



The Project Officer should assist the group by:

- Gathering survey data and information of any previous management agreements.
- Breaking the area down into compartments by ownership and management.
- Identifying the effect of re-introduction of grazing on other land users.
- Examining the use of land adjacent to grassland sites to identify possible areas for arable reversion to increase viability of grazing areas.
- Getting quotations for any capital works required.
- Working up business plans and budgets with all group members to fund works.
- Discussing the opportunities to delegate between organisations and individuals to maximise staff resources and volunteer hours.
- Making applications for consents, funding and to carry out practical works.
- Co-ordinating site work.
- Acting as a co-ordinator and facilitator for delivery, sharing the knowledge base amongst members.
- Offering help towards related local issues to build trust and relationships.
- Advising graziers on farm diversification and assisting in developing markets for produce.

All landscape and biodiversity partnerships have the potential to work in this way.

Delivery of long-term solutions for grassland sites is about empowering local people to take responsibility and look after their own local environment. This, in turn, engages local resources in a sustainable way and gives a shared sense of achievement.

Limestone grassland sites near you can be found by selecting 'habitat inventories' at Defra's multi-agency geographical information centre website at www.magic.gov.uk

Other useful websites:

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| www.defra.gov.uk | www.grazinganimalsproject.org.uk |
| www.english-nature.org.uk | www.farmwildlife.info/ |

This fact sheet is part of a series:

- Horses, Grassland Management and Nature Conservation
- Communities and Limestone Grassland Management
- Limestone Grassland Management for the Smallholder
- Limestone Grassland Restoration Case Studies

The Limestone Grassland Project, which is part of the Caring for the Cotswolds Project, is supported by a £1.43m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For further guidance on special features of the AONB contact us at:



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This fact sheet is aimed at Project Officers in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, (AONB) who are interested in delivering sustainable management on limestone grassland sites, where there is a strong community interest. It is also designed for general use as a guide for anyone who is keen to conserve grassland sites.

This guidance will help you to:

- Deliver long term sustainable management of wildlife habitat, historic environment and landscape through partnership working.
- Promote and facilitate Environmental Stewardship agreements through Natural England.
- Have a positive impact on the local economy and environment.
- Create an integrated forum to benefit people who live and work in the countryside.
- Create and market quality local products to enable sustainability.
- Reduce the need for constant funding to deliver favourable condition of grassland sites.

Project Planning

It is important to have realistic objectives and outputs for the project, targeting complex sites that will benefit most from co-ordinated partnership working, for example common land. Many funding bodies now require a high level of public benefit, so, identifying your audience and how that benefit can be quantified, is important. It is necessary to research all existing conservation projects in the area to ensure that you maximise opportunities for collaborative working with other projects which have similar objectives.

Carrying out this research will identify potential partners, conservation groups and individuals who may be interested in working with you and will help identify any schemes, grants and match funding opportunities that can be accessed for the project. Research in detail and do not underestimate the cost of capital works required to deliver sustainable management. Be familiar with all the necessary processes for consents required and any legislation that may impact on the project.

The success of the project directly relates to recruiting the right type of person for the post.

Many organisations wishing to protect and manage grassland sites may be constrained by their individual objectives and criteria. They may not have the remit or resources to look for long term solutions with wider objectives. Consequently, a Project Officer enables a more holistic approach to grassland management.

The Project Officer

A Project Officer should demonstrate the following qualities and skills:

- Exceptional interpersonal skills at every level and an interest in building relationships.
- A genuine passion for countryside protection.
- Enthusiasm and the ability to motivate.
- Problem solving abilities.
- Practical knowledge of agriculture.
- Knowledge of environmental and agricultural policy.
- A self starter.
- Ability to co-ordinate, delegate and facilitate the implementation of the restoration works.

An Officer can engage the local community and co-ordinate partnership working to maximise resources and deliver more than the individual organisations can achieve in isolation. They must identify opportunities offered by organisations and individuals, and orchestrate their contributions so that everyone works towards a common long-term aim, encouraging a sense of ownership and control over the project by local people.

Sustainability is dependent on there being an end product that makes practical management viable. Conservation grassland sites, when linked to surrounding grassland to create viable units, can be used as a marketing tool to promote value added produce; beef or lamb. Also, engaging local resources can save funding for practical works e.g. local firewood businesses can benefit by removing natural regeneration that threatens grassland.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has produced a Limestone Grassland Strategy showing how this can be achieved. Copies can be downloaded from our website – www.cotswoldsconb.org.uk

A guide to delivering long term sustainable management of sites

Each site may be different but the process is the same:

- Ensure adequate Project Officer time is identified in the delivery at the early stages.
- Ensure the length of the project is adequate to deliver the work necessary for long term sustainability.
- Consider the stakeholders involved in conservation sites with multiple land use.
- Dispel any negative pre-conceived perceptions that interested parties may have of each other.

A Guide to delivering long-term sustainable management of sites:

- Research the historic management of the site and identify people who have been involved with its management.
- Identify whether there is an existing management plan or site management statement.
- Contact the Parish Council and encourage broad public support for the opportunities of the restoration project.
- Collect information from local people, conservation groups, site managers, farmers and enthusiasts.
- Seek official support and endorsement of the Parish Council.
- Contact and build relationships with landowners.

Communication and consultation creates a forum bringing all interested parties together, sharing knowledge, understanding and commitment.

Grassland is a vulnerable resource. Implementing a sustainable structure through supported local delivery is essential to protect the long term future of the grassland site:

Parish Council ► Conservation Sub-Committee ► Management Group ► Village Volunteer Work Party

- Create effective communications with management group members, maybe through a group email.
- Encourage all villagers to attend the management meetings and be included in the group email.

Management Group Members should be drawn from:

- Advisors from relevant Local Government Departments and Statutory Bodies.
- Parish Council and/or conservation sub-committee members.
- District/ County Councillors.
- Landowners.
- Local recreational interest groups.
- Local ecologists and enthusiasts.
- Local conservation groups.
- Farmers/Graziers.
- Volunteer Groups.

The Management Group should identify and discuss:

- The owner's aims and objectives.
- The members' interests.
- The sharing of information.
- The short and long-term management aims and opportunities
- The contribution that each organisation can make to the overall aim.
- Timescales.
- The design and detail of specifications for any practical works.
- How to support local graziers and promote the meat products locally.
- How to inform the local community and deal with any concerns.
- The frequency that they need to meet.