



NOVEMBER 2021 | ISSUE 4

# GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS

PROJECT NEWSLETTER



## Summer seed harvesting

Despite an unpredictable growing season, we have had another fantastic seed harvesting season, collecting 1520kg of seed from 33 donor sites. Nearly all of this has now been distributed to over 60 sites across the Cotswolds, totalling another 53 hectares of wildflower grassland restored. In total, over the initial 3 years of the project, we have restored over 200 hectares of wildflower meadow, doubling the original target of 100 hectares – an amazing achievement!

Whilst the focus of our project is the dry calcareous grassland typical of much of the Cotswolds, we have also worked on neutral grassland and some stunning floodplain meadows. We have also taken the opportunity to revisit some of our year 1 restoration sites and have been delighted with the results – swathes of yellow rattle together with rarer species such as orchids and adder's tongue fern appearing, taking advantage of the space created by the yellow rattle which is semi-parasitic on grasses.



*Year 1 restoration site near Donnington.*

## Last chance for grant applications

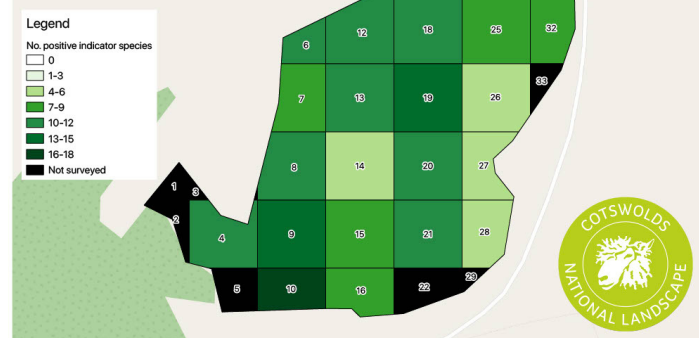
Our small grant scheme, which is able to provide support to landowners with grants of up to £500 for capital items or works to assist with wildflower grassland projects, has now made a further three grants: to help with fencing and signage in Stow-on-the-Wold, and to support meadow cutting regimes at two sites in Woodstock and Broadway. If you have a wildflower meadow project which needs financial support please do get in touch and visit the grant section of our website – all applications need to be in by 28 February 2022 when the grants programme comes to an end.

# Biodiversity focus

We carried out botanical surveys at all our donor sites and recipient sites this summer and have now recorded 311 plant species since our project began – showing the incredible diversity of plants which can be found in grassland habitats. We have been using a new method of surveying known as grid square mapping for our recipient sites which produces heat maps of grassland indicator species. By resurveying sites at regular intervals we will be able to see how this species richness changes over time as wildflowers establish.

An Oxford University student has been carrying out a research project on a number of our sites this summer, looking at ground beetle diversity on unimproved sites as compared to restoration sites. He is currently finalising his project report and we will share his findings in the next newsletter.

Glorious Cotswold Grasslands  
Grid Square Mapping Example  
50m grid



Example biodiversity heatmap of the Cotswolds

# Volunteering update

We would like to say a HUGE thank you to our volunteers for all their help with botanical surveys, seed harvesting and seed spreading over the last few months – there is no way we could do it without you! Thanks to our Esmée Fairbairn funding, we were able to offer a series of training sessions to our volunteers this summer on botanical surveying, wildflower and grass ID and scything, all of which were very well attended and enjoyed by all. We hope to run a similar programme next year so please do check our website and emails for updates.

We have now started our autumn/winter volunteer habitat management days, held fortnightly on a Wednesday. So far this autumn we have cut and spread green hay at a site near Hinchwick, cut back scrub near Fairford and are currently working on a project to open up some lovely calcareous grassland glades in a woodland near Stroud. Future plans include opening up roadside verges at Ruscombe and scrub clearance near Withington. We are always looking for new volunteers so if you are interested in coming along, please do get in touch – everyone is welcome and no experience needed – all tools/training/tea & cake provided.



*Volunteers on a scything course near Burford.*

# Inspired young artists

This summer, we launched a Glorious Cotswold Grasslands arts competition, aimed at 11 - 19 year olds. The judging panel, consisting of Jim Parkyn, Hatty Staniforth, and Anna Field, met recently to announce the winners. The overall winner is Ruby Pritchett (a detail of her entry is shown here). The judges found her work uplifting, and loved the inclusion of wildflowers such as wild carrot and oxeye daisies. The inclusion of seed pods and seed dispersal is also a great nod to the seed collecting work carried out by the GCG project. We will be organising an online gallery of entries, as well as a physical exhibition. More news to follow!



Winning entries shown are:

- *Top right - Competition winner: Ruby Pritchett*
- *Below left - Runner-up: Ellie Rowlands - the judges loved her colour use, composition and the mix of wildflowers included in her painting.*
- *Below middle - Winner, 11-15 age category: Daisy Davis (aged 13).*
- *Below right - Winner, 16-19 age category: Daniel Vollborth (aged 17)*



## And finally...

Great news for the future of Glorious Cotswold Grasslands. Earlier this year we entered into a partnership with Severn Trent Water as part of their Great Big Nature Boost to restore 60 hectares of wildflower grassland over the next 3 years. This, combined with several other potential funding streams and the huge success of the project to date has enabled Cotswold National Landscape to move the project onto a permanent footing, meaning we will be working to restore Cotswolds grassland for many years to come.

