

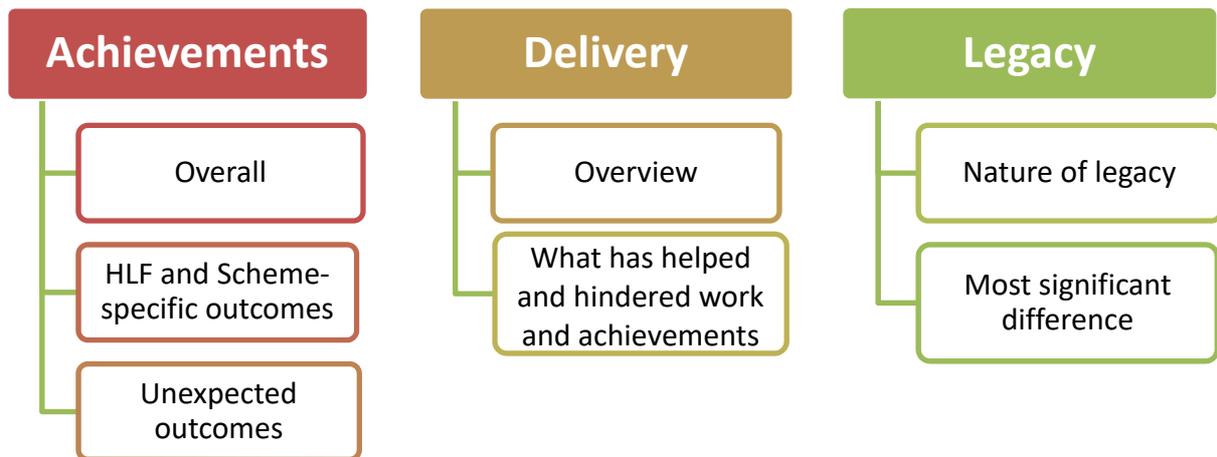
**STIPERSTONES & CORNDON HILL  
COUNTRY  
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME  
FINAL EVALUATION**

March 2018

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme began its delivery in 2013. In line with its original plans, a short and simple mid-term review was carried out by the Scheme's evaluators (Resources for Change) at the end of 2015, and then a final evaluation at the end of 2017. This is the report for the final evaluation

Sitting within the overall Scheme evaluation framework, the evaluation was structured around the following key topics:



The evidence which underpins this evaluation was gathered through a number of techniques

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with all staff members and a sample of Partnership members including the accountable body Shropshire Council (n=13)
- Short semi-structured interviews with a sample of volunteers and event/activity participants (n=15).
- Pinboards and structured conversations with participants at 4 local activities/events run by the LPS (n=36).
- Online survey aimed at volunteers and other beneficiaries (n=50).
- 4 impact stories compiled through in-depth interviews with a small number of stakeholders for each one (total n=8).

The lead evaluator then facilitated a workshop at a Partnership Board meeting to validate the headline findings and to discuss and develop the main learning points which are presented in this report.

## 2. FINDINGS

In this section, we describe what the respondents to the evaluation told us.

### SCHEME ACHIEVEMENTS

We asked respondents to tell us about the Scheme's achievements to date in a number of ways, including very open questions and some more targeted and in-depth questions. In line with our Key Topics for the interim review, we wanted to hear about what was being achieved in relation to HLF's specified outcomes for all its grantees, as well as outcomes specific to the Scheme.

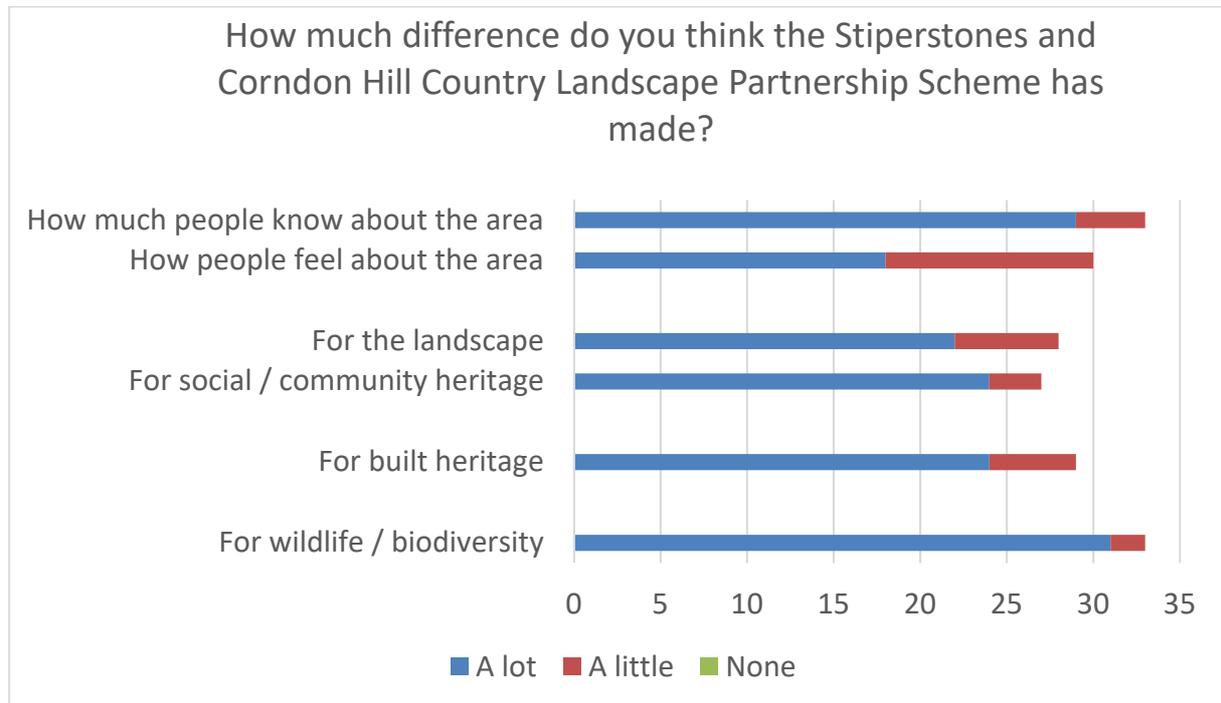
#### AN OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Staff and partners were asked to give a 'topline' view of how well they thought the Scheme had done in relation to the spread of intended outcomes, and these were then discussed in more detail.

The table below shows the scoring from the 'topline' view, which shows that overall, staff and partners think that the Scheme has done well in achieving its intended outcomes, most particularly in relation to enhanced natural and cultural heritage, increased community engagement and more positive attitudes, and increased opportunities for training in heritage skills.

	Outcome	Really well	Quite well	Not as well as I'd have liked
1	Enhanced natural and cultural heritage	12		
2	Increased community engagement & more positive attitudes	9	4	
3	Increased opportunities for access and learning	6	3	
4	Increased opportunities for training in heritage skills	8	2	
5	Improved sense of place, wellbeing and pride in the area	3	8	
6	Landscape scale change	2	5	1

Feedback from participants at some of the LPS' events shows that they think the Scheme has made a lot of difference to the area's wildlife and biodiversity heritage, as well its built heritage. They also note a big difference to how much people know about the area.



## ACHIEVEMENTS IN RELATION TO HLF OUTCOMES

### For heritage

Respondents were very clear that they thought that a variety of heritage features have been restored and are now in improved condition, are more visible and more accessible, and more is known about them.

*“It allowed us to survey a lot of features, e.g. Stapeley Common, discovered significantly more earthworks”.*

*“It’s contributed to heritage records, now accessible at Shrewsbury”.*

This includes built heritage features, not least the Engine House (which was widely seen as a flagship project for the Scheme), but also several mines sites and the motte and bailey castles.

*“It’s done a lot of work on the ground. Things are now in a better state of repair, which was important”.*

*“The management agreements for the motte and bailey castles; good community engagement has led to positive outcomes”.*

[In relation to Castle Pulverbatch] *“The site looks like there’s something there! It’s not just a mound”.*

The Scheme included considerable work relating to natural heritage. Curlew Country has been the pre-eminent project within this part of the Scheme’s work in terms of evaluation respondents’ feedback. As a project, it grew beyond several respondents’ expectations, including national ministerial representations and taking a paper to an international conference, as well as contributing to very positive changes to people’s attitudes and strong indications of positive changes for the local curlew population.

*“[Curlew Country] raised lots of awareness with local famers and landowners. Farmers are getting up and talking positively about what is being done, was very negative at the beginning. There’s been a change of attitude of some farmers across the conservation sector, a change of viewpoint”.*

*“Curlew Country has become nationally acknowledged. It’d developed a life of its own”.*

*“Curlew County has grown to something way bigger than expected. Some great successes in terms of engaging people, making them more aware of curlews, especially through Curlew cam in 2017. Engagement with wider partners nationally and internationally that hadn’t been foreseen. Getting some fledged chicks this year, 6 – 9 this year, none previously, likely that the project has helped”.*

*“There are conversations in the pub between landowners, reminiscing about how it used to be. Now I think there are very few landowners who don’t know about curlew. People are talking about where the nests might be, including farmers. Village people are aware of the work the project is doing”.*

*“It’s key that all the information produced is factual, established through fieldwork”.*

However, there were several other aspects of the Scheme’s work with natural heritage that generated positive responses, including Buzz in the Borders, the meadows project and Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics. An important element has been bringing habitats back into management, as well as getting many people involved in practical conservation work with associated benefits for the natural heritage.

[After green hay had been spread on a respondent’s field] *“I wasn’t expecting a huge amount, but we had yellow rattle, bird’s-foot trefoil, red clover, which we hadn’t had before”.*

[In relation to Poles Coppice] *“We’ve recorded 150 butterflies on a site where there were none [recorded] before. It’s opened up freshwater habitats for invertebrates, especially newts which have already appeared, damselflies and dragonflies, butterflies and bats”.*

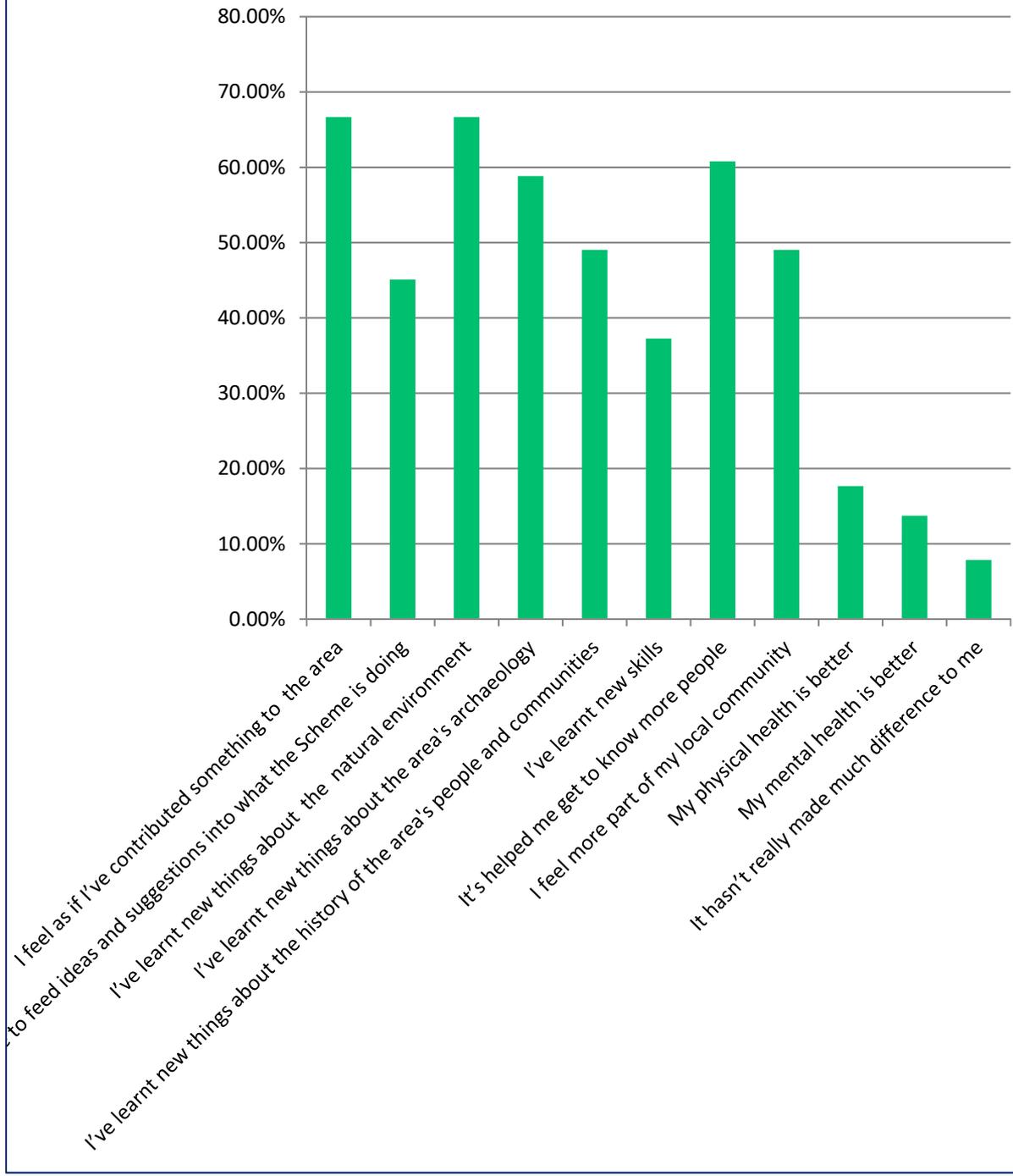
[In relation to Poles Coppice] *“It’s been great to see Poles being used for experimentation, some quite innovative work with veteranisation plunge cuts by arborists to introduce cracks and crevices for bats. It starts to make you think a bit differently about how to manage other sites”.*

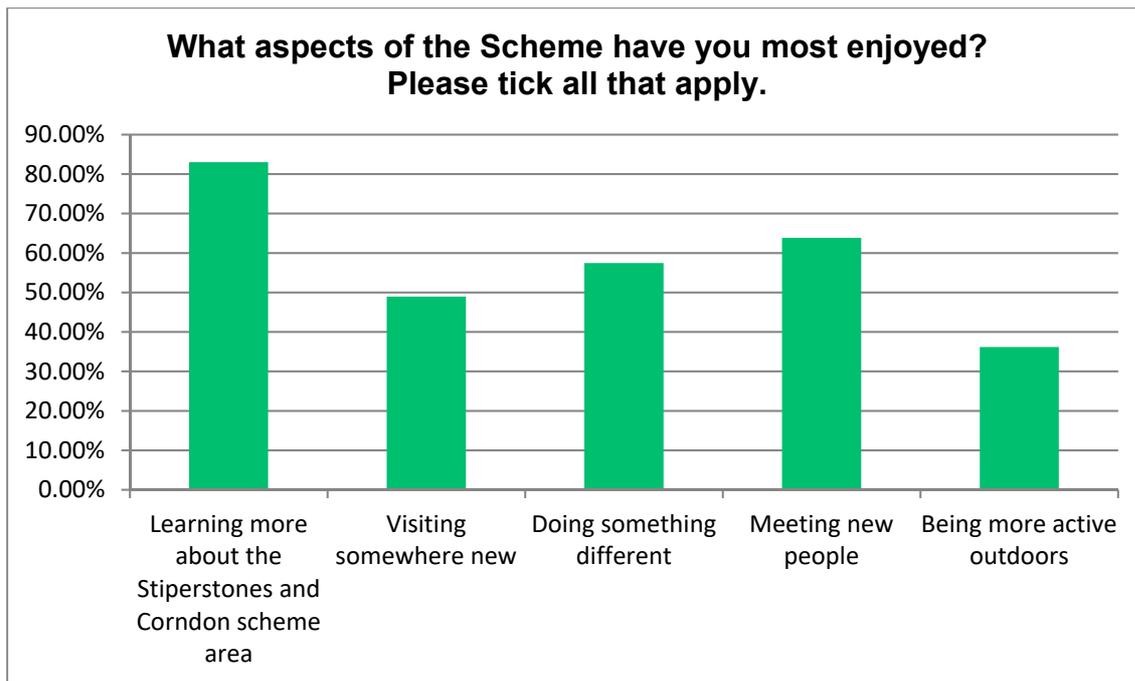
### **For people**

As one respondent noted, *“The Scheme’s been about people really, above everything else”.* This shows through in many ways: the scale of volunteering, the benefits reported by people who have been involved, raised levels of awareness and knowledge reported, the learning and skills relating to local heritage, and the social aspects.

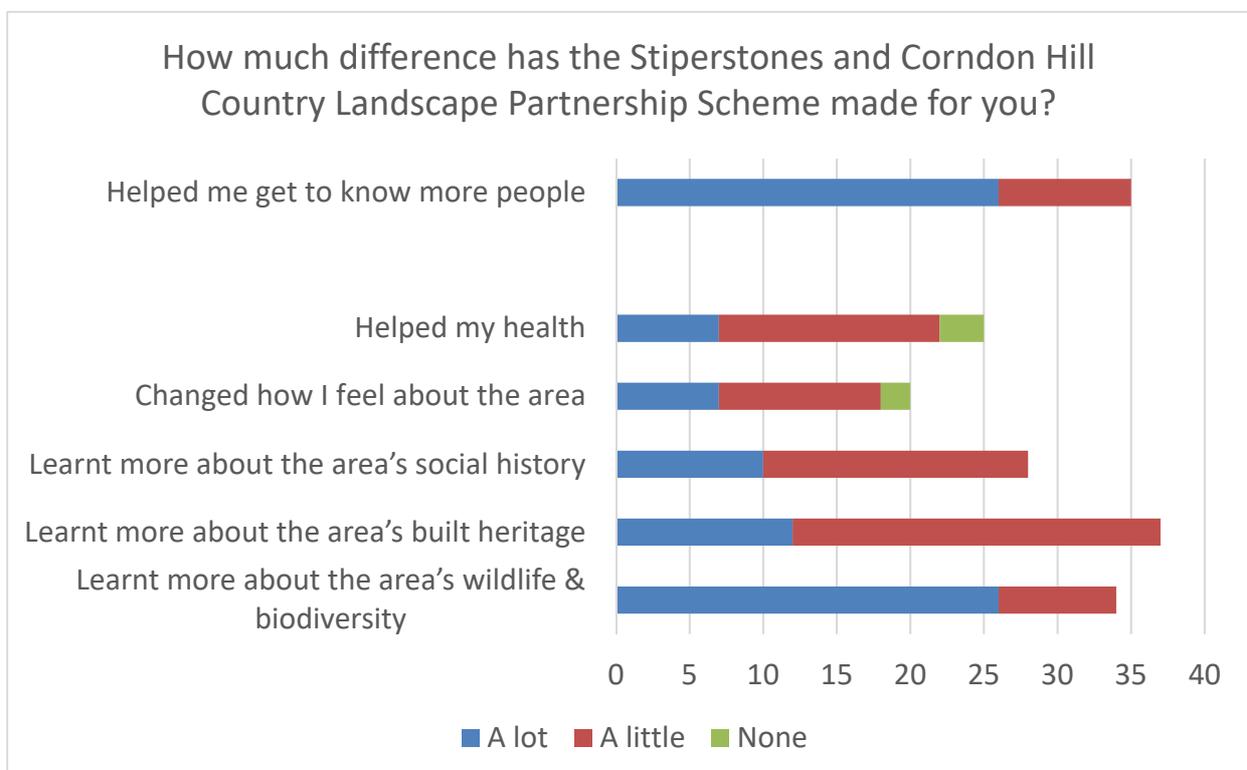
Results from the online survey of participants shows that learning about the Scheme area was the aspect that respondents had most enjoyed; the two most popular responses for the difference that their involvement in the Scheme had made to them were also focussed on learning.

**What did you get out of your involvement? What difference did it make to you? Please tick all that apply.**





The same survey shows how important the social aspects of the Scheme have been for people, and this is backed up by the results from the feedback survey at events, as well as by comments made to the evaluation team.



*“For me, the most outstanding thing has been the opportunity to meet other like-minded people, especially in a rural area where there are still lots of farmers, I can sometimes feel quite isolated”.*

*“I’ve got to know more people”.*

*“If the LPS project hadn’t existed, most of the people I now know I wouldn’t have got to know”.*

Evaluation respondents have reported on many different ways that they have learned about the Scheme area and about its heritage and management. The online survey shows that learning was most frequently about the natural environment, followed by the area’s archaeology, and then the history of the area’s people and communities (see p. 6 above).

*“I’ve learnt how to look after trees and hedgerows. It’s made me a bit more aware at home of looking after woodland nearby on our land, managing the site”.*

*“Personally, I’ve learned about pollinators”.*

*“I’ve learned a lot - about hillforts and archaeology as well as increased wildlife knowledge”.*

*“I’ve learnt about archaeology including how to use a theodolite. I’ve also learnt about wildlife and now can notice and appreciate more”.*

*“The children all benefited; increase in their knowledge, but also in their confidence as the project involved them in speaking in front of the class”.*

Participants’ feedback to the evaluation also shows how important it has been for people to have been able to ‘give something’ back to the local area. The online survey shows that this was the most popular response (scoring joint highest with ‘learning about the natural environment’) to the question about what people had got out of their involvement with the Scheme.

*“Contributing to the conservation and management of wildlife and wildlife habitats”.*

*“Being able to contribute something personally by developing an amenity used by us and the adjacent school”.*

*“I’ve done something really worthwhile here”.*

Some respondents also talked about health and wellbeing benefits from their involvement with the Scheme, including it giving them a reason to spend time outdoors.

*“I was already volunteering, but there were benefits of getting out, being active socialising with people of a similar age”.*

*“I used ground clearing work to keep fit!”*

### **For communities**

Respondents were clear that the Scheme has made positive differences at a community scale, describing improvements to the heritage in their area, more community awareness of that heritage and (as noted above), better social networks.

*“It’s created a sense of belonging, and people know more, and have more pride in the area in which they live”.*

*“It’s strengthened community feeling”.*

*“The wildlife groups have brought people together”.*

## **ACHIEVEMENTS IN RELATION TO SCHEME-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES**

### **Training opportunities in heritage skills**

The Scheme offered formal training and learning opportunities through targeted projects, as well as more informal learning that is reported by volunteers and participants (above).

Many of the staff and partner respondents described their disappointment about North Shropshire College’s failure to deliver on the training project, but were very positive about the replacement project. Comments from two of the trainees described some of the benefits.

*“Basic things that are really useful for the future”.*

*“Gave me a real good feeling, I’m really quite good at something”.*

*“I’ve built up knowledge about species, learnt skills, how to plan and lead (jointly) an event etc and also how to measure baseline data”.*

The Buzz in the Borders project received much positive comment for its positive impacts for participating schoolchildren, and there was considerable support for the Young Rangers project and the opportunities it had offered young people, including the trip to the Europarc Federation Young Ranger’s Summer Camp in Switzerland. Several people mentioned how well the Understanding the Care & Conservation of Pre-1919 Traditional Buildings course had gone.

*“There has been a good range of courses and tasters on offer for all ages, abilities and knowledge”.*

*“The children have significantly more respect for their environment and understand the role that pollinators play. They hatched butterflies and so learned about the cyclical nature”.*

*“Wood from Poles Coppice then used locally for fencing, traditional land management – e.g. scything, horse logging etc on the meadows project”.*

*“The Buzz project, significantly different from the original black bee project, has been a big success on the ground”.*

*“The pre 1919 course was surprising in the interest it created in local tradespeople, and a better understanding of working in older properties”.*

### **Landscape scale change**

The nature of landscape scale change is unique to each Landscape Partnership Scheme. In this Scheme, respondents described it in two main ways: contributing to a longer-term continuum of activity in the area, and implementing work across the Scheme area. However, not all respondents felt that there was noticeable landscape scale change.

*“Look at all the things done, in lots of different places”.*

*“The overall theme was engagement of people specifically in the landscape, nature and heritage. A lot of people have been involved, considering how sparsely populated the area is.*

*“In a farmed area, you would have to engage with the landowners. There’s so much more to do but there has been really good groundwork through the engagement with landowners”.*

*“The project has been a group of fairly disparate projects with an over-arching theme of mining, but it has still continued as disparate projects; it’s never been a landscape project”.*

*“Landscape scale change has not happened. There is a sense of recognition of the landscape, people know more about it and have been about in it more. It would take longer, much more money”.*

### **UNEXPECTED ASPECTS**

Respondents were asked whether there had been anything unexpected about what had been achieved or how things had happened.

Many respondents noted that they had been surprised by the high level of volunteering. The reasons for this were investigated, and suggestions included:

- The variety of different opportunities offered, so that there were things that would appeal to different interests.
- Offering interesting things for the volunteers to do.
- The length of time of the Scheme, so that there was time to go on from one area of volunteering to another.
- The local demographic, with a relatively large number of semi-retired and retired people with skills and time to offer.
- The approachability of the team's engagement officer and other staff members.  
*"We've made it easy for them. No application form".*
- The freedom for volunteers to do as much or as little work as they want.
- Quite a short day (10am – 3pm) with a social aspect.  
*"Having tea and biscuits laid on makes more of a difference than you think".*
- Local people's strong affection for the area.

Several respondents were surprised that three projects had needed significant redesign and changes to delivery. Again, the reasons for this were explored. Whilst a problem with one project might have been unsurprising, respondents struggled to identify obvious causes for problems with three projects. One issue suggested by several people was designing a project which relied on a single individual who had a very particular way of working and was determined to stick to that approach, although this is not relevant to the problems experienced with the Mixed Heritage Skills Apprenticeship project with North Shropshire College.

Some respondents had been disappointed that cross-border element of the Scheme had not worked out as they had hoped, with relatively little engagement by Welsh partners. This was put down to the cuts within NRW that led to NRW's decision to withdraw agreed match-funding after the first year of the Scheme, and to the fact that the Scheme was very much on the border of any Welsh organisation's 'patch', making it less easy to participate in at a time when staff resources have been very stretched.

The last element that some respondents reported as being unexpected was working with some private landowners, where it took much longer than originally anticipated to gain work and access agreements.

### **THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE**

We asked as many respondents as possible to complete the sentence "In my view, the most significant difference that the LPS has brought about is...". This leaves it completely open for what element of change they choose to focus on. We received a total of 81 responses, (presented in full in the Appendices). The evaluator then ran an exercise with Partnership members through which the full list of responses was gradually whittled down to draw out

the ones that they most strongly agreed with. The top six are shown below (presenting the top 3 choices for two groups of Partnership members)

- Engaging lots of people in a lasting and meaningful way with heritage and landscape.
- A deepening sense that the area is of considerable and distinctive natural, cultural and archaeological significance
- Engaging local people in understanding and taking action on heritage
- The sense of place, making people value the area (x2)
- Curlew Country

**DELIVERY**

**AN OVERVIEW**

As with impact, staff and partners were asked to give a ‘topline’ view of their thoughts about delivery of the Scheme, and then their responses were discussed in more depth. The ‘topline’ views are shown in the table below. These show that on the whole, staff and partners think the Scheme has been well delivered, in particular in relation to the value added to people’s experience of volunteering. However, there were concerns (mostly from staff members) about preparation for legacy, and to a lesser extent the working relationship with the lead partner and host organisation. There were mixed views about the success of the Programme Advisory Groups.

	<b>Delivery element</b>	<b>Really well</b>	<b>Quite well</b>	<b>Not as well as I’d have liked</b>
<b>1</b>	Sticking to timetable and budget	3	8	
<b>2</b>	Communications internally	5	5	2
<b>3</b>	Communications externally	1	7	3
<b>4</b>	The way the Partnership has worked	5	5	
<b>5</b>	The way the PAGs (Programme Advisory Groups) have worked	2	4	
<b>6</b>	Working relationship with the lead partner (Shropshire Hills AONB) and the host organisation (Shropshire Council)		4	4
<b>7</b>	Preparing for legacy		2	6
<b>8</b>	Adding value to people’s experiences of volunteering	8	1	

### **Sticking to timetable and budget**

The overview from staff and partners show that most felt that the Scheme had done quite well. This was based on the fact that there were expecting the Scheme to come in more or less on budget, and to have delivered everything by the formal end of the funding period.

However, respondents noted that there had been delays and problems which had delayed activities against the original plans: three of the originally intended projects had had to be redesigned or replaced with others, which was time-consuming and delayed delivery; the ground-nesting birds project had expanded its scale of activity considerably against original plan; some of the projects relying on landowner negotiations and permissions – the 1784 Engine House in particular, but also access routes requiring Definitive Map Modification Orders – had been subject to unanticipated delays, although it is hoped that all will be completed in time.

### **Communications internally**

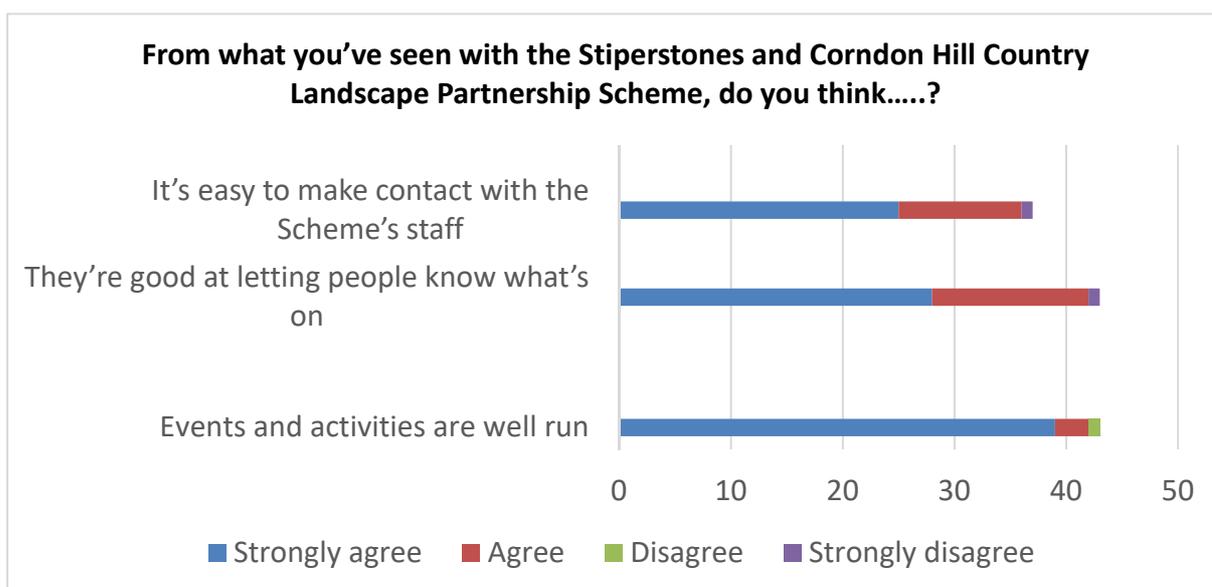
Overall, the overview from staff and partner responses showed that they felt that internal communication has mostly gone either very well or well. Additional comments referred to working well as a team, and being able to use the team meetings and Programme Advisory Groups to share information.

However, some concerns were raised that the team meetings had not been as effective as they could have been, and that it was difficult sometimes to bring everyone together or to communicate with other team members because several team members were part-time.

### **Communications externally**

The overview of staff and partner responses suggests that external communications has gone quite well, although interviews revealed that several respondents would have liked things to have gone better. A common message was that comms resources were too limited for the scale of work that needed to be done, although things improved once there was a one-day-a-week comms role in place, seconded from the Shropshire Hills AONB Team.

The responses from volunteers and participants to the online survey showed that communications was an area that they thought could have been improved; feedback from participants at events showed that they thought the Scheme was good at letting people know what was on.



**The way the Partnership has worked**

As noted above, there was some disappointment that Welsh participation in the Partnership Board had been weak. However, there was also positivity about the group in terms of how people had worked together and how the group had supported the Scheme staff. Reasons suggested for the good co-working on the Board included: individuals who were committed to what the Scheme was trying to achieve; positive attitudes to collaborative working; helpful and constructive approaches.

### **The way the Programme Advisory Groups (PAGs) have worked**

Respondents noted that some PAGs had worked better than others. The original intention had been to share learning and support between projects within a single theme. There was no clear messaging about why some had been effective and others not; there were suggestions that the most successful had met regularly, had ‘the right people’ on it with good experience and who took ownership of it and wanted it to work.

### **Working relationship with the lead partner and the host organisation**

Shropshire Council has been the Scheme’s accountable body, through the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership as the lead partner organisation, including line management of the Scheme Manager.

Several respondents noted that the AONB’s internal organisational changes had been a “distraction” for the organisation.

Views about Shropshire Council’s role were mixed. There were positive comments about the Council’s ability to bankroll Scheme finances, as well as the help the legal department had been able to provide, but at the same time, concerns were expressed about its ability to functionally support the Scheme, e.g. with IT and procurement.

### **Preparing for legacy**

Concerns were expressed that not enough work had been done, or early enough, to prepare for legacy. The Scheme Manager prepared a working document, listing the opportunities available for taking projects or elements of work forward and identifying tasks needing to be done for each project towards legacy.

Several respondents noted the difficulty of finding ways to continue work set up through the Scheme due to the very limited availability of grant-funding and the lack of capacity of partner organisations to take on extra work or commitments.

Also, several respondents made reference to the Stepping Stones project being developed locally by The National Trust and Natural England, which was seen as a potential legacy vehicle for some of the Scheme’s work. It was noted that the likely scheduling (if Stepping Stones were to be successful with planned funding bids) would lead to a gap in activities, and more recent information suggests there have been delays in development.

### **FACTORS THAT HELPED AND HINDERED DELIVERY**

We asked staff and partners about the things that they felt had helped and hindered delivery; the responses are summarised in the table overleaf.

HELPED	HINDERED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team members' knowledge, networks, hard work and positivity</li> <li>• Partners</li> <li>• The volunteers</li> <li>• Shropshire Council bankrolling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting landowner permissions &amp; access</li> <li>• 'Problem projects'</li> <li>• A largely part-time team</li> </ul>

### Helping factors

There were numerous very positive comments about how the attitudes, skills, knowledge and commitment of the team members had been instrumental to the Scheme's achievements. Several people commented that staff members' local knowledge and networks had been particularly useful. It was noted that the Scheme had benefited from all the team staying on in their jobs until the end of the funded period. Reasons for this that were suggested included: staff members' commitment to the Scheme's work; that they were strongly tied to the area, as they all live locally; some have their own work running as well, so they have a base of work in place; perhaps a scarcity of other opportunities locally. Some of the staff also felt that it had helped to have autonomy in their roles, "hands off" management.

*"The team has been incredibly stable. They've seen it all the way through, all worked really well together. They've been willing to help each other out and contribute to other people's projects".*

*"The team has been a tremendous asset. All brought a wide range of skills; talented people within their own field. They had lots of respect for each other, they gave space to one another to do their own thing".*

*"The team has a good range of skills and everyone has worked extremely hard".*

*"Very passionate about the work".*

Another helping factor was said to be the partners and the support that they provided to the Scheme and staff.

*"Some of the partners were very helpful....did their utmost".*

Several respondents felt that the volunteers had been a significant helping factor in the Scheme's achievements, particularly in terms of the amount of time and work that they had put in.

*"The biggest success story, more and better than expected....contributing in a massive range of ways from practical tasks to one-off things to helping out with events".*

*“Good quality volunteers on the ground, able, willing and committed”.*

### **Hindering factors**

The three main factors raised - getting landowner permissions and access, three ‘problem projects’ and a largely part-time team – have already been discussed. Please see Delivery section above.

### **LEGACY**

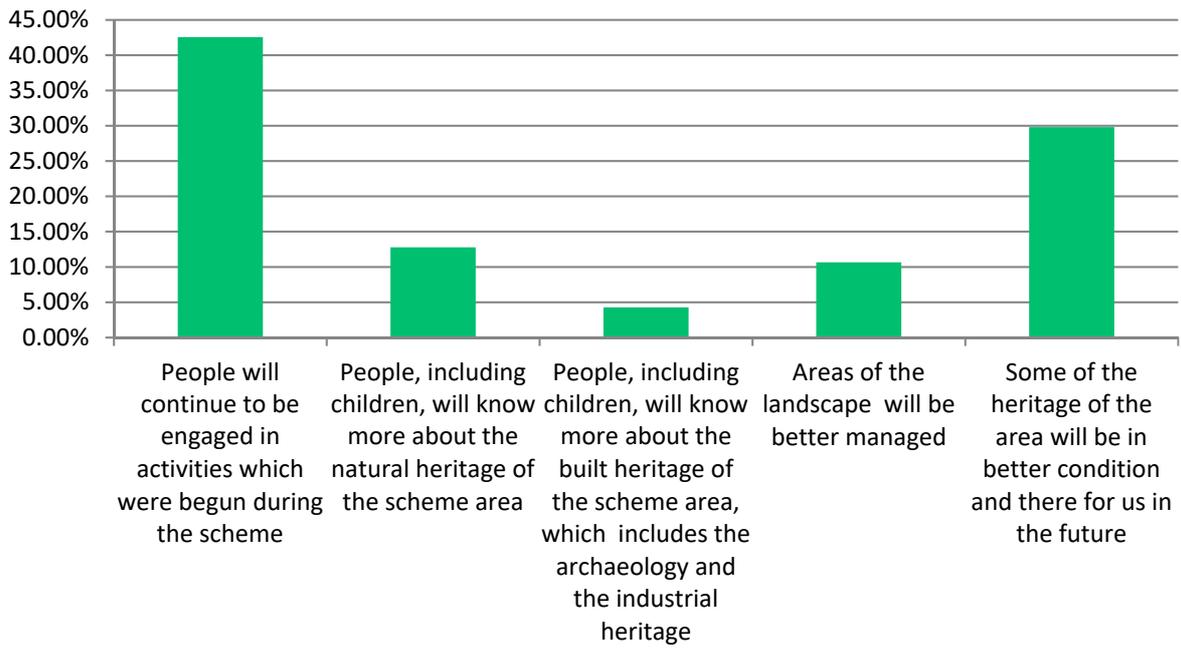
Respondents were asked what they thought that the legacy of the Scheme would be. Their responses can be categorised as follows:

- Built heritage features e.g. Cothercott, the Engine House
- Access features e.g. all ability access trail at Poles Coppice
- Heritage information and records, e.g. LIDAR
- Interpretation
- The volunteers
  - Continuing to do useful work
  - Their knowledge and skills
- Awareness and understanding of local heritage
- Project work that would continue into the future, including volunteer groups e.g. Marches Meadow Group, Friends of Castle Pulverbatch, the hay meadow festival, Curlew Country.

The majority of volunteers interviewed said that they intended to carry on volunteering, including through the community wildlife groups, the Friends of Castle Pulverbatch group, the Meadows group, the archaeology group and the P3 (Parish Paths Partnership).

Responses to the online survey showed that people’s engagement was most frequently thought to be the main legacy of the Scheme.

### What do you think the main legacy of the scheme will be?



### 3. ANALYSIS

In this section, we present the evaluation team's analysis of what people told us.

Our overall impression is that a huge amount has been achieved in spite of having to deal with some considerable problems along the way, and that the staff and partners can usefully pull out learning to take into future work.

## A huge amount has been achieved.

### **For local heritage**

A great variety of types of heritage have benefited from the Scheme's work, from taking a building off the 'At Risk' register, to increasing bat populations, to interpreting local mining features, and more.

### **For local communities**

Besides knowing about – and being able to access – so much more local heritage, there have been tremendous gains in social networks.

### **Overcoming significant project issues**

Three of the Scheme's original projects veered significantly 'off-course' for varying reasons, but the problems were dealt with, alternative actions identified and implemented, and the intended outcomes achieved.

### **Engendering activity, enthusiasm and commitment**

The level of volunteering has considerably exceeded expectations, and volunteers report back about very positive experiences.

It is useful to reflect on what the enabling factors for these achievements have been.

- **The staff team**

Individually and as a team, staff members have brought a very wide range of skills and knowledge to the Scheme. Their practical experience and local networks have brought considerable advantage to the work, and this is much appreciated by local participants.

They have proved themselves to be immensely committed to the Scheme, which has enabled them to achieve an enormous amount. However, this has been at a cost, with team members experiencing quite a bit of stress at times and feeling under-resourced. Individuals have been reluctant to 'say no', which is understandable and a natural result of their commitment, but this has tended to compound the problem. They have worked well together as a team, which has increased their capacity to deliver.

- **The Partnership Board**  
The partner organisations which have been active on the Partnership Board have been very supportive of the staff team, in tangible and less tangible ways. They have helped by making decisions when needed at the Board meetings, and have been active outside these meetings in a way which has helped to achieve intended outputs.  
There has been a good working relationship between the Scheme Manager, staff and Partnership Board members.  
The same Chair has been in post throughout the Scheme; this consistency has helped, as has his commitment (demonstrated in practical inputs and attitude).
- **The context**  
The Scheme area benefits from a local demographic with relatively numerous skilled people with time available for, and an interest in, volunteering. This is likely to have been developed in part by previous local projects (such as Back to Purple) and local groups already in existence.

However, as is inevitable, not everything has worked out entirely positively. With the benefit of hindsight, and our own external perspective, we would make a few observations.

- **The Partnership Board**  
The Board as initially designed was larger in number, but there were some regular non-attenders. The Scheme Manager tried hard to tackle this and to understand why, but with limited success. In reality, it is difficult to see how this could have been much different; the geographical location meant that the Scheme was operating 'at the edges' of many people's patches, and with increasing pressures on people's time, they would only attend if it was very core to their role. However, the people who did attend regularly can be seen as the 'right people' who were effective and enabled the Partnership Board to do its job.
- **Resourcing**  
The Scheme was under-resourced to deliver in line with its work-plan, with the result that staff team members were over-worked and experienced considerable stress at times. The issue was raised at the Interim Evaluation, with a suggestion to review and cut some element of the workplan. The success of the staff team in achieving the level of delivery that they have is down to their very strong commitment and work ethic, but this has come at a price.
- **Dealing with the 'problem projects'**  
The Partnership Board and staff team say – with the benefit of hindsight – that they probably should have dealt with the significant delivery problems sooner. In reality, this is very difficult to judge, as it is much harder to make the call to stop something when in the midst of the issue; what is clear is that there was some cost in terms of time wasted and stress.
- **Shropshire Council**  
Shropshire Council brought many benefits as a host organisation, but it was not well set up to support a programme at a distance, e.g. the IT and infrastructure problems

experienced by the staff team in the first two years of the Scheme. Besides the stress caused, this led to considerable wasted time.

- Planning for legacy

The focus of the staff team remained on delivery, right through towards the last months, somewhat at the expense of fully developing a legacy strategy and delivering its implementation. The pressure to deliver on grant-funded outputs is strong, particularly with a staff team who are committed to delivering an excellent Scheme. However, this means that there has not been much time available to put into legacy planning above and beyond practical immediacies (which was dealt with in the Scheme Manager's legacy plan), and that the overall question of a high level vision for legacy of the Scheme as a whole was not strongly discussed and adopted at a stage early enough to do something at a strategic level. This LPS is the latest of a number of initiatives intended to improve the conservation and management of the area's landscape; the commitment of its partner organisations provides a great opportunity to continue this practice, but there is little time left to build a 'big vision'.

## 4. LEARNING POINTS – THE EVALUATORS’ PERSPECTIVE

Evaluation respondents were asked about what learning points they would draw out from their experience of the Scheme. Their responses can be roughly grouped around:

- The importance of personalities and personal relationships to delivery.
- Engage as widely as possible at the design stage.
- Deal with significant problem projects as quickly as possible.

We considered these learning points in the light of our own experience and the other feedback provided within this evaluation, and developed them further. We then took our thoughts to the Partnership Board, where there was a comprehensive and wide-ranging discussion. The learning points which emerged from this discussion are presented below; these are an amalgamation of R4C and Partnership Board thinking, intended to provide useful food for thought for the partner organisations making up the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Partnership, other LPSs and organisations doing similar work, as well as HLF.

### Careful planning

- Projects should be taken forward where there is *group* commitment or vision, rather than where the project is the product of a single person’s aspirations. This reduces the risks associated with personality problems and control of the project.
- Ensure that everyone involved in a project has been able to discuss the different potential philosophies or approaches to that project, and agree on what will be done and why. This discussion will allow ideological differences to be brought out into the open. There should be a strong focus on finding the best way to achieve the best possible outcome for the heritage.
- Where an individual project is planned in a hurry, there is inevitably less detail and less in-depth planning, which means that the project tends to be more difficult to deliver and be less likely to succeed.
- There is always budget pressure at the Scheme planning stage to minimise the staff team resource, which can cause problems later on as the Scheme finds itself under-resourced to deliver in line with its ambitions. It is important that HLF recognises this tension, which tends to be evident in the amount of extra time worked by staff members, the stress they experience, and the work tasked squeezed below the level that staff feel is acceptable. Our observation is that this situation tends to be exacerbated with LPS staff who are often very committed to the cause!
- It would be really helpful to be able to learn from other Schemes when at the initial design stage. Perhaps this could be achieved by requiring each Scheme to host a learning session as a condition of their funding.

### The need to change

- It is crucial – but not at all easy – to recognise the point at which a significant step is needed in order to deal with a significant emerging problem. Failing to deal with a

problem in a timely manner is likely make things more difficult for the LPS staff team and others in terms of the amount of time that has to be spent dealing with the problem which cannot then be used for other work, as well as the levels of stress caused.

- Having strong contracts in place can be very important in providing the right framework to be able to deal with non-performance. If the contracts are drawn up with relatively small/short work delivery stages, this offers opportunities for review at shorter intervals and therefore makes it more likely that emerging problems can be picked up and dealt with before they become excessive.
- Having strong governance in place is also very important, in terms of providing a sound decision-making structure for dealing with an emerging problem.
- These procedures should be backed up by staff members with strong 'people skills', including a working understanding of conflict resolution.

### **Some management and strategic practicalities**

- Having a larger team of part-time staff is more time-consuming and complex to manage than a smaller team made up of full-time staff.
- The overall economic climate changed considerably over the period of the Scheme, making it harder for partner organisation staff to find time/capacity to help out above and beyond the minimum.
- A strong management approach is likely to be needed to ensure that staff deliver their roles appropriately in relation to the scale and timescale of their allocated work.
- The 'traffic light' system used to report to the Board works very well as a way to flag up the most significant problems and to make it possible for Board discussions to focus on the matters where their input is most needed.
- Where there is a very local HLF mentor/monitor with other roles and close links locally, this opens up a risk of perceptions of potential conflict of interest and perhaps loses the benefit of a useful 'outsider' or independent perspective.

### **Outcomes-based planning and delivery**

- Ideally, the starting point for planning project work should be the desired outcomes; from this, the projects should then be designed in order to achieve these outcomes.
- Where there is strong orientation towards outcomes, there is scope to revise the delivery methods if the originally planned activities are not bringing about results as anticipated. This requires flexibility from the funder (which has been the case for the LPS here).

### **Impact in all its facets**

- This LPS has been a very clear demonstration of how the Landscape Partnership programme approach can deliver as much social benefit as conservation and heritage benefit. With this in mind, it is worth considering the desired skillsets and experience of team staff; in this context, community development can be seen as a core required skill, with relevant application at design and planning stage, as well as delivery.

- The impact that a Scheme can achieve is to some extent a function of its context. In this case, the local demographic seems to have been a positive contributory factor to the success of the level and nature of volunteering, for example.

#### **Well-timed, proportionate and inclusive legacy planning**

- Legacy planning needs to start well ahead of the end of the Scheme, to give enough time to cover both the strategic decision-making about the Partnership's aspirations for legacy and the practicalities of the work needed to be done to achieve those aspirations.
- The wider economic context of austerity means that the types of on-going grant-funding opportunities that might have been available in previous years are not an option now. Alongside this, partner organisations no longer have capacity to pick up activities in a way they might previously have done. There are also issues relating to the difficulty of finding grant-funding which can be spent on private land. This forces LPSs to think differently about how project activities which have been successful within their Scheme might be enabled to continue, in particular whether there is an option for income generation and therefore a pathway towards future financial sustainability. It would be helpful if HLF funding in future would allow some degree of step-wise commercialisation, so that if successful, project activities would be ready to work on a commercial footing at the time of the end of funding.