

Reserve Advisory Group meeting update & minutes – Carr House Meadows NR
Thursday 6th August, 2015
On site walk around: 7pm – 9pm.

1. Present & Apologies

Present: Rob Miller (SRWT - Living Landscapes Manager).
Rachel Stevenson (SRWT – Community Wildlife Ranger).
Christina Doar (SRWT – Greno Woods Manager).
Keith & Jane Parkin (local residents)
John & Barbara Anstie (local residents)
Gerry Thompson (local resident)
Trevor Bagshaw (local resident & local parish council)

Apologies:

Kath Busfield (local resident)

2. Capital works and land management

Ongoing patrols are carried out by our nature reserves patrol team, who litter pick the reserve, check for any major problems on site, and undertake small maintenance tasks. In addition to regular patrols, our land management team (LMT) have completed the following works.

Ongoing maintenance:

- Strimming of the car park (field 18) three times throughout the summer to keep it useable by our staff & for public events.
- Maintenance of the culverts at boundaries 24, 38, 46 & 56 plus the re-directing of the stream along boundaries 67 & 47.
- Two days of hedgerow maintenance across the newly planted boundaries – 4, 14, 36 and 38. This involved weeding and mulching to help remove and suppress competitive species enabling the hedgerows to establish.
- Our LMT have been busy sanding down, re-painting the wording and re-varnishing the welcome signs across the reserve – there are still more to do which will hopefully be completed by the end of this financial year.

Access and infrastructure:

- The LMT have made a second attempt to fix the wobbling step located at boundary 46, which should hopefully now be secure.
- We continue to monitor access around the sleeper bridge in field 6. We have a LMT day planned in over the coming months for making further improvements with some larger stepping stones to improve access.

- The group had some good discussion about how the site could be better advertised and utilised by local people and also about the information provided to visitors of the reserve and around the different ways this could be done. This strategy will be looked at as part of the management planning process as discussed further at the next RAG meeting. Some things we have already considered are as follows:
- We are planning to install QR codes on to the existing site boundary signs that people will be able to scan with their phones for more information about SRWT & the site. This will be considered in the management plan process.
- We may look at renewing our signage in the future possibly with signs similar to our Wyming Brook reserve with space for posters and information underneath but funding will need to be secured. This will be considered in the management plan process.

Habitat management:

- Two days of ragwort and thistle pulling in the hay meadows (fields 4, 15, 16, 17 and 18) – we are conscious that we also need to keep an eye on fields 7 and 9.
- The meadow was being cut (while we were on site) by John Helliwell and removed for winter fodder.
- Phase 1 survey is in the process of being completed by our survey team – this will be used to inform the new management plan.

3. Events, education, community and interpretation update

Future events: Our nature reserves event programme has been reworked and is now running more community engagement events on certain high profile sites, and considering alternative tactics for sites on which we struggle to attract attendees to events - suggestions for events at Carr House Meadows welcome as always.

- We have organised a Fungi walk for Fri 30th Oct 1-3pm. We have plans to try and do a butterfly walk or bat/ moth night walk following the expressed interest from the group in 2016/17.

4. Management plan (April 2011 – March 2016)

The current management plan has entered heading towards its 5th & final year. This means that we have approximately 8 months left for the plan to be updated and re-written with a new work programme developed to cover at least the next 5 years (April 2016 – March 2021), but possibly longer upto 10 years. As part of the process we will carry out a review of the last 5 years. Christina Doar will be taking a lead on the management planning process supported by Robert Miller.

If you have any ideas or things that you would like to see happen on the site please let us know and we will consider adding them into the work programme. Your opinion and enjoyment of the site is very important to us and we will of course provide everyone with an opportunity to comment on the new plan when the first draft is complete.

The timetable for the management planning progress is as follows:

5. Future work programme and associated funding (Aug 15 – March 16).

- Ladder stile on boundary 38 needs to be monitored – we have carried out some repair work on it for now but it will need replacing in the next 12 months.
- Small amounts of bracken control required in field 15, 16 & 18.
- A large oak tree has fallen down in the bottom of field 3, we have x2 work days scheduled in for this winter to get this removed.
- Rush management: Strim 50% of rushes in fields 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 & 13 to encourage cattle to graze re-growth over the next few months (two days planned August / September).
- Reduce spread of bramble and scrub areas in no fields 5, 6, 7, 8 & 10. Retain access to pumps & tanks in field 6. (Two days planned for autumn).
- 50% grass cut (eastern side) and creation of successional area through scrub removal in field 7. Scrub and other unwanted species are to be managed as per HLS requirements; removal of approximately 50 – 75% of the scrub, including coppicing and removal of willow and blackthorn around the pond. The rosebay willow herb in field 7 will be managed over the coming month before it can set seed and spread.
- Hedgerow maintenance – some the hedges that have been laid over the last few years may require some small scale cutting back to promote additional re-growth.
- Woodland management – thinning of conifers in the plantation (field 11) to favour native species whilst retaining a coniferous component (one day planned for February 2016).
- Ongoing small scale site maintenance & repairs as and when they occur.
- Reinstate field drainage along the boundary with Spout House Wood – need funding and permission from NE for these works. This drainage work will hopefully dry out the fields reducing rush cover and increasing water levels in the pond.
- Clean out bird boxes across the reserve.

Funding:

- The Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme provides the nature reserve with an annual payment of £4275.00 (enough to cover around x10 LMT days per year). This funding is in place until 2021, and allows us to carry out spot repairs of drystone walls, woodland thinning in the plantation, hedgerow weeding and mulching, grassland cut in field 7, scrub and bramble control, rush management, ragwort and thistle control, etc.
- At the last meeting we announced that we had been developing a project over the last 12 months to create a network of connected quality habitats along the River Don Valley from the Pennine fringe into Sheffield. We submitted a funding bid to WREN (Waste Recycling limited) in February 2015 for £250,000 to work in partnership with the Steel Valley Project, Wharnciffe Heathlands Trust, Sheffield City Council, Wild Trout Trust & the Environment Agency.

The aim of the River Don 'Network for Nature' – Phase 1 Project – was to create high quality habitats along the River Don Valley and its tributaries, supporting clean water, natural flood storage, enhanced biodiversity and enjoyment opportunities for people as part of a Living Landscape. An Action Plan has been prepared for the 24km length of the River Don Living Landscape study area which extends from the Rotherham Boundary to the upland Pennine fringe above Stocksbridge. Undertaken in collaboration with the Living Don Partnership during 2014, it identified a total of 53 projects. A selection process was undertaken which prioritised deserving and deliverable projects, with a focus on the north west of the study area. This priority list of 14 projects forms the River Don 'Network for Nature' - Phase 1 Project. It is hoped that later phases in subsequent years will focus on the central and south eastern section of the River Don.

We were seeking project funding to allow us to work with a range of partners to maintain, improve or create 131.74 ha of BAP habitat at 14 sites along the River Don valley and its tributary river corridors, to improve the ecological network.

Despite all of this hard work & development the funding bid was **unsuccessful**, sadly meaning that Carr House Meadows will not receive any additional external funding for the time being. SRWT are in the process of deciding on what are next step is with regards to this potential landscape scale project and are trying to identify other opportunities of funding for Carr House Meadows which would pay for the following identified work that we would like to carry out:

Woodland Management

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Project Total
Woodland thinning in the plantation - labour	£945.00	£945.00	£945.00	£2,835.00
Materials - Chainsaw fuel & oil	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00	£60.00
Total	£965.00	£965.00	£965.00	£2,895.00

Hedge Restoration

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Project Total
Boundary 42: Hedge laying - labour (30m)	£945.00			£945.00
Boundary 42: Hedge laying - materials (30m)	£900.00			£900.00
Boundary 42: Post & Wire Fencing - labour (60m)	£630.00			£630.00
Boundary 42: Post & Wire Fencing - materials (60m)	£210.00			£210.00
Boundary 58: Hedge laying - labour (49m)		£1,575.00		£1,575.00
Boundary 58: Hedge laying - materials (49m)		£1,400.00		£1,400.00
Boundary 58: Post & Wire Fencing - labour (98m)		£945.00		£945.00
Boundary 58: Post & Wire Fencing - materials (98m)		£343.00		£343.00
Boundary 65: Hedge laying - labour (83m)			£2,677.50	£2,677.50
Boundary 65: Hedge laying - materials (83m)			£2,300.00	£2,300.00
Boundary 65: Post & Wire Fencing - labour (83m)			£630.00	£630.00
Boundary 65: Post & Wire Fencing - materials (83m)			£290.50	£290.50
Boundary 6&7: Hedgerow planting - labour (114m)	£472.50			£472.50
Boundary 6&7: Hedgerow planting - materials (114m)	£150.00			£150.00

Total	£3,307.50	£4,263.00	£5,898.00	£13,468.50
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Drystone Walling

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Project Total
Boundary 54: Drystone Walling - labour (35m)		£1,575.00		£1,575.00
Boundary 54: Drystone Walling - materials (35m)		£300.00		£300.00
Boundary 62: Drystone Walling - labour (50m)		£2,730.00		£2,730.00
Boundary 63: Drystone Walling - labour (114m)		£4,865.00		£4,865.00
Boundary 63: Drystone Walling - materials (114m)		£1,310.00		£1,310.00
Total		£10,780.00		£10,780.00

A lot of the above works are likely to be included in the new management plan as they are still required.

6. AOB

- Issues of subsidence adjacent to boundaries 61 & 62 were highlighted, and it was suggested that SRWT contact the highways department officers as soon possible, due to the potential lead in time that highways work to. It was said that Lee Bramall is the cabinet member for transport and that Jane Bunn manages the Amey contract.
 - **Action:** SRWT to report the subsidence to the highways department.

7. Date of next meeting

Thursday 14th January 2016 at the Wharncliffe Side community centre: 7pm – 9pm. We plan for this meeting to concentrate on the development of the new management plan.

SRWT contact information:

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