

Nature Improvement Areas programme 2012-2015

Case studies

Following the end of the 3 year funded NIA programme the NIAs were asked to submit their top case studies under a variety of headings. Case studies submitted by the 6 NIAs that responded are listed below

	Birmingham and Black Country	Dark Peak	Marlborough Downs	Northern Devon	Nene Valley	Wild Purbeck
Habitat – creation or restoration of new priority habitat	<p>Situated on the edge of Castle Vale estate in Birmingham was an area of little-used and biodiversity-poor open space. Working with a local charity, the Community Environmental Trust, and the University of Wolverhampton, NIA staff designed and delivered a project to create two new species-rich meadows.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbdSCBu5fVY</p>	<p>Burbage: The Dark Peak NIA Project's aims include the improvement and creation of areas of high quality wildlife habitat. This woodland project contributed to these aims by replacing impoverished, alien conifer plantation with open moorland habitats and Sessile Oak woodland. With a net gain across the NIA project area of 14.40 ha of woodland, 8.58 ha of upland heath, through the removal of this significant conifer plantation. This work was to be the biggest project within the biggest of the 12 new national NIAs.</p>		<p>Use of green hay and seed collection from species-rich sites to create new grassland</p> <p>www.northerndevonnia.org</p>	<p>Inspiring Meadows; Meadow restoration and creation was undertaken at targeted sites in the Nene Valley. 63ha were restored and 11ha created through HLS and a NIA land advisor fund. This contributes to a wider project which has created and restored over 400ha since 2006 and was presented at the annual CIEM conference.</p> <p>http://www.nenevalleynia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Inspiring-meadows-CIEM-conference-presentation.pdf</p>	<p>400 Ha heathland restoration through scrub removal and installing fencing to allow grazing to be undertaken.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/132-landmanagement/691-heathland-restoration</p> <p>In addition, 71 Ha of high quality heathland restored through increased management and aftercare, including raking and Rhododendron clearance. This took place in Wareham, Affpuddle and Rempstone Forests.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/132-landmanagement/562-high-quality-heathland</p>
Habitat - maintaining or improving condition of existing priority habitat	<p>Milking Bank is a large area of open space in Dudley that was created on the site of a former opencast coal mine. In 2013</p>				<p>“Greening” the River Nene through Peterborough city centre; using pre-vegetated coir rolls to transform the aesthetics,</p>	<p>The Land Management Advisory Service has visited 54 farmers to advise on new and existing HLS agreements, and</p>

	<p>The Wildlife Trust and Dudley Council began a project to improve the site for people and wildlife. The project involved local schools and community volunteers in activities that enhanced the woodlands, grasslands and wetlands of Milking Bank.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/nia/projects/milking-bank-plantations-project</p>				<p>appearance and ecological function along 640m of concrete, sterile riverbank in the city centre.</p> <p>http://www.therrc.co.uk/Bulletin/Apr2014/Nene_Peterborough.pdf</p>	<p>provide land management advice benefitting the environment. 12 HLS agreements were submitted and 25 revisited. This has increased the area of unimproved land with low impact grazing in the NIA by 380 Ha.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/132-landmanagement/565-land-management-advisory-service</p>
<p>Species – recovery</p>	<p>The canal network of Wolverhampton supports three isolated populations of water vole. Working with the Canal and River Trust a Nature Improvement Area project was delivered that aimed to protect and link the populations through increasing available cover, foraging and habitat.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/nia/projects/wandering-water-voles</p>		<p>Grassland management for owls and raptors – patchwork of sites across large area has led to wider range for these birds; each farm leaves 20% of rough grassland area ungrazed each year so ‘burden’ of providing habitat is shared and truly landscape scale</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyw7IG5hPW0</p> <p>Tree sparrow villages – increased range of tree sparrows, new colonies, more fledglings</p> <p>http://www.mdnia.org.uk/what_tree.html http://www.mdnia.org</p>			<p>The ladybird spider occurs on a single known natural site in Britain, which is in Purbeck. The project re-introduced the spider on 12 sites, following this up with monitoring.</p> <p>See page 30 of “End of Project report” available at http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck</p>

			g.uk/featured_stories_general.html#tree			
Habitat Connectivity	<p>The River Penk in Wolverhampton has been constrained in a culvert since the mid-20th century. Working in partnership with the Environment Agency and Wolverhampton City Council the Nature Improvement Area created a new open channel which now takes the flow of the Penk through the centre of species-rich grassland in an area of public open space.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/node/7806</p>					<p>A landscape permeability study was carried out to identify key opportunities for habitat creation or restoration to improve habitat connectivity. Work has been undertaken with landowners to draw up a list of projects to achieve this.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/146-researchplanning/571-landscape-permeability</p>
Delivering social and economic benefits	<p>Birmingham and the Black Country NIA Ecosystem Assessment: the green infrastructure investigated within scope of this study provides ecosystem services valued at £1.08 billion capitalised over 100 years (2014 prices), stating the best guess estimate. In addition a case study evaluation for habitats created as part of the NIA activities has been undertaken.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/sites/default/files/bbc_nia_ea_2015.pdf</p>		<p>Disabled carriage driving</p> <p>http://www.mdnia.org.uk/featured_stories_general.html#general</p>	<p>Research with Exeter University – this has shown that Culm grassland holds up to 5 times the amount of water in storm events compared to conventional grassland, making it a valuable contribution to flood risk management.</p> <p>www.northerndevonia.org</p>	<p>Access to the Nene Valley; Accessible green space was mapped and analysed, whilst visitor access to core areas of the NIA, based around the SPA, was the basis of a visitor access study. The reports will be used to influence future conservation management, Green Infrastructure projects and planning policy.</p> <p>http://www.nenevalleynia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/NIA-ANGSt-rpt.pdf & http://www.nenevalleynia.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Footprint-Ecology-Upper-Nene-Valley-Gravel-Pits-</p>	<p>A schools programme worked with 55 teachers from 8 schools in Purbeck to encourage them to integrate nature and wildlife into curriculum planning. Teachers from 4 schools were trained in Forest Schools, and one teacher has visited the USA on an exchange to promote this way of working.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/145-community/590-schools-programme</p>

					SPA-Visitor-Survey-screenres.pdf	
Innovation	<p>The Wildlife Trust's 'Growing Local Flora' project is providing millions of seeds and thousands of locally-sourced plants to projects which are being delivered by Nature Improvement Area partners.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/nia/projects/growing-local-flora</p>			<p>Beaford Arts commissioned two theatres pieces, one on ecosystem services (The Bureau of Extraordinance Survey, for families) and the other on perceptions of values of the land ('The Common')</p> <p>www.northerndevonia.org</p>		
Synergies e.g. Good working across government bodies &/or local delivery and partnerships	<p>Sedgley Beacon is a well-known local landmark and area of public open space. Since 2013 a Nature Improvement Area funded project has been helping to restore the historic environment and enhance the site for people and wildlife. The project is a partnership between The Wildlife Trust, South Staffs Water, Dudley Council, The Friends of Sedgley Beacon and local schools.</p> <p>http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/nia/projects/sedgley-beacon-grassland-improvement-project</p>			<p>Strong partnership working across FC, EA and NE plus 12 other project partners</p> <p>www.northerndevonia.org</p>		<p>Good partnership working on a number of projects. This is continuing post NIA funding.</p> <p>http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/149-wppartnership</p>
Ecosystem Services					<p>Valuation of ecosystem services in the Nene Valley; This report provides a monetary valuation of three</p>	

					ecosystem services provided by the Nene Valley: carbon, pollination, and recreation. By calculating a monetary value for these services the aim is to improve understanding of the importance of the natural environment for people and the economy. http://www.nenevalleynia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Valuation-of-ecosystem-services-in-the-Nene-Valley-NIA.pdf	
Volunteers	The NIA's Freshwater Invertebrate Network (FIN) helps community groups take care of their streams. Volunteers use invertebrates to monitor stream health and work to protect and improve urban watercourses to become Stream Champions! http://www.yourstream.org.uk/		With the exception of the project manager the whole of the Marlborough Downs project was delivered by volunteers – from the board to the delivery groups to the farmers on the ground			Over 3,000 volunteer days have been contributed to Wild Purbeck. The Cyril Diver project has engaged local experts in survey work, whilst the Community Gateway has engaged with a wide variety of community groups. Over 10% of the population has been engaged in some way. http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/145-community/582-community-gateway http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/146-researchplanning/573-cyril-diver-s-archive
Value added	The Birmingham & Black Country NIA is working with the Environment Agency-					The National Trust has fully engaged as a partner in the Wild Purbeck NIA and are

	<p>led River Rea Catchment Partnership to build biodiversity gains into large-scale flood risk management projects. http://www.reacatchmentpartnership.co.uk/</p>					<p>currently developing a bid to continue a number of the projects begun through the NIA. The high profile of the NIA has also assisted in enabling two land purchases to proceed in the Wild Purbeck NIA area. In kind support and financial contributions added £1.8 million to the grant, resulting in a total project of £2.8 million http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk/our-work/wildpurbeck/132-landmanagement/566-saline-lagoon</p>
<p>Effective Communication, e.g. web/twitter/open farm events/inspirational delivery</p>	<p>Our work in creating a network of species-rich grasslands has gained significant media coverage including a number of items on local television. http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/niaprojects</p>		<p>Open Farm Sunday – 800 to 1000 visitors each year. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxF3SAej-BI&feature=youtu.be</p> <p>Facebook page – almost 500 followers www.facebook.com/MarlboroughDownsNIA</p>		<p><i>A Public Dialogue Project;</i> <i>Learning from the experience of the Nene Valley NIA.</i> The project gave local people the opportunity to contribute to finding solutions for issues around public access within the NIA. This consisted of two key work streams; community panels and an interactive website. http://www.nenevalleynia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Nene-Valley-NIA-Guidance-Document.pdf</p>	