

‘Grow With Wyre’

ROSEMARY WINNALL

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Why is Wyre special?

The Wyre Forest is a rich tapestry of ancient semi-natural woodland interspersed with traditional orchards, unimproved flower meadows, old hedgerows, veteran trees, and winding watercourses. It has a unique biodiversity, a fascinating history and captivating landscape features. Wyre is one of the largest areas of ancient semi-natural woodland in Britain, 2,634 hectares in size, of which a fifth is designated a National Nature Reserve (549Ha) and two thirds a Site for Special Scientific Interest (1,753Ha).

‘Grow With Wyre’

‘Grow With Wyre’, the £4 million Landscape Partnership Scheme led by the Forestry Commission, took place between 2008 and 2012, aiming to conserve, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape heritage of the Wyre Forest. It was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sita Trust, Natural Assets, Biffaward, Grantscape, and other funders, and 18 projects were delivered within the 28 square miles of greater Wyre.

What has been achieved?



New Community Discovery Centre

Rosemary Winnall

An attractive new Community Discovery Centre has been built for use by groups of all ages and abilities, with regular Open Days for the general public. It is heated by a woodchip boiler and is one of 6 such boilers across the area to help the demand for low carbon fuel. This encourages sustainable woodland management (with biodiversity gains), by providing a product for sale. There is now a commercial woodchip store within the forest and a retail outlet for logs. 3 workshops have been run in local communities to demonstrate low carbon approaches, and from this



Woodchip store, Wyre Forest

Rosemary Winnall

Transition Groups have been formed to take forward a low carbon economy within the district.

In the new building there is now a Records and Archive Centre which is manned by volunteers from the Wyre Forest Study Group in conjunction with Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (see www.wyreforest.net). An audio project ‘The Nature of Wyre – a Forest Relived’ is a collection of recorded interviews by older local residents that provides a lasting reminder of memories of the forest in days gone by. A Crayfish Survey was undertaken to map the remaining native White-clawed Crayfish populations within the Dowles catchment, with training for volunteer recorders and information for landowners. The Reptile Project involved volunteers and a consultant working together to find out more about the local adder population, and a 10 year breeding programme has been instigated using an adder pod built at the West Midlands Safari Park.

14 traditional orchards have been restored and 25 new orchards created, with training courses delivered in cider and juice making, the wildlife value of orchards, bees and orchards, restoration pruning and care of young orchard trees. A commercial juicing plant has been set up to provide an outlet for the fruit whilst producing a valued product.

A grazing animal project has resulted in 350 acres of small meadows and orchards being grazed by the 45 Dexter cattle purchased and held by the Wyre Community Land Trust. Several landowners have been assisted into Higher Level Stewardship 10 year agreements to enable this project to continue. Pigs have been introduced into plots of clearfelled woodland to help to restrict conifer regrowth and a monthly market has been established for local producers to sell their produce.

Courses have been provided on coppicing, hedge planting and hedgelaying, and 19.5 km of hedgerow has been planted to link up woodland, to reinstate old

Wyre Forest Study Group

hedgerows, or fill gaps. 200 veteran trees have been discovered, 150 have had management plans prepared and 40 trees have had remedial work carried out. 3 apprenticeships were provided in Trees and Timber Working and 795 training places were offered in woodland management.



The new 'Simon Walker' orchard

Rosemary Winnall

'Back to Orange' involved forest management for butterflies during which conifers were removed, some south-facing slopes and damp areas were opened up, and flight corridors and scallops created. Monitoring took place to check the benefits, and during the last 2 years there has been a significant increase in numbers of Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Wood Whites, Drab Looper moths and Grizzled Skippers. A butterfly identification leaflet was produced, training courses held, and now we have committed volunteers who will continue to monitor butterflies into the future.



Pigs in Wyre

Rosemary Winnall

The scheme area was surveyed using LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) and maps created to show the ground surface below the tree canopy. 36 volunteers have been trained in validation and 20 landowners have been involved. Archaeological features of note have been discovered and interpretation panels have been produced. Two historic buildings have been restored – Knowles Mill and Coopers Mill, and the latter is now available as a bunkhouse for use by youth groups and students.

These are just some of the 18 projects that were successfully completed. Legacy provision is already planned and a Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership has been formed under the chairmanship of Professor Chris Baines. Natural England and the Forestry Commission are supporting a 3 year post for a Strategic Development Manager, Tim Selman, who started in Wyre in Jan. 2013. In partnership we shall take forward the good work that has already been achieved under Grow With Wyre!



LIDAR training day, Pound Green

Emma Thompson