



WINTER 2025

GLORIOUS COTSWOLD GRASSLANDS

Cotswolds
National
Landscape



PROGRAMME NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We've had a busy year - with changes to funding schemes, changes in the Glorious Cotswold grasslands team, and routine programme work continuing at pace.

Restoring Uley Common

From Chris Shaw (volunteer)

In 2023, GCG put out a social media post aimed at parish councils with public grassland areas. We knew one Uley councillor was getting a biodiversity policy in place for the village (now a mandatory requirement). Lorna visited and advised on the policy, and her professional report helped get the policy over the line. GCG followed up with a habitat management day to restore a calcareous bank on the millennium green. By then, we had an enthusiastic group of around 30 residents who formed the Uley Trees and Meadows group in order to action the biodiversity policy.

One exciting area to restore was Uley Common - a remnant of the historic Westhill common. It's an island of unimproved calcareous grassland surrounded by pasture, arable and woodland. Over the winter several work parties put in place GCG habitat management. We cut and raked the grass, knocked back bramble, cut back encroaching hazel and hawthorn until we had cleared a substantial area. We built dead hedges using brash left over from ash clearance carried out by a local firewood merchant.

In early spring, the common was covered in primroses and lesser celandine - a very promising start. In June, the Stroud Wildlife Survey group carried out a baseline survey, and we found around 30 species including yellow rattle and lady's bedstraw.

The great thing about the group is that it built new connections between many local people to each other and their local environment, increased local knowledge of grasslands and biodiversity and improved a fabulous village asset.



Uley Common

Funding changes

2025 has been a frustrating year for funding. June brought the disappointing news that the entire Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) programme, including the options for species-rich grassland restoration, was being suspended with immediate effect. This left many of the landowners we work alongside unable to action their plans to restore grassland. Thankfully, the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme had just been extended until next year and this had provided a valuable bridge to fund capital restoration works in 2025. We hope that the newly restored meadows will be at the front of the queue to receive DEFRA funding for ongoing management when the SFI reopens in 2026. Additionally, the government has recently confirmed the “30 by 30 for nature” commitment which will provide funding to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. Grassland restoration will be able to access some of these funds.

A new face

This spring a familiar face took up a new role, as Programme Officer with the Glorious Cotswold Grasslands team. Cerian grew up in the Cotswolds and started volunteering with GCG three years ago, when she moved back to the area and the family farm. The programme seeded seven acres of grassland on her North Cotswold site and a happy partnership began. With a background in conservation and ecology, Cerian is delighted to be furthering her botanical skills and to be able to spend time with the GCG volunteers. She is looking forward to helping bring even more of the Cotswolds back into bloom.



Cerian Brogan

Species focus

As we head into winter we might think that colourful variety is absent from our fields. But in fact, grasslands, particularly ancient permanent pasture, support a huge range of fungus that come into their own in the cooler months. A particularly pretty group of fungus are the waxcaps. There are over 40 species and with names such as, crimson, pink, golden and parrot waxcap you can imagine they are a glamorous bunch! Small mushrooms with a recognisable domed cap that comes in all colours, some even have pleasant smells of honey and cedar. Just like wildflower diversity they provide a reliable indicator of the health of the habitat. Their underground mycelium can be damaged by compaction or ploughing, and can take decades to recover. The charity Plantlife are currently doing a citizen science project to report waxcaps. If you are out and about keep an eye for these gorgeous grassland jewels.



A variety of waxcaps

A massive thank you



Fly orchid rosette emerging in a new glade



GCG volunteers - holding the line.

The early part of this year saw a real variety of Cotswold Grasslands on our habitat days. Some new sites got their first taste of GCG management and others have been managed by our volunteers 5 years running. In some cases we aimed at broad interventions of scrub clearance on priority grassland habitats, and others we managed specifically for rare species known to inhabit the site, such as fly orchid and Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

We were lucky enough to work on the stunning Brassey Reserve and Windrush Valley SSSI. Another part of the reserve is managed by the Wildlife trust, and we also worked on a parcel close upstream. This spring and autumn we've restored over 10ha adjacent to these ancient sites. It's fantastic to contribute in this way to the vision of nature recovery set out by John Lawton of 'more, bigger, better, joined up'.

Our spring and summer season saw new botanists joining our surveys and then huge amounts of help bringing in our flower seed harvest. We gathered over 3 tonnes of seed from donor sites stretching from Bath to Bredon along the whole length and breadth of the Cotswolds. The hot summer meant that we were out harvesting most days and were able to get the seed dried easily. We have already spread the seed onto well over 100ha of promising restoration sites including 17ha of rare floodplain meadow. Our volunteers were amazing on both of these labour intensive jobs. Anna captured their effective line holding while we were sowing at Sapperton Wilder, a lovely regenerative farm site near Cirencester.

We are now back into habitat management and the cycle continues! As always we need to underline that we could not do this without all the wonderful volunteers. Thank you!

Contact us

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