

Thu 05/05/2022 11:49

Dear Colleagues,

Green Fund Projects

I wanted to share the results of the first round of the New Green Fund. Below are thumbnail sketches of the projects agreed so far, with another to come.

Malham Tarn's walled garden is being updated to support and enrich its biodiversity. This will include planting native-to-Yorkshire apple and pear trees, a new pond and reptile refuge. Annual seed swaps and community events are planned. Staff will be creating a paper making station so that visiting groups can create a booklet from waste material. These recycled journals and the seeds that can be taken home act as a reminder of their time with us but also provide an opportunity for further behaviour change.

Rhyd-y-creuau's on-site allotment and biodiversity garden will be renovated and redesigned. The renovation will integrate education and hospitality, improving the sustainability of meals and creating a biodiverse space for local wildlife which can be enjoyed by visitors.

At Dale Fort, swifts are being provided with special nest blocks under the eaves, and to attract them an automatic swift call is being played via an MP3 player. Swifts have a red conservation status which means that there has been a significant decline in their numbers. It's a good way to demonstrate conservation in action to visiting schools, and there are plans to involve students and families in the monitoring process by recording sightings.


At Flatford Mill, the focus is on hedgehogs. Flatford's habitat should be ideal for hedgehogs so the project is seeking to assess the baseline numbers and then provide hedgehog housing. The broader habitat and its biodiversity, food webs and foraging opportunities will also be improved. Mammal footprint tunnels and camera traps are being set up to monitor progress.

Rhyd-y-Creuau wants to improve its boot washing system to become more sustainable and, importantly, more effective in combating the spread of invasive species. Our wellies are used by students throughout many different learning locations in North Wales including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Nature Reserves, or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Staff will be working closely with Matt Hawes and are also looking to develop a system to increase the lifespan of the boots saving time on monthly boot checks and cleans.

At Flatford Mill, being a much drier part of the country, staff will be trialling a new solar water pump to make use of water from an existing well, rather than that pumped from the local reservoir. It should allow staff to water the vegetable garden, wash wellies and provide water to extinguish camp fires.

Finally, trees and a new hedge suitable for the coastal environment will be planted at Dale Fort to increase biodiversity and carbon capture. Following up hedge planting by ongoing hedge laying maintains high levels of biodiversity as well as providing shelter for small birds and mammals. Staff have come up with a clever way to offer a home to some of the [free trees that the Welsh Government are offering to everyone in Wales](#). It's a good way to involve those in the local community who would love to plant a tree but haven't got the room.

Staff Handbook

An updated version of the Staff Handbook has recently been uploaded to the Intranet:  [Staff Handbook - April 2022.pdf](#) This now includes an appendix which summarises the changes that have been made. As the Handbook applies to all Field Studies Council employees, I strongly encourage all staff to remind yourselves of the contents.

Special Mention

We are saying goodbye to Debbie Gregson, senior tutor at Slapton for almost 20 years. Debbie is a passionate biologist but, as with so many staff, can turn her hand to anything. She is known for her positive, can-do approach and has inspired thousands of young people over the last 2 decades. It's clear from the nominations I have received from the team at Slapton that she and her exuberant personality will be greatly missed by her colleagues. We all wish her the very best for the future.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark