 ha of land with our local wildflower seed, kickstarting these habitats on their way to becoming all-important species rich wildflower grassland in the Cotswolds.



Volunteering in all weathers - a good day above!



Common lizard

Making a home for...

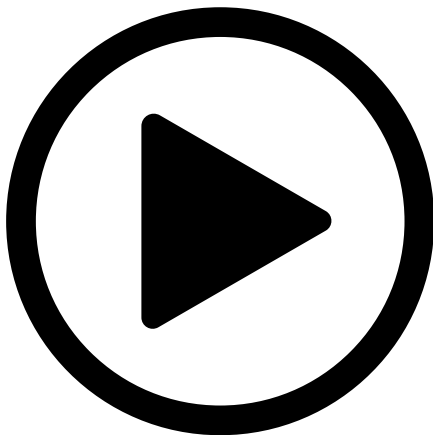
...the Common Lizard. Another species which can be found within the grassland habitats which we are creating is the common lizard, also known as the viviparous lizard (because females 'give birth' to inch-long miniature lizards, which have developed inside the body of the parent). Lizards can be found in a range of habitats including grassy and scrubby habitats, heathland, and woodland rides. They require mosaic habitats with lots of sunny edges for basking, such as brash piles, low logs and open grassy tufts. Cotswold stone walls can be brilliant basking spots and connected habitat for lizards, along with the grasslands we work to restore, since they provide plenty of invertebrate life for the lizards to feed on.



Harvey

Farewell to Harvey

Some big programme news to start the new year is that Harvey, having been with us at CNL for five years, is moving on to pastures new. Harvey has helped shape the fortunes of our Glorious Cotswold Grasslands operation – moving it away from being dependant on grant funding, to being a self-sustaining business unit. Along with Anna (and more recently Lorna) he has truly made a positive impact on grassland creation and restoration throughout the Cotswolds National Landscape. We are sure our partners, landowners, and volunteers will all join us in thanking Harvey for all he has done and achieved, and wish him success in his new working position. Harvey will officially be leaving at the beginning of February to move into a local river catchment restoration role. The GCG team will now be working on a handover and plan for another busy season ahead.



Presenting Glorious Cotswold Grasslands

If you're interested in hearing Anna and Lorna talk more about the programme, the financing options for grassland habitat management, and how you can get involved, click [here](#) to watch a recorded presentation.