



Shropshire

News

30th January 2012

Love your local greenspace

A two-year environmental community project is starting up on the western fringes of Telford, including areas around Newdale, Lightmoor, Lawley, Dawley and Buildwas. The New Works wildlife project is being run by Shropshire Wildlife Trust with funding awarded by UK Coal's Huntington Lane Community Fund.

The project aims to establish a local wildlife group to carry out wildlife surveys during the spring and summer and practical conservation tasks in the autumn and winter. "We want to engage local people and make a positive impact on the local environment," said Bryony Carter, New Works project officer.

There will also be a series of fun family sessions including bug hunts, pond dipping, fungi forays, newt surveys and much more.

"We are looking for people to show that they care about their local wild places and are ready to get involved in looking after them. No previous skills are needed, just enthusiasm and a passion to protect these beautiful green spaces," says Bryony. If you'd like to find out about how you can be involved with the New Works project please contact [Bryony Carter](#) on 01743 284 290.

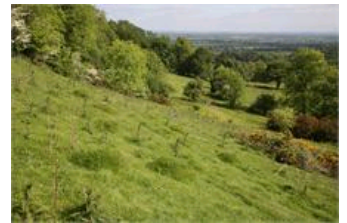


11th January 2012

Shropshire Wildlife Trust celebrates 50th anniversary

Shropshire Wildlife Trust celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Founded on 12th July, 1962, the Trust was formed at a time of rapid change in the countryside. "The passion and determination of those early pioneers means that some of the very best wild places in the county were saved and protected as nature reserves," said Colin Preston, Director of the Trust.

Today the Trust is the county's leading environmental champion supported by 10,000 members, around 30 staff and hundreds of volunteers. "We give Shropshire's wildlife a voice, speaking up for the whole web of life - birds, butterflies, dormice, frogs, newts - every kind of wildlife and the places they inhabit," said Colin Preston. The charity looks after 37 nature reserves around the county, managing these places for a vast range of wildlife, including some very rare species such as the pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly, water vole and marsh helleborines.



Shropshire Wildlife Trust also campaigns for wildlife. The Trust lobbies planners to protect wild habitats within urban areas as well as the countryside; it spoke out forcefully against the selling off of the nation's forests and is currently campaigning alongside Wildlife Trusts across the UK to protect our seas.

The Trust runs many events to spread enjoyment and knowledge of the natural world for people of all ages. "We encourage children to let their imaginations fly and discover the many pleasures of outdoor play," says Colin Preston.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary the Trust will be arranging a series of wildlife spectacles - special events all around the county exploring Shropshire's abundance of natural wonders. The first of these is a guided walk in the south Shropshire hills to see flocks of ravens at dusk on Sunday 12th February. The Darwin Festival 11th -19th February, will also include celebratory events, most notably a talk and walk by TV wildlife presenter Nick Baker. The main 50th anniversary event programme will run from the spring, details of which will be included in an events brochure available in March. See www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk for further details.

3rd January 2012

Young people get muddy for wildlife

Eleven young people from the Prince's Trust have put on their wellies and are digging deep with their spades at Shropshire Wildlife Trust this week to make a pond and boggy area in the garden. The wildlife pond will provide an ideal location for children's pond dipping events and hopefully inspire visitors to make a pond in their own gardens. Mud is the most visible feature at the moment, but when the area is planted up and spring arrives, it will rapidly be transformed into a beautiful feature.

This is part of a 12-week personal development programme undertaken by the group, who are making the pond as a contribution to their local community.



30th November

New attack on nature

The Wildlife Trusts today voice exasperation at George Osborne's autumn budget statement which includes plans to review the rules which protect some of the most important wildlife sites in England.

"It seems that the Chancellor is not content with the massive shake-up of the planning system that is already under way, and which initially failed to recognise Local Wildlife Sites1. Now sites and species of European importance face an uncertain future in England. When will the Government recognise

that our natural resources are finite?" asked The Wildlife Trusts' Chief Executive Stephanie Hilborne OBE.

The Government's own National Ecosystem Assessment² and Natural Environment White Paper³, both published in June this year, promised us much more than this. They were to herald a step change in nature's fortunes. And Special Areas of Conservation (SACs⁴) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs⁵) are a key part of the foundation upon which nature's recovery across England will depend. Yet taking England's much depleted wildlife into a more positive future is clearly far from the Chancellor's agenda.

Stephanie added: "The Wildlife Trusts are well known for taking a pragmatic and constructive stance in its dealings with developers and local authorities on the ground and with the national Government. Now we have to lost patience with the Treasury. The wrong outcome from this review risks driving a wedge between developers and conservationists at time when we ought to be co-operating more than ever.

"At a time of recession we should look to the long-term. The coalition Government during the Second World War placed nature at the centre of post-war reconstruction."

Special Areas of Conservation were established under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas established under the EU Birds Directive. Such sites are the very foundation of environmental protection on land and at sea in England. They are key to our quality of life and to the future of iconic places⁷ in a densely populated country like our own.

Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscape, added:

"We are deeply concerned that Government is considering reviewing the implementation of both the EU Birds and Habitats Directives in England, in an attempt to ease the way for major developments on land and on our coasts."

Joan Edwards, Head of Living Seas, said:

"It would be appalling if this review created yet another barrier to protecting wildlife at sea. We were already 60 years behind conservation on land when the 2009 Marine Act was to have started a new era".

Thirteen off-shore SACs were announced by the European Commission only last week giving hope to The Wildlife Trusts' long-running campaign for marine protected areas⁸.

The chairs and chief executives of the 47 Wildlife Trusts met last week and heard from the New Economics Foundation about the urgent need for a fundamentally different economic model that takes into account that our natural resources are being rapidly depleted. Only such a dramatic shift will secure a society that can thrive whilst addressing climate change and reversing the loss of biodiversity.

Stephanie Hilborne concluded: "Economic growth should not be achieved at the cost of our natural life support systems."

NOTES

1 Local Wildlife Sites: There are more than 40,000 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in England which cover an area of at least 711,201 hectares; equating to an area 4.5 times the area of Greater London (assuming Greater London is 1,572km²). The number of Local Wildlife Sites lost to, or damaged by, built development in England in 2010 was at least 172. Of these, at least 25 were lost completely. This figure could have been much higher without the degree of protection under the current planning system. All 37 individual Wildlife Trusts in England are actively engaged in the planning system, reviewing more than 70,000 planning applications last year.

Collectively, Local Wildlife Sites play a critical conservation role by providing wildlife refuges, acting as stepping stones, corridors and buffer zones to link and protect nationally, and internationally, designated sites. Together with statutory protected areas, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), they support locally, and often nationally, threatened species and habitats. With SSSIs they are the starting point for Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs).

2 The UK National Ecosystem Assessment states: "The natural world, its biodiversity and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision-making."

3 The Natural Environment White Paper (chapter three paragraph 3.6) states "The Government is committed to putting the value of natural capital at the heart of our economic thinking."

4 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

SACs are areas which have been given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive. They provide increased protection to a variety of wild animals, plants and habitats and are a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world's biodiversity. Find out more about them on <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/sac/default.aspx>

5 Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

SPAs are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the 'Birds Directive 1979' which provides enhanced protection given by the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status all SPAs also hold. Find out more about them on <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/spa/default.aspx>

6 The campaign to protect nature's wildlife sites began in 1912 with Charles Rothschild.

7 Sites with European protection include key forests like Epping (Essex), Ashdown (Sussex), the Chiltern Beechwoods (Bucks, Oxon etc) and the New Forest (Hants). Other much-loved areas include Cannock Chase (Staffs), Rutland Water, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads, North Pennine Dales and Moors, and the Stiperstones (Shrops). Coastal and marine sites include Flamborough Head (Yorks), Dawlish Warren (Devon), Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly coast (Cornwall), the Farne Islands (Northumberland), Chesil Beach, Lyme Bay and Lizard Point in the South West, and Morecombe Bay (Lancs). Famous rivers benefiting from protection include the Tweed (Northumberland borders), and the Itchen (Hants).

8The Wildlife Trusts' Living Seas campaign <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/petitionfish>

The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) [wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK. All are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We have more than 800,000 members including 150,000 members of our junior branch [Wildlife Watch](#). Our vision is to create [A Living Landscape](#) and secure [Living Seas](#). We

November 10th

Landlocked Shropshire stands up for the sea

Hundreds of Shropshire people have signed their names on silver scales for a petition fish, part of a national campaign run by the Wildlife Trusts, calling on the Government to implement the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 by designating a strong chain of marine conservation zones. "We may be a landlocked county, but Shropshire people care passionately about the sea and its rich wildlife," said Bryony Carter, Shropshire Wildlife Trust's marine champion.



After years of pressure from NGOs, and with huge public support, the Marine and Coastal Access Act of 2009 promised a coherent network of protection around the coast of England by 2012. A total of 127 marine sites around England's coast were recommended by four regional stakeholder groups to become marine conservation zones next year.

The recommendations are the result of two years of consultation with more than one million stakeholders involved including fishermen, conservationists and businesses. This has been the first 'Big Society' experiment where local stakeholders have decided together which areas of the sea should be protected.

There is now considerable concern that the Government's Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee) will recommend to Government that only a fraction of the 127 recommended sites are designated. This would result in a much smaller and less effective network of marine conservation zones, leaving vulnerable and precious areas unprotected.

Joan Edwards, The Wildlife Trusts' Head of Living Seas, said: "A huge amount of work has been done to get a broad agreement on this network of sites needed for the health and future productivity of our marine environment. Now, however, in the final stages the Government has lost its direction and is proposing to over-ride the recommendations of local stakeholders and cut the 127 sites down to an unrealistic 30 in contradiction with the aims of the new Marine and Coastal Access Act.

"With Wildlife Trusts all around the UK, we are lobbying hard for the successful completion of a process that will make the difference between life or death for our seas. We need to demonstrate the weight of public support for marine conservation zones to Government. This is a once in a lifetime chance. We can't afford to let it slip away."

The Wildlife Trusts are urging people to write to Richard Benyon and ask for Government to create the proposed network of 127 sites in England. It has produced some guidance on writing to the minister, which can be found at www.wildlifetrusts.org/saveourmczs.

October 25th

A farmer who grows bird food stocked in Shropshire Wildlife Trust's shop has won the top prize in the 'Oscars' of conservation awards for the second time, a first in the Silver Lapwing Awards 34-year history.

The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group's Silver Lapwing Award is awarded annually to farmers who go above and beyond in their quest to farm sensitively and sustainably. It is aimed at farmers and landowners who demonstrate outstanding commitment to good environmental practices. It rewards land managers who can show a three year track record of good practice in a commercially successful farming enterprise. This year the award was sponsored by Waitrose in association with Coombe Farm.



Nicholas Watts was also awarded an MBE in 2006 for his wildlife conservation work and wildlife -friendly management of his farm.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust's [visitor centre](#) and shop opposite Shrewsbury Abbey is open from 10am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday.

October 19th

Government planning proposals threaten wildlife

Shropshire Wildlife Trust's director, Colin Preston, has written to all the county's MPs in protest at the government's controversial proposals for the planning system and called for changes to the policy to protect wildlife.

"The draft National Planning Policy Framework, which outlines current government planning reforms, is an explosively destructive document, threatening countryside and green spaces all over England," said Colin Preston. It proposes a presumption in favour of development, a guiding principle which leaves county wildlife sites exposed to the speculation of property developers. Wildlife Sites represent the best surviving wildlife habitats beyond the legally protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The only protection these sites currently have is through the planning process and this will be stripped away.

"The government's Natural Environment White Paper, published in June 2011, emphasised the economic and social value of the natural environment. It also endorsed the need for a landscape-scale approach to securing nature's recovery. These planning proposals effectively scupper the chances of the vision being implemented," said Colin Preston.

In Shrewsbury such changes in legislation could see planning applications approved which have little regard for the environment or the communities who live close by. Currently, an application for 62 houses is under consideration within the Rea Brook Valley, overlapping the floodplain and close to the Local Nature Reserve. Such applications could slip through a weakened system without proper consideration.

A very real threat would be the possible submission of a planning application for a significant number of houses over the two or three years with respect to the UK Coal Opencast site of New Works. This would threaten the landscape of the western fringes of Telford. The opportunity to consolidate a Wrekin Forest for the benefit of the whole borough could be lost due to weakened planning legislation.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is urging the government to make the following changes:

remove the primacy given to economic development in the draft NPPF and reinstate the importance of the natural environment;

require local plans to identify Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs). The Natural Environment White Paper introduced the concept of NIAs: large areas where nature's restoration would have greater priority. Land use planning will be critical to achieving NIAs and yet they have no mention in the draft NPPF;

protect Local Wildlife Sites – there are 40,000 Local Wildlife Sites in England (602 in Shropshire).

14th October

A natural legacy

Will for Wildlife Week 17 – 21 October 2011

From ancient woods, to bogs and bird-rich wetlands, gifts in wills can help Shropshire Wildlife Trust protect some of our most precious species and habitats. During Will for Wildlife Week, from Monday 17 to Friday 21 October, Wildlife Trusts across the UK are encouraging wildlife-lovers to leave a legacy that will help protect nature for future generations.

Wildlife Trusts manage more than 2,300 special wild places across the UK, including heathland, wildflower meadows and urban nature reserves. A gift in a will can play a vital role in allowing this work to continue. Bequests to Shropshire Wildlife Trust have helped purchase nature reserves such as Catherton Common in the Clee Hills and the Crickheath extension to Llyncllys Hill in the Oswestry Hills.

Gifts in wills, of any size, help support The Wildlife Trusts work to protect our species and habitats that are under threat. Someone who remembers their local Wildlife Trust in their will could help to create a new nature reserve for wild creatures to colonise and for people to enjoy, help with work to protect a specific species, such as erecting nest boxes for swifts, or support our work to educate and empower local communities to take action for wildlife.

Sir David Attenborough, Vice-President of The Wildlife Trusts, said:

"A legacy to your local Wildlife Trust is a very special gift that can do remarkable things to help the wildlife treasures on your doorstep. Please, consider remembering The Wildlife Trusts in your will."

Kate Barker, Membership and Legacies Manager for The Wildlife Trusts, added:

"We believe many people would like to write, or update, their will to reflect their current situation but simply haven't got round to it yet. A clearly written will, kept updated throughout your life, is essential to ensure that your wishes are respected."

For further information please contact John Hughes at Shropshire Wildlife Trust (01743 284287).

4th October

Wrekin's ancient history protected

Shropshire Wildlife Trust's volunteers are doing their bit to save 2,500 years of history on the Wrekin.

The Wrekin Forest Volunteers, along with staff from the Raby Estate (owners of the Wrekin) and the Trust's Telford officer, Pete Lambert, are working on the hillfort for three days (Monday-Wednesday) this week to repair the effects of millions of feet tramping up to the summit.

A bronze age barrow exposed by erosion is being covered with matting and sown with grass seed to protect it from further damage. Hell Gate, the earthwork entrance created by the Cornovii, has also suffered extensive erosion and is being restored.

The Wrekin is also regaining a little height this week. The triangulation point had dropped about 1½ feet over the last few years as its stone base had worn away. The volunteers have built it up again, a fantastic landmark seen from hilltops around and beyond the county.

6th September 2011

Saving species

The story of Whitchurch's water voles will be broadcast on Radio 4's Saving Species on and Thursday 15th September at 9pm and is available now on [BBC iPlayer](#) approx 15 mins and 43 seconds into the programme.

Kate Long of the Whitchurch Water Vole Group will talk about these beautiful, russet-furred creatures, the problems they face to survive and what can be done to help them.

See [About a Brook](#) for Kate's blog about the Whitchurch water voles.

July 20th

Saving our seas

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is launching a petition fish campaign, collecting signatures in support of marine protected areas around the UK's seas. You can [sign](#) the fish here.

The Trust is asking people to sign silver fish scales which will be attached to giant blue fish and ultimately delivered to the House of Commons.

Years of campaigning by the Wildlife Trusts and other conservation organisations led to the Marine & Coastal Act in 2009. The purpose of this new campaign is to make sure the Act is implemented properly and that a strong network of marine protected areas is designated.

The UK has a fabulously rich marine life, with many diverse habitats from estuary and mudflat, to high-rise cliff-top and craggy coastline. It is home to the world's second biggest fish - the plankton-eating basking shark - stunning coral gardens and that master of camouflage, the cuttlefish.

Britain and Ireland serve as summer feeding grounds for whales, including minke whales, pilots and orcas, and as a year-round habitat for dolphins and porpoises. As well as the bottlenose dolphin, the white-beaked, common, Atlantic white-sided and Risso's dolphin are also seen off our coasts.

"Many of these marvellous creatures are declining and their future existence is threatened by commercial fishing, dredging, pollution and industrial activities. It is essential that we establish a network of marine protected areas to safeguard them," said Bryony Carter of Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Fish scales can be signed at Shropshire Wildlife Trust and the giant fish will also be appearing at events around the county and in schools over the coming months.

July 19th

Culling is not the cure

The Wildlife Trusts today express disappointment at the Government's decision to pursue yet more trials of badger culling, as The Wildlife Trusts do not see culling as the solution to the problem of bovine tuberculosis (bTB).

To press ahead with these pilots ignores the main body of scientific evidence relating to culling, which shows that at best it is ineffective, and at worst can exacerbate the problem.

The Wildlife Trusts acknowledge bTB is a significant problem that causes hardship for many in the farming community but believe there will be no winners from continuing to pursue badger culling as an option.

Paul Wilkinson, Head of Living Landscape for The Wildlife Trusts, said: "This issue demands a scientific and practical approach. The rationale for - and practicality of - any cull of native species needs to be extremely clear and well proven. In this case it is not.

"Today's announcement of trialling shooting of badgers in pilot areas is still based on the assumption that culling can be a viable solution.

The Wildlife Trusts strongly support the development of the bTB vaccine for cattle and an oral vaccine for badgers. It welcomes the Government's continued funding for this and urges that there is commitment to ensuring this concludes, and to subsequent wide-scale deployment. The leading conservation organisation sees vaccines as a critical 'tool in the toolkit' to help break the disease cycle and significantly reduce the levels of infection in cattle. It seeks a clearer timetable and strategy for vaccination to bring us closer the solution so urgently needed.

Paul Wilkinson continued: "There is already an injectable vaccine available for badgers, yet last year the Government cut funding for trialling it.

"Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust embarked on the first such injectable vaccination trial, of its own initiative, at the end of June. Looking at the deployment of injectable vaccines should help find wider solutions for dealing with this disease."

The Wildlife Trusts are keen for the farming community, conservation organisations and the Government to continue to work together to confront this disease.

[Details of the Government's proposals](#)

July 18th

Summer holiday events

A Robin Hood day and an Elf Experience are among an action-packed series of events taking place at Shropshire Wildlife Trust's visitor centre in Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury over the summer holidays. Several craft making sessions have been arranged, including opportunities to make musical instruments, bird mobiles, puppets and jewellery out of recycled materials.

A special marine day will celebrate the sea and all that lives in it, with a hermit house hunt and a great cod run in the garden. Back on dry land, a bushcraft session will give children the chance to make a shelter from tree branches and cook jam twists over a campfire.

For a full programme our [What's on](#) pages or pick up the events brochure direct from Shropshire Wildlife Trust between 10am-4.30pm Monday to Saturday.

There is a charge of £3 per child per event and all children should be accompanied by an adult. Booking essential (01743 284280) or email katep@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

June 28th

Farmland wildlife under threat

Ahead of the European Union budget announcement on Wednesday (29 June), The Wildlife Trusts are raising concerns that funding for farmers and landowners, who manage their land with wildlife in mind, may be hit.

Money for environment schemes which support wildlife-friendly farming may be in the firing line for budget cuts and Shropshire Wildlife Trust, which regularly works with farmers and landowners, is deeply concerned about the future of such schemes over the next few years.

Across the UK conservation organisations for all wildlife will lobby to ensure that the environmental priorities, and corresponding funding requirements, are enhanced.

"I can think of dozens of farms in Shropshire that have benefited from this funding," said Fiona Gomersall, Shropshire Wildlife Trust's conservation officer. "These grants often make the difference between a farm being viable and it failing; for others it is simply the incentive which encourages them to adopt wildlife-friendly techniques and without which flower-rich grasslands are all too likely to be ploughed up in favour of more lucrative crops."

Several wetland creation schemes have been financed in Shropshire through these environment schemes, giving a life-line to the fast-declining lapwing and other wading birds. Across the county schemes have helped farmers pay for hedgerow restoration, fencing and appropriate livestock so that they can manage their land in ways that help wildlife. "The future of our best wild places hangs in the balance. Take away these financial incentives and many of them will be lost," said Fiona.

"Funding through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and specifically Pillar II, is critical to supporting this action for wildlife now, and in future, to secure nature's recovery. If Wednesday brings proposed cuts to this vital funding, it will be huge steps backwards.

"We must all fight for this funding to be retained for it is support for wildlife-friendly farming practices which help to achieve a healthy long-term future for farmers, communities and wildlife," said Paul Wilkinson of The Wildlife Trusts.

In the UK, more than £3bn per year is provided to support farmers. The outcomes agreed in the current reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will have a huge influence over how farmland across the UK is managed from 2014-2020, as well as setting the direction for agricultural policy.

The Wildlife Trusts urge this Government to press for the retention of the overall scale of funding to protect and enhance the natural environment.

June 1st

Orchids

Nothing beats a wild orchid growing in its natural situation; common spotted and pyramidal in old, undisturbed meadows, twayblade and greater butterfly in ancient woods, bee orchids in short turf on shallow soils. Watching them appear, they tell us the season; their brief flowering a moment to be cherished as the year spins out.

Download a guide to [40 of the UK's best orchid sites](#).

27th May 2011

Peregrines at the Wrekin

Come along to the Forest Glen car park, at the foot of the Wrekin 10am - 4pm, Thursday June 2nd - Sunday 5th to see peregrine falcon chicks in their nest, high on a rock ledge. Telescopes will be on hand to give people a chance to view the nest and four chicks.

Peregrines are spectacular fliers, catching their prey in flight at speeds of over 100mph. [Find out more about peregrines](#)

26th May 2011

Dusk, dawn and daylight on a nature reserve

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is inviting people to come along to Wood Lane nature reserve, Colemere, during twilight hours on Tuesday May 31st and Wednesday June 1st for a series of special wildlife experiences.

From 8pm -10pm on Tuesday May 31st there will be a chance to listen and watch birds as they come settle down to roost in trees and on the lagoon and to look for signs of nocturnal wildlife, including bats, which will be recorded with a bat detector. Humane mammal traps and a moth trap will be set, to be looked at the following day.

The early morning event on Wednesday June 1st will start at 4.30am to catch the marvellous crescendo of birdsong. It's the perfect time to see all kinds of wildlife, some of it rarely seen in daylight hours. Breakfast will be available after the walk.

From 10am – 12pm people can join us to check the mammal and moth traps and stay if they wish, for a bring-your-own picnic session.

All ages are very welcome for this event though children will need to be supervised. The cost is £2.50 per person per session or £6.50 for all three. Please ring 01743 284280 to book your place.

19th May

Pylons a threat to woods and wildlife

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is opposed to National Grid's plan to erect pylons from mid-Wales across Shropshire.

A number of routes have been suggested all of which either cross or pass within close proximity of over 20 County Wildlife Sites as well as a number of SSSIs. County Wildlife Sites provide a vital network for our endangered fauna and flora and often include some of the most distinctive, varied and ancient features in our landscape. Woodland sites are likely to suffer the greatest impact and these account for some 50% of the County Wildlife Sites along the suggested routes. The National Grid has to date made no reference at all to the presence of Wildlife Sites in its consultations.

Power lines, and the large scale wind farms they connect, have been shown to have impacts on our wildlife – most notably migrating birds and bats – and it has not been made clear how these impacts will be addressed. Climate Change is undoubtedly one of the biggest threats to our wildlife but in attempting to address this there is a risk of causing more harm than good.

"We also question the need for the wind farms themselves and would like some answers about whether this is the most efficient form of energy and whether these developments fit into a strategic plan," said Colin Preston, Director of Shropshire Wildlife Trust. "We haven't yet seen the evidence that this is the right most sustainable way to deliver our energy needs."

The pylons would also inflict dramatic visual change on this tranquil landscape; a matter of great concern to local communities.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust's response

The Trust has responded to National Grid's consultation questioning the logic of locating so many wind farms in an area remote from a source of energy demand and existing infrastructure.

[Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trusts' statement on large windfarm development](#) 4th May 2011

Windfall for Llanymynech's butterflies

Llanymynech Hill is renowned for its variety of butterfly species and their future is looking brighter now, thanks to funding which will see improvements to their habitat on both the English and Welsh sides of the border.

A grant of £47,000 has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to Shropshire Wildlife Trust, which owns half the Llanymynech Rocks nature reserve, while Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (which owns the other half) has received funding from the Aggregates Levy Fund for Wales towards a series of activities which will greatly increase the area of suitable habitat for the butterflies, eight of which are species whose status is of national concern.

Limestone grassland can be very rich in flowers, as it is in the open areas of the nature reserve and these in turn attract numerous butterflies. The project will extend these glades in the quarries and also on the neighbouring golf course, which is part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Years ago, sheep used to graze the golf course, where they were shepherded to avoid golfers. Grazing stopped in 1979, since when many of the best limestone grassland sites have disappeared under trees and bushes. These will now be removed and areas fenced off to allow for the return of sheep. Some careful design work has been carried out, with the enthusiastic co-operation of Llanymynech Golf Club, to ensure that sheep and golf balls do not clash and that these beautiful butterflies get a chance to extend their colonies.

Volunteers will be trained to monitor the butterflies, so we can judge the success of the project and events will be run to show them to people.

The biodiversity action plan species present on the reserve are pearl-bordered fritillary; small pearl-bordered fritillary, grizzled skipper, dingy skipper, small heath, grayling and white letter hairstreak and wall brown. Most of these butterflies have suffered steep declines at a national level due to loss of habitat. Thirty-two butterfly species in total have been recorded on the hill.

26th April 2011

Dawn chorus

Join Shropshire Wildlife Trust for a celebration of the world's oldest wake-up call – the dawn chorus – and the beauty of bird song at events all round the county over the next few weeks.

Led by local experts, these events have an early start - usually between 4am-6am - and offer listeners a truly memorable experience as the dawn chorus builds from the first cheep to a crescendo of birdsong.

The end of April and beginning of May sees the dawn chorus reach its peak, as the songs of the UK's resident bird species are joined by the return of summer visitors such as blackcaps and garden warblers.

Most birds which sing are male and do so to defend their territory and attract a mate. Typically, birds such as the blackbird, robin or skylark are among the first to strike up, and the dawn chorus takes off as the sun rises.

Simon King, President of The Wildlife Trusts, says: "Whoever you are, wherever you live, set your alarm for 4.30am, stand outside or make the short journey to the nearest park or leafy cemetery, and wait for the curtain to rise on the most awe-inspiring symphony on earth."

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is running the following dawn chorus events:

Shrewsbury

Saturday 7th May

A stroll along the Rea Brook Valley, 4- 8am followed by breakfast at Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Ring 01743 284280 to book your place and for further details. £5 per person.

Whitchurch

Saturday 14th May

An early morning excursion to Brown Moss followed by breakfast 4am-7am. £2 per person. Ring 01948 663069 to book your place.

Ludlow

Saturday 21st May

Birdsong of Whitcliffe Common. Meet at the toposcope at 4.30am.

Wood Lane, Ellesmere

Wednesday 1st June

Dawn chorus at this special wetland bird reserve followed by breakfast, 4.30am – 8am. £2.50 per person, booking essential ring 01743 284280.

And for those who would prefer to catch their birds a little later in the day, there will be a Dusk Chorus event on Sunday 29th May at Llanymynech Rocks nature reserve near Oswestry at 7.30pm.

Full details of all the above events can be found at shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk or by ringing 01743 284280.

21st April 2011

Forestry consultation

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is inviting people to make their views known on the woodlands of Shropshire by filling in an online questionnaire. The results will then be fed into the government's extended consultations on the future of woodlands in England, including those in the ownership of the Forestry Commission.

A consultation group chaired by the Bishop of Liverpool has been charged with revising the government's stance over the summer with a report deadline in the autumn. To inform this process Shropshire Wildlife Trust has set up a simple questionnaire designed to find out your views. Feedback will be collated and sent to the consultation group so that the Shropshire view is represented.

[Woodland questionnaire](#)

Please complete the questionnaire by 31st May 2011.

April 19th 2011

A living memorial

More than £2,000 has been raised for Shropshire Wildlife Trust by Ludford Park Meadow of Remembrance in the last two years.

For every plot sold 10% of the cost is donated directly to the Trust to help wildlife and wild places in Shropshire. "Shropshire Wildlife Trust is most grateful for these donations. As a local charity, the Trust is reliant on the generosity and commitment of all those who cherish the wildlife and wild places of Shropshire. It is contributions such as these that pay for the protection of this beautiful county," said John Hughes, development manager for the Trust.

Long term, the burial ground will be bequeathed to the Trust, ensuring that it is looked after in perpetuity.

The meadow at Ludford Park is a tranquil place with more than 50 wild plant species. In spring there are snowdrops, cowslips and wild daffodils. Throughout the summer an abundance of wild flowers and grasses appear including musk mallow, yellow rattle, red and white campion and ox eye daisies.

Find out more about [Ludford Park Garden of Remembrance](#).

April 11th 2011

Don't wait for the cuckoo: tune into birdsong now

The cuckoo, traditional harbinger of summer, is vanishing from Shropshire as it is from many parts of England and Wales; its liquid voice much-missed and our world diminished. While the cuckoo can never be replaced in our affections, now is the moment to take more notice of some of the other millions of birds that undertake epic journeys from Africa every year to breed in this country.

Most of us are rotten at birdsong. While almost everyone once knew a cuckoo's call, the other summer migrants sing their songs, if not actually unheard, at least unrecognised. Now is the time to start listening. Spring migrants such as chiffchaffs, willow warblers, garden warblers and blackcaps are flocking back to Shropshire now and singing their hearts out.

Listen out for Britain's commonest summer migrant bird, the willow warbler – very similar in looks to the chiffchaff but with an utterly different song. More than four million of them wing their way back to the UK each summer – yet apart from regular birdwatchers, few of us so much as register their existence. They sing from bush and hedge, throughout the countryside, their lovely song starting full-throated and strong, dwindling away at the end, then continuously repeated from April through till June.

Blackcaps, whitethroats, garden warblers and wood warblers are also arriving, some of their songs easier to pick up than others. Blackcaps and garden warblers have similar sounding, spirited and rapid songs though it is said: The garden warbler goes on longer. Blackcap's briefer. With the help of birdsong cds or recordings on the internet (including www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk) we can pick them up – some of them more easily than others.

Birds ring in the seasons for us. Whether it is the piercingly beautiful call of a curlew as it arrives in its breeding grounds or the chiffchaff – a 6- 10 gram bundle of feathers, still spritely after its epic 6,000 mile journey, their songs are the musical backdrop to spring and summer. And you don't have to get up at dawn to hear them – they sing all day. So don't wait for cuckoos to tell you it's spring – let the chiffchaff and the willow warbler sing it to you.

Listen to [birdsong](#).

Grow your own plants

A series of gardening workshops will take place over the spring and summer at Shropshire Wildlife Trust's visitor centre in Shrewsbury, starting with a session on plant propagating techniques on Saturday 19th March, 10am – 1pm.

The workshop will cover many different ways of growing your own plants, including growing from seed, dividing and root and stem cuttings. Barbara Molesworth, an expert gardener and plantswoman, will lead the event. "Growing your own plants is wonderfully rewarding," says Caroline Pond of Shropshire Wildlife Trust "and it's also a very cheap way to stock your garden!"

This course costs £15 per person. If you'd like to come along please book your place by ringing 01743 284280 or e-mail [Caroline Pond](#).

This will be followed by an organic vegetable-growing workshop on Saturday 2nd April, 10am-1pm. This half day session will show you how to grow organically throughout the seasons, give guidance on choosing seeds, growing and harvesting produce. Whether you have a massive plot or just a few planters, this beginners guide should tell you all the secrets to successful growing.

This course costs £20 per person. If you'd like to come along please book your place by ringing 01743 284280 or e-mail [Caroline Pond](#).

1st March

Darwin Festival success

Shropshire Wildlife Trust's first year of running the Darwin Festival has been a resounding success. More than 800 people came along to the events, many of which were aimed at children and families.

Charles Darwin liked nothing better than exploring – searching for beetles, looking at rocks, conducting noisy scientific experiments – and during half term week children crowded into the Trust's visitor centre in Shrewsbury to join in, their curiosity fired up and full of excitement.

Messy chemical experiments, bushcraft, worm power, Just So story-telling and Galapagos tortoise-making were all part of the fun.

For adults there was a fascinating series of talks by distinguished speakers and a wonderful exhibition of iridescent moths by Franziska Schenk, who also ran a workshop on painting.

"I enjoyed everything. - it was superb – I didn't want to go home!" said Ross Downie of Oswestry.

18th February

Wildlife Trust's concern over forests

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is extremely concerned about the Government's planned disposal of Forestry Commission woodlands. "There are huge risks attached to dispersal of our woodlands," said Colin Preston, Director of Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

"Woods such as Haughmond Hill, Mortimer Forest, Wyre Forest and Bury Ditches are greatly valued both for their wildlife and for their recreational opportunities."

"While conifers are not particularly good for wildlife, many of these woods still contain areas of broad-leaved native trees such as oak and ash. Haughmond Hill, for example, has wonderful veteran trees and good patches of heathland among the conifers. If the hill were to be sold off, these features would be at risk and opportunities to restore these natural habitats might be lost forever.

The Forestry Commission was extremely co-operative in the Stiperstones Back to purple project, which brought about restoration of a significant area of

heathland to the ridge and in recent years it has carried out a policy of replanting felled conifer plantations with native species, which has done much to restore the landscape. Shropshire Wildlife Trust fears that if these woods are sold off, new owners may not take such an enlightened approach, resulting in degradation of the land.

"We know that many people feel passionately about the future of our woodlands; they are worried about losing access to them and concerned for their wildlife.

Public meetings

Two public meetings are to be held, giving people a chance to have their say over the proposed forest sell-off. The first will be at Shropshire Wildlife Trust in Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury on Tuesday 22nd February, 7pm. The following Friday (25th February) a joint event with Philip Dunne, MP for Ludlow, will take place from 2.30pm to 4pm in the Refectory at Ludlow College to discuss the Government's proposals.

25th January

Darwin Festival

An action-packed programme of Darwin-themed events for enthusiasts has been put together by Shropshire Wildlife Trust for February 2011. The schedule includes many events for children and families and a series of talks and walks for adults.

Esteemed Darwin experts such as Bob Bloomfield, Dr Alison Pearn and Kevin Warwick will all be giving lectures and presentations. Topics will include what the implications are of Darwin's theory for modern technology, how Darwin's work relates to the changing biodiversity of our planet and how around 15,000 of Darwin's personal letters have survived to this day, giving us a fascinating insight into one of the world's foremost thinkers.

All events are listed in What's on and the leaflet can be downloaded [here](#).

30th November

Give the Government your views on badger culling

The Government is consulting until 8 December 2010 on a policy to control bovine TB based on the culling of badgers in affected areas in England. There is a separate proposal and consultation in Wales. The Wildlife Trusts are fully aware that TB in cattle is a significant problem for farming in the UK and that urgent action is required to combat the disease. The Wildlife Trusts believe that action to address bovine TB should be based on clear scientific evidence that can be effectively applied in practice.

Our position is:

The Wildlife Trusts do not support a cull of badgers, as we do not believe this will deliver a significant and sustained reduction in cattle TB;

There is a very real risk of exacerbating the spread and incidence of the disease in the badger population due to the 'perturbation effect';

We believe there are alternatives to culling badgers, such as vaccination, that will deliver more effective, suitable, and sustainable reductions in cattle TB.

If you conclude, as I have, that the proposed cull is bad for badgers and bad for farmers, we would like you to do one or more of the following:

Respond to the Government's consultation on a badger cull at: www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/tb-control-measures/index.htm

Write to your local MP and ask him or her to pass on a copy of your letter to Defra. If you do not know your MP, telephone 020 7219 4272 or go to findyourmp.parliament.uk/

Copy your responses, letters and replies to the Trust and urge your family, friends and neighbours to do the same

More information is available on The Wildlife Trusts' website: www.wildlifetrusts.org.

16 November

Young wildlife champion wanted

One young person from the local area is being offered the opportunity of a lifetime – to work with one of the country's top wildlife photographers, creating images, film, sound and talks to inspire people across the UK about nature.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is looking for a young champion aged between 16-24 who will help spread the message about conserving nature using wildlife photography, video and audio. This is part of 2020VISION - an ambitious conservation visual media initiative. It involves 20 of the country's top wildlife photographers, including Chris Packham, BBC Springwatch presenter, and will result in spectacular images of 20 different areas that have special natural qualities.

One of 20 being recruited across the UK, the Stiperstones young champion will accompany their assigned photographer over a period of 20 months. The young champion will also receive support from Shropshire Wildlife Trust staff, based in Shrewsbury. Helen Trotman, People and Wildlife Manager, said: "We are looking for a young person who is passionate about nature and wants to communicate that to their peer group. We think this is a fantastic opportunity to gain new skills and experience, and be part of a big national project that will generate lots of awareness and publicity."

Commitment is required for the full 20 months with the amount of time devoted to the project flexible, depending on the successful applicant's circumstances. No previous photographic or film experience is necessary, just an enthusiasm for communicating with people.

An application form and further information is available from [Helen Trotman](mailto:helent@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk) 01743 284297 or helent@shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk. The deadline for applications is Monday 22nd November.

2nd November

Hallowe'en

A special fancy dress Hallowe'en event run by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in Apley Woods on Saturday attracted 250 people. Families took part in a spooky troll and witch hunt around the woods, following clues around an enchanted trail. The event was arranged as part of a series for the as part of the Telford Access to Nature partnership.

26th October

Nick Baker and the slow worm

Watch Nick's latest [YouTube video](#) of wildlife that crawled out from under his washing machine.

This is the latest in a series of wildlife videos made by Nick for Wildlife Watch, the junior wing of the Wildlife Trusts (to be enjoyed by people of all ages).

14th October

Pontesford Hill

The Friends of Pontesford campaign to buy their local hill from the Forestry Commission is over. Following government tendering processes, the Commission has completed the sale of Pontesford Hill to a private buyer from Wiltshire.

The campaign to buy the hill was supported with passion and huge generosity, resulting in £63,000 raised. "While this is a massive blow to all those who have worked so hard to raise the money and supported the appeal, we must now look to the future," said John Hughes of Shropshire Wildlife Trust. "The new owner has been up to see us already and is extremely keen to manage the hill in a way that benefits wildlife. He also wants to work on projects with the local community and to maintain public access to the hill."

Shropshire Wildlife Trust will be contacting everyone who donated to the appeal giving them the option of having their money returned to them or of investing it with the Trust to spend on conservation projects around the hill. The Trust owns neighbouring Earl's Hill and is keen to increase its activity in the area.

"The last few months have revealed just how powerfully people feel about Pontesford Hill," said John Hughes. "The support has been tremendous, both from people currently living in the area and also from those who had connections with the area in the past."

30th September

Stiperstones project wins award

Shropshire Wildlife Trust has won the West Midlands category of the UK Landscape Awards 2010 for The Stiperstones heathland restoration project. "We are delighted," said John Hughes of Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Back to purple began in the late 1990s and brought about the felling of several conifer plantations and the gradual return of much-loved heather, whinberries and wonderful views along the Stiperstones ridge. Nesting ground has been returned to skylarks, stonechats and redstarts and the wonderful mosaic of sedges and lichens is gradually creeping back into the landscape. It was the project's aim that the emperor moth caterpillar should be able to crawl all the way along the six-miles of the Stiperstones ridge without hindrance. Only one small block of conifers now remains.

Change was brought about through an extraordinary partnership of organisations and individuals. The *Back to purple* project involved English Nature (later Natural England), Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, the Linley Estate (a major land owner) and several funding bodies including Tarmac, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Tubney Charitable Trust – each able to bring different skills and resources.

Local people have joined in at every stage of the project; schools have explored its myths and legends; its moody atmosphere inspired music students at a nearby secondary school to write a special composition and families have come along to plant heather at a special Mothering Sunday event.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust consolidated its work on the Stiperstones by purchasing nature reserves at Brook Vessons, The Hollies and Nipstone. "But the strength of the project lay in its partnership work with other organisations, enabling change to happen much more rapidly than we had dared hope," says John Hughes.

While most of the project's objectives have been achieved, the Trust and its partners continue to look for opportunities to restore the landscape and make

connections between wild places nearby.

The Stiperstones experience has shaped the Trust's thinking in other areas. "We now take a landscape-scale approach to all our work," explains John Hughes. "Fragmented wild places do not give wildlife the best chance and all around the county we are looking at restoring and conserving habitats across large areas and we are keen to work with other partners wherever possible."

Jo Watkins, President of the Landscape Institute which organised the Awards said: "These awards highlight the tremendous contribution that great urban and rural landscapes make to the creation of strong communities. This Award is important as it recognises that looking after our landscape for future generations is a responsibility shared by all of us."

Results will be announced next week for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. An overall UK winner will be announced at the *European Landscape Convention Conference* to be held in Liverpool from 8 November. The winner will go forward as the UK's entry to the 'Landscape Award of the Council of Europe' which will be decided by the Council of Europe in March 2011.

20th September

Shape the Nature of England

In response to calls from The Wildlife Trusts, the Government will produce a White Paper on the Natural Environment in spring 2011. They have invited the public to 'Shape the Nature of England' and want to hear your views by 30 October 2010. You can help ensure that the Government receives a strong message about why the White Paper should:

- Provide a framework to restore the health of our wildlife and the natural processes upon which we depend eg for clean air and water
- Ensure the protection and enhancement of our existing wildlife sites
- Maintain momentum to implement the Marine Act and identify Marine Protected Areas
- Support people and communities to value and take action for wildlife

[Download](#) the Wildlife Trusts' leaflet explaining how you can get involved and setting out commitments the Trusts would like the Government to make.

[Take part in Defra's online consultation](#)

[See Shropshire Wildlife Trust's response](#)

15th September

Government proposed badger cull

The Wildlife Trusts are concerned that proposals by the Government for badger culling in England's bovine tuberculosis (bTB) hotspots will not help control the spread of the disease to cattle.

Agricultural minister Jim Paice has today (Wednesday 15 September) unveiled a range of measures for consultation, following the coalition government's pledge to introduce a 'science-led policy of badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine tuberculosis.' Earlier this year he confirmed the Government was looking at a range of measures, including culling and badger vaccination, to control the spread of the disease to cattle.

The Wildlife Trusts acknowledge bTB is a significant problem that causes hardship for many in the farming community. There is no single solution to this disease but any approach must take account of ecological as well as veterinary science. It should be tackled on many fronts: vaccination of badgers, cattle controls and improved biosecurity on farms. The rationale for any cull of native species needs to be extremely clear and well proven.

We are concerned the scientific evidence does not support the culling of badgers as part of that solution. It could even make matters worse by disturbing the remaining badgers, so spreading the disease further. The Wildlife Trusts are willing to work with the farming community and others to confront this disease in a science-led and constructive way.

17th August

2020 Vision

Shropshire Wildlife Trust has signed up as a partner to an ambitious visual media project involving 20 of the UK's top wildlife photographers. Together with a team of videographers, sound recordists, writers and designers, they will put together 26th July

Fishing for pond skaters

Nick Baker catches flies with a miniature fishing rod to lure pond skaters skittering across a pond. Another delightful film on YouTube for Wildlife Watch. See it [here](#).

22nd July

New ponds for dragonflies

Dragonflies and other wildlife will benefit from two new pools being created in north Shropshire thanks to a grant from the Carillion Natural Habitats Fund. Shropshire Wildlife Trust has teamed up with RAF Shawbury to dig a pond at Dawson's Rough, next to St Mary's Primary and a second pool will be excavated at Wood Lane nature reserve, Colemere.

To launch the project pupils from St Mary's Primary came along to Dawson's Rough with Shropshire Wildlife Trust. They looked at wildlife already present, using sweep nets to catch insects in the grass. The schoolchildren, their families and teachers will also be involved at further stages of the project with weekend events planned over the autumn and winter.

The pools will be constructed in the autumn and a boardwalk installed at Dawson's Rough giving people excellent opportunities to see the wildlife that moves in.

Carillion supports Wildlife Trusts across the UK through its Natural Habitats Fund. It has not only enabled the Wildlife Trusts to secure some excellent gains for wildlife, but also given many people the chance to get closer to their local nature.

8th July

Buttercup delights botanists

The discovery of a corn buttercup at Pimhill Farm last week has amazed and delighted Shropshire's botanists. It is 50 years since it was last recorded in the county and was believed to be extinct.

The solitary plant was found during an arable weeds training course at Pimhill run by Shropshire Wildlife Trust's conservation officer, Fiona Gomersall through the Field Studies Council's Biodiversity Training project.

It grows to about 50cm in height and has small pale yellow flowers which develop into striking-looking spiky seed heads that inspired its folk names: Devil's claws, Devil-on-all-sides, and hellweed.

Even in the mid-nineteenth century the corn buttercup was uncommon in Shropshire, though prolific further south in lowland England on heavy calcareous soils, where it was noted as a troublesome weed of cereal crops.

"This is an very exciting find," said Fiona Gomersall. "It's wonderful that this plant is still alive in Shropshire. Pimhill Farm has been organic for 61 years so it has had the best chance of survival here."

7th July

Nick Baker and the back garden mole

The latest in our series of Nick Baker webfilms (produced for *Wildlife Watch* The Wildlife Trusts' junior/family membership branch) is now available to view on the [Wildlife Watch YouTube](#) channel

Nick gets up close to a mole he found in his back garden, giving us a rare look at these fantastic, furry creatures.

7th June

New sign unveiled at Meverley Meadows

A new illustrated sign was unveiled at Meverley Farm on Sunday 6th May. A swag of clematis was cut by Veronica Plant, daughter of Ivor Plant who owned the farm before Shropshire Wildlife Trust bought it in 1995. The family living in the Plants' former home were also present.

The meadows are rare survivors from another age, full of flowers of many kinds and brimming with insects, birds and other wildlife. The ceremony was followed by a guided walk with volunteer warden Cath Price around the hay meadows.

20th May 2010

Million pound lottery award for the Meres & Mosses

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today earmarked a first-round pass* of £1,055,400 including £82,400 development funding under its Landscape Partnership (LP) programme for Shropshire Wildlife Trust to progress its plans to undertake conservation of the natural and historic environment within part of the Meres & Mosses area and to engage local people in looking after the landscape.

The project area is a swathe of land of around 150 sq km from Ellesmere, through Whitchurch to Malpas. It encompasses The Mere at Ellesmere, Wood Lane nature reserve, Colemere, the nature reserves of Fenns, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses and Wem Moss, Prees Heath, Whitchurch water vole sites and Cheshire Wildlife Trust's HQ at Bickley Hall Farm.

The project partners include Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Shropshire Council, Northern Marches Leader, Muller Dairies, Shropshire Sailing Club, Butterfly Conservation, Environment Agency, Walford & North Shropshire College.

The development phase of the project will last for a year and employ two staff. During this time the partnership will plan a major five-year delivery

programme. So long as this meets the Heritage Lottery Fund's criteria for landscape partnership schemes, substantial funding will then be awarded to implement the project.

It will be a wide-ranging project with a variety of outcomes. These are likely to include conservation work in the Meres & Mosses district, restoration of the control tower on Prees Heath, damson tree planting, assistance with the delivery of the environmental sections of parish plans, access improvements to local wetlands, projects with schools and training in heritage building skills and cheese making.

"Shropshire's most underestimated treasures are in the limelight at last. This is a landscape shaped by ice and tamed by people over centuries that has created some of the finest places for wildlife in the region. This grant will enable us to help local people discover their neighbourhood nature and explore the wealth of other interests such as their history and archaeology," said John Hughes, development manager for Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

"Landscapes play a huge role in all our lives but we mustn't take them for granted. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to be providing an initial investment into these exciting plans for the Meres and Mosses of Shropshire and Cheshire, particularly in this International Year of Biodiversity. We look forward to seeing the project progress over the next year or so," said Anne Jenkins, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands.

May 2010

Forest skills for teachers

Fifteen local school teachers will be taking part in a week-long Forest School course arranged by Shropshire Wildlife Trust from 24th – 28th May. The course is being run by the Forest School Learning Initiative at Shropshire Wildlife Trust's centre in Shrewsbury and on the Ercall nature reserve, Wellington.

"There has been a great increase in interest in the Forest School experience in recent years," said Helen Trotman of Shropshire Wildlife Trust, who will be assisting in the training event. There is strong evidence that children get healthier and happier through Forest School: they take fewer days off sick, have a longer concentration span and better co-ordination than those who remain inside for a more traditional education.

The relaxed environment also contributes to other aspects of child development; individuals who are struggling at school often come out of themselves in Forest School and the benefits spill over, back in the classroom.

Forest School involves spending at least half a day every week in a designated outdoor area where children are encouraged to meet simple challenges while working together as a team and to follow their natural curiosity to explore. The ability to assess hazards, identify risk and reduce that risk is something that becomes second nature to children as a result of time spent in the great outdoors.

The teachers, who are mostly from Telford & Wrekin schools, will spend time learning about the philosophy of Forest School, get to grips with the health and safety aspects of running the sessions and then take part in practical sessions, finding out about the flora and fauna of wild places and using tools to make things from materials found in%2

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