

Farming in Protected Landscapes North Wessex Downs AONB

Case Study

Project Name: Elm Revival

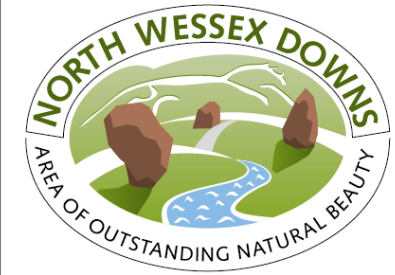
Applicant Name: Dr Robin Buxton

Farm Name: Church Farm Partnership

Amount of grant: £14,503.10

% of total funding awarded: approx. 80%

Year of Project: 2021/22



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Project Overview

Farm description

Church Farm Partnership is sandwiched between the Thames and Wittenham Clumps in the North-East of the AONB. It is a mixed farm with arable and beef cattle spread across the Oxfordshire floodplain. They have worked for two years with the Earth Trust and Wild Oxfordshire to deliver a landscape-scale restoration of Thames floodplain wet meadows and pastures between Clifton Hampden and Shillingford, aiming to restore populations of insectivorous birds like house martins and yellow wagtails, building on the Earth Trust's River of Life projects.

Project description

This project builds on the success of the 'River of Life Project' by **restoring hedgerows and tree lines** along **traditional field and parish boundaries**. These hedgerows and tree lines increase the **connectivity** of habitat for many species and restore the traditional character of the landscape. **Disease resistant elm** (grown intentionally for this purpose) will be used as hedgerow trees along with other species, to return a tree lost to the area. Due to the soil susceptible to drying out rapidly on the floodplain, the plants need watering. As a result, the programme is also supporting the purchase of a high capacity vacuum tanker. This high capacity, high speed tanker ensures the trees and hedgerows get watered and increases the sustainability of the farm business.



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Objectives

The objective of this project was to **establish a hedge** between two fields, with a mix of trees including **disease resistant elm** trees (variety *Ademuz*). A mix of trees were also planted, including disease resistant elms to replace the collapsed “Lombardy” poplars that have marked the **parish boundary** and boundary of the AONB for the last 80+ years.

Management Plan Strategic Objectives

From the eight themes in the Management Plan, this project seeks to fulfil the following Strategic Objectives: **S01, S14**

Thematic Programme Objectives

Nature	There is a greater area of wildlife rich habitat	X	People	There are more opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape	
	There is greater connectivity between habitats	X		There are increased opportunities for more diverse audiences to explore, enjoy and understand the landscape	
	Existing habitat is better managed for biodiversity	X		There is greater public engagement in land management, for example through volunteering	
	There is an increase in biodiversity	X			
Climate	More carbon is stored and/or sequestered	X	Place	The quality and character of the landscape is reinforced or enhanced	X
	Flood risk has been reduced	X		Historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively	
	Better understanding among farmers, land managers and the public as to what different habitats and land uses can deliver for carbon storage and reduced carbon emissions			There is an increase in the resilience of nature friendly sustainable farm businesses, which in turn contributes to a more thriving local economy	X
	The landscape is more resilient to climate change	X			



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Outputs

490m of new hedge planted using biodegradable tree guards

62 ordinary hedgerow trees planted

35 disease resistant elm planted

Vacuum tanker for watering hedgerows and trees purchased

Outcomes

This project has resulted in multiple outcomes. In such close proximity to the River Thames, any tree and hedge planting serves to **arrest the decline in water quality** and **increase flood resilience**. It has resulted in **greater connectivity** across the farm which in the long run will be a boon for local biodiversity as well as **increasing carbon sequestration**. The **re-introduction of elm** will **increase biodiversity** and provide a once abundant tree a presence in the landscape again. Furthermore, the replacement of trees in **traditional boundaries** serves to **reinforce landscape character**.

Key Learnings

The use of biodegradable tree guards will limit the amount of plastic in the landscape, limit the unsightly guards left after the hedge is established and reduces labour as they won't have to be cleared up afterward. We can offer an uplift in funding where applicants are going above and beyond the levels described in Countryside Stewardship.

Where tree planting is occurring, thought should be taken about species selection. We need to not only plant trees to boost biodiversity and carbon sequestration but also those trees suitable to the site and wider landscape, as well as providing future resilience and trees that may have been lost but once abundant such as the elm.



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Photos credit – Rob West 2022



View of landscape trees



View of landscape trees



View of hedgerow



Vacuum tanker for watering plants



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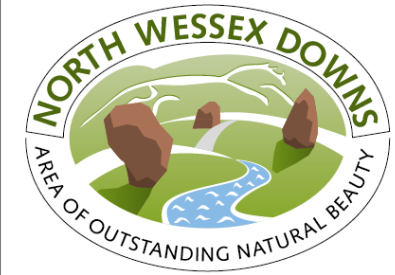
For More Information

Contact Rob West, Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer

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Refer to the North Wessex Downs AONB website for latest information

<https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/farming/farming-in-protected-landscapes/>



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