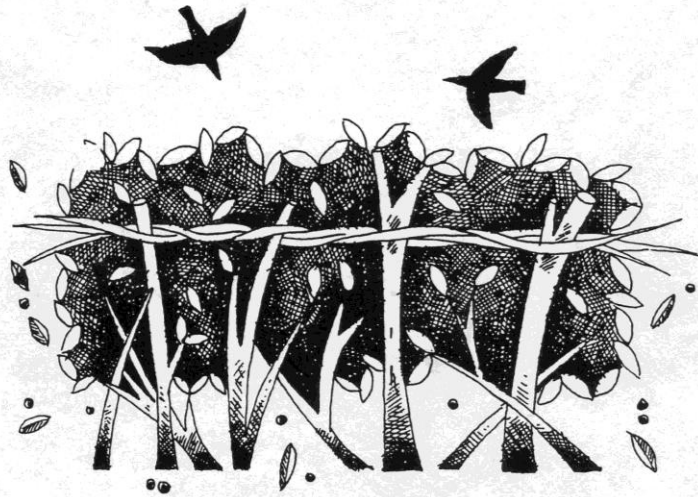




English Nature Research Reports

Enriching the Vale:
Final report for the Dorset Blackmore Vale Trial Area



HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

No. 376

working today
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English Nature Research Reports

Number 376

Enriching the Vale

Final report for the Dorset Blackmore Vale Trial Area

April 2000

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Contents

Preface	7
Acknowledgements	7
Executive summary	9
1. The national Habitat Restoration Project	11
2. The local project	12
2.1 Objectives	12
2.2 Location and landscape	12
2.3 Main habitats	13
2.4 The Steering and Advisory Groups	14
2.5 The role of the project officer	14
2.6 Main nature conservation features and designations	14
2.7 Land ownership	15
3. The key lessons derived from the Blackmore Vale trial area	15
3.1 The vision	15
3.2 The most effective methods for stimulating restoration or creation schemes	16
3.3 The value of the project in stimulating restoration or creation schemes	16
3.4 The greatest obstacles to habitat restoration and creation	17
3.5 Implications for delivery of international (Habitats and Species Directive), national (BAP) and local (NAP) objectives	19
3.6 The implications of the project timescale	20
4. The vision for the trial area and its implementation	20
4.1 Background to the vision	20
4.2 The aims of the vision	21
4.3 Delivery of the vision	21
4.4 Target habitats and species	22
4.5 Habitats and species monitoring	22
5. Results of the trial and discussion	25
5.1 Summary	25
5.2 Wildlife benefit achieved within the trial area	26
5.3 Achieving better working relationships with landowners and partners	37
5.4 Value of the partnership approach	38
5.5 Funding for habitat restoration and creation	40
5.6 Value of a project officer	43
6. A vision for the future	45
6.1 Suggested improvements to the project	45
6.2 Extending the scope of the project	46
7. References	46
Appendix 1. Farmers' interest survey - questionnaire	47
Appendix 2. Financial options for restoration	49

Preface

This report summarises the work of the Habitat Restoration Project in Dorset from 1997 to 1999 - the *Enriching the Vale* Project. The comments made and conclusions reached are based on the actual experience of the Project but would not necessarily be repeated in other places during other time frames. Common themes and contrasting approaches across the four trial areas will be established when comparisons are made between *Enriching the Vale* and the other trial areas. Consequently the views expressed here are not necessarily those of English Nature but will make a useful contribution to developing that view.

Acknowledgements

I would especially like to thank all the farmers and landowners in the Blackmore Vale for their continued interest and involvement in the project, and their enthusiasm in carrying out restoration works which would otherwise not have been possible.

I would also like to thank the members of the Steering Group who provided support for the project locally, especially Bob Green for voluntarily contributing his time and expertise, and to a number of people in different organisations:

English Nature: Phil Horton, James Isaacs, Dee Stephens, Rachel Thomas, James Trueman, Peter Wain;

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FRCA: Stephanie Payne, Adrian Jowitt.

Rachel Thomas
April 2000

Executive summary

The Habitat Restoration Project was initiated by English Nature in 1996 to investigate ways of reversing habitat fragmentation and degradation, with the overall aim of exploring different approaches to increase the biodiversity in lowland England. The project was also set up to assess the extent to which the objectives set out in the Habitats and Species Directive, the Biodiversity Action Plan and Natural Area Profiles could be met within four trial areas of lowland England.

The Dorset trial area is centred in the Blackmore Vale which lies within the Wessex Vales Natural Area. It is a low-lying clay vale, characterised by small intensive dairy farms. Semi-natural habitats are scattered throughout the trial area, and linked by an intricate network of species-rich hedgerows, flower-rich roadside verges and streams.

Overall the project achieved the following:

- A succinct summary of BAP and Natural Area targets for the trial area landscape through the vision map. It showed landowners ideas for habitat restoration, and the most beneficial locations in relation to their local landscape.
- A project officer-centred focus to the delivery of BAP, to provide a single point of contact for landowners and partner organisations.
- Good working relationships with landowners and partner organisations.
- A greater understanding of the most successful ways, and constraints, to achieving BAP targets within a farming landscape.
- Additional financial incentives for habitat creation/restoration, and targeting existing incentives.
- 201 ha and 6.6 km of creation and restoration work in 250 schemes over 32 months, largely within the preferred areas, and further work planned for the near future.
- A ten year programme of site-based ecological monitoring.

The key learning points from the project are as follows:

- The area based approach of the project enabled promotion and advice to be targeted to a specific group of landowners/managers.
- The project timescale of three years was sufficient time to determine the key factors affecting habitat restoration. However, in an agricultural area with 150 landowners/managers, a longer project time would have permitted greater wildlife benefit on the ground.
- The vision map provided a holistic view of the trial area, and was useful in discussions with landowners and encouraging habitat creation/restoration.

- The single point of contact and pro-active approach of the project officer was particularly welcomed and useful for landowners and partner organisations.
- The current economics of UK agriculture is by far the greatest obstacle to habitat creation/restoration on farmland, and has caused acute financial, labour and land ownership constraints.
- Conservation projects on farmland need to be integrated with agricultural production, in an economical and practical way.
- The restoration of semi-natural habitats on farmland is easier to achieve than the creation of new habitat.
- Small farms do not have land available to take out of agricultural production for habitat creation and the costs of restoration are often too high in relation to farm income.
- Farmers are keen to restore hedgerows and ponds, and manage areas of unproductive land for wildlife.
- Financial incentives are essential to achieve habitat creation/restoration on farmland.
- Additional funding for one-off capital projects is needed, to enable farmers to address one conservation project at a time to suit their farm business and their available time and labour.
- It takes time to gain farmers' confidence and instigate habitat schemes, which once established needs to be continued.

1. The national Habitat Restoration Project

When the UK Government signed the International Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, it committed itself to reversing declines in habitats and species. Following the Summit, the Government set national targets for restoring threatened habitats and species in the UK through the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This plan recognised that in order for species to thrive, they must be able to move between habitats and states that 'the fragmentation or isolation of key habitats [is] to be avoided and wherever practicable past fragmentation [is] to be reversed' (Biodiversity Steering Group 1995).

In 1996, English Nature initiated a specific project to investigate ways of reversing habitat fragmentation and degradation and creating an agricultural landscape that is more hospitable to wildlife, with the overall aim of exploring different approaches to increase the biodiversity in lowland England. The project was also set up to assess the extent to which the objectives set out in the Habitats and Species Directive, the Biodiversity Action Plan and Natural Area Profiles could be met within trial areas of lowland England. Experience gained from the trial areas will allow conservation organisations to target the most effective means of reversing habitat deterioration and fragmentation using the current range of environmental land management schemes and to identify any constraints which may prevent this from being achieved.

Four trial areas, each of about one hundred square kilometres, were chosen to represent a particular type of agricultural landscape typical of lowland England (Figure 1). They are as follows:

1. *Enriching the Vale* - The Blackmore Vale, Dorset: a low-lying clay vale, characterised by small intensive dairy farms and scattered semi-natural habitats.
2. *Ouse Valley Link* - The Ouse Valley, Buckinghamshire: a river valley dominated by fairly intensive, mixed farms with little semi-natural habitat.
3. *Renewing the Alde* - The Alde Estuary, Suffolk: a varied landscape with large areas of important semi-natural habitats including coastal grazing marsh and heathland.
4. *Sherwood Forest* - Nottinghamshire: an historical landscape with a mix of land-type including farmland, coal mines, forestry, leisure parks, heathland and wood-pasture associated with old parkland estates.

The following report sets out the main learning points gained from the project in the Blackmore Vale trial area in north Dorset.

2. The local project

The Project:

- covers land in the Blackmore Vale in north Dorset;
- supports a wide variety of ecologically important habitats in addition to extensive areas of intensively managed farmland;
- aimed to reverse habitat fragmentation and degradation;
- produced an idealised vision that identified the best locations for the restoration and creation of priority habitats and set targets for those habitats;
- encouraged restoration of habitats using funds from a wide variety of agri-environment schemes, including Countryside Stewardship and local grant schemes;
- employed a project officer to stimulate appropriate restoration projects by landowners;
- used an established group of locally based organisations as a steering group.

2.1 Objectives

The Dorset trial area aimed to implement the national objectives of the Habitat Restoration Project at a local level. The overall objective was to encourage the creation and restoration of locally characteristic habitats and to determine whether this could be achieved using the current range of environmental land management schemes.

2.2 Location and landscape

The Dorset trial area is situated in the Blackmore Vale of north Dorset, south-east of Sherborne and south-west of Sturminster Newton. It comprises approximately 100 square kilometres of low-lying, gently undulating clay vale, characterised by small intensive dairy farms within the Wessex Vales Natural Area and Blackmore Vale Countryside Character Area (Figure 2).

The landscape of the Blackmore Vale is typical of the English lowland pastoral countryside, composed of small fields, defined by a dense network of hedgerows, streams and small roads with verges that support flower-rich plant communities. Most of the grasslands have been agriculturally improved, and small woodlands are scattered throughout the area. The little arable land is mostly sown with winter wheat and maize silage used for winter livestock feeding, with smaller acreages of oilseed rape, linseed and other crops. There are a number of linear villages and hamlets, and many scattered farmhouses and dwellings.

2.3 Main habitats

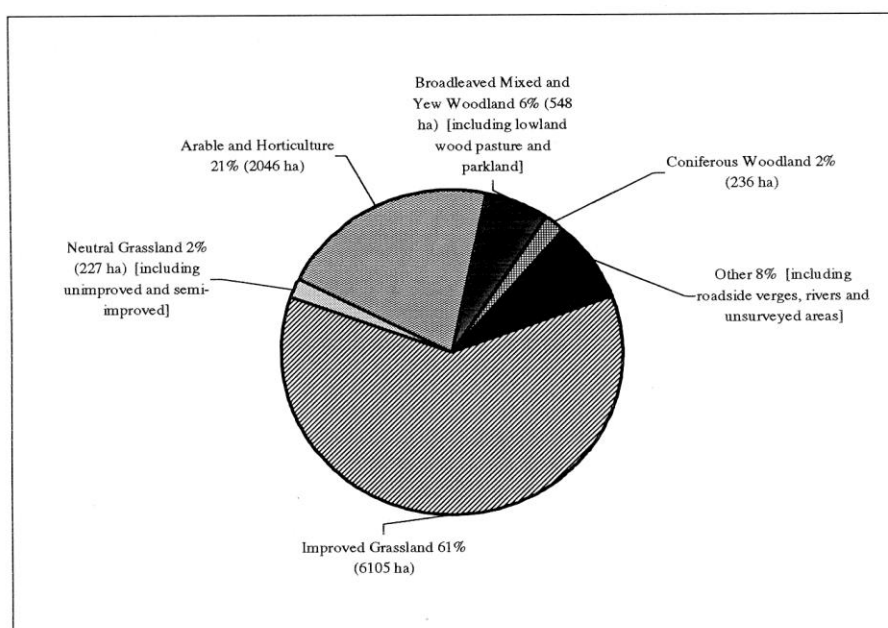


Figure 8 : Summary of the main habitats in the Blackmore Vale

A Phase I Habitat Survey was carried out at the start of the project in autumn 1996. It identified a mosaic of good wildlife habitat throughout the trial area, connected by streams, hedgerows and roadside verges. The extent of the main habitats is illustrated in Table 1 and Figures 3 and 4. The majority of the trial area consists of improved grassland (61%), arable land (21%) and woodland (8%).

Table 1. The extent of habitats in the Blackmore Vale

Broad habitat		Areas (ha)	% Trial Area
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	<i>Inc. lowland wood pasture and parkland</i>	547.7 (74)	5.5 (0.7)
Coniferous woodland		236.3	2.4
Unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland	<i>Inc. unimproved & semi-improved Inc. purple moor grass & rush pasture</i>	261.1 (34.2)	2.6 (0.3)
Acid grassland		1.3	0.01
Standing open water		7.1	0.07
Arable and horticultural		2045.5	20.5
Improved grassland		6104.5	61
Other	<i>Inc. roadside verges, rivers, streams & unsurveyed areas</i>	798.3	7.9

2.4 The Steering and Advisory Groups

A Steering Group was set up at the outset of the Dorset project in 1997. The group comprised representatives from the following organisations:

- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- Farming and Rural Conservation Agency
- Local farmer

Meetings of the Steering Group took place approximately every six months, and acted as a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences, and giving strategic direction for delivering the Project.

An Advisory Group was also set up, and comprised representatives from a wider range of organisations and the farming community. Advisory Group meetings took place annually and also acted as a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences. In addition, several of the organisations worked closely with the project, providing advice, support and jointly working on conservation projects in the Vale. The National Farmers Union, Forestry Commission, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency were particularly involved in helping the project to deliver its objectives.

2.5 The role of the project officer

The project officer was employed in August 1997 to manage and direct the implementation of the project. In the first year the main requirement was to establish contact with the farming community and other landowners in the trial area, to raise awareness of the project's objectives and to seek access permission for the Phase I habitat survey. This pro-active approach was essential to build relationships with local farmers and landowners and act as a point of contact for advice. As the project progressed, the project officer provided an essential facilitating role in furthering interest and encouragement, assisting with grant applications and specifying practical implementation plans.

The project officer also helped to ensure that criteria for grants from external bodies, such as Countryside Stewardship and the Dorset Small Woods Management Challenge Fund, were targeted towards the restoration of habitats in the Blackmore Vale.

2.6 Main nature conservation features and designations

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the trial area; Lydlinch Common and Stock Wood, and Rooksmoor. Both contain species-rich meadows, scrub and woodland, and support major populations of the marsh fritillary butterfly. In order to protect this internationally scarce butterfly, Rooksmoor and Lydlinch together are a candidate for a Special Area for Conservation (cSAC) under the Habitats Directive.

In addition, the trial area contains 47 locally important Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) containing unimproved neutral grassland, semi-natural ancient woodland, and parkland (Figure 7).

2.7 Land ownership

There are approximately 150 farms and holdings in the trial area, of which almost half are less than 40 hectares in size. Dairy farming is the predominant land use, and most farms are family businesses. Nearly a third of the farms are rented from neighbouring large estates, the County Council and private owners.

The MAFF Agricultural Census (1985-1995) showed a decrease in the number of full-time farms (101 in 1985 to 84 in 1995) and an increase in the number of part-time farms (75 in 1985 to 93 in 1995) in the trial area. Although this data applies to a ten year period before the project started, it highlights the changes in land use and farm businesses, leading up to the start of the project in 1997. This situation has continued, as the period of the project coincided with probably the most rapid deterioration of economic circumstances which British agriculture has seen for generations. Farmers are not just modifying their enterprises, but to an increasing extent are ceasing their enterprises (such as dairying). For example, the village of Hazelbury Bryan in the trial area, supported 15 dairy farms 30 years ago. In the last two years alone, five farms have ceased their business, and today just two dairy farms remain. Increasingly, parcels of land and even whole farms are passing from people farming for a livelihood to those who are not, and in some cases to people who have little knowledge and means of land management. Such ownership is often more short-term with different aims to those of livelihood farmers.

3. The key lessons derived from the Blackmore Vale trial area

3.1 The vision

It was clear from the start of the project that delivery of the vision (of both the aims of the project and the vision map) would need to have a careful approach. It was essential to build the trust and confidence of farmers and land managers in the trial area from the outset, and to deliver the vision in a practical and encouraging way (4.3).

The vision map (Figure 5) clearly showed the existing habitats, and the preferred areas for the creation and restoration of the priority habitats. Its illustrative presentation was a useful aid to show farmers and landowners the results of the Phase I habitat survey, and the vision for the trial area. It was a useful catalyst for face-to-face discussion about the project when taken on farm visits, and for ideas on habitat restoration and creation. The vision map also identified the target wildlife species, which promoted further interest with farmers and landowners.

The vision map was also well received and used in-house by partners as its holistic nature provided a framework to which their work contributed. Its clearly defined priorities for target habitats, species and most suitable areas for restoration encouraged partners to work together with the project officer to achieve a common goal, and proved particularly useful to assist with grant applications.

3.2 The most effective methods for stimulating restoration or creation schemes

The achievement of any habitat restoration on farmland ultimately depends on the willingness of the owner. Gaining the trust and confidence of landowners was paramount, and was significantly helped by the support of the National Farmers Union and delivery through FWAG.

A pro-active approach was taken by the project officer and on-the-ground practical advice given, which raised awareness and interest in habitats, species and sympathetic farming practices. Grant schemes were promoted, and the majority of conservation projects were carried out with some funding. The assistance of the project officer in providing on-the-ground advice, obtaining grant aid and preparing specific plans provided a practical framework for the farmer/landowner to work within.

The local grant schemes for one-off capital works were popular, especially where a farmer's contribution could include his own labour time. Various restoration projects were undertaken whereby work being carried out by the owner (such as pond work, tree pollarding and bankside coppicing), furthered their interest and sense of achievement.

Regular mail shots of leaflets and newsletters were used to publicise the project, and provided a constant awareness of the project and a point of contact, which led to requests for advice and visits. Promotional events were held, such as farm walks, a practical woodland management demonstration day and an evening talk on British owls. The events stimulated ideas and discussion, and resulted in a number of conservation projects being carried out. For example, the woodland management demonstration day resulted in two successful Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) Management Challenge Funds to re-instate traditional woodland management.

Farmers and landowners particularly welcomed restoration and creation work that primarily focused on habitat management for individual species. It gave a specific interest point and instigated conservation work that invariably led on to increased interest in habitat management across the farm. The barn owl is a high profile, popular farmland bird, and the box scheme generated a wide interest. The evening talk was attended by more than 40 landowners, and 30 farms/holdings will have a box provided and will carry out suitable habitat management.

Farm walks gave farmers/landowners an opportunity to see what could be achieved, and an opportunity to discuss practical and economical implications of habitat restoration, in an informal setting. Discussion between landowners and seeing works carried out on neighbouring land (eg rotation hedgerow trimming and the creation of otter holts) encouraged further habitat schemes, and was particularly evident in the third year of the project.

3.3 The value of the project in stimulating restoration or creation schemes

A targeted approach was used to deliver the project on a specific area. There are no area-defined grant schemes such as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) or Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ), and apart from woodland managed under WGS, SSSI and SNCI land, very few partner organisations had worked with landowners. The Blackmore Vale is a close farming

community and the project provided a constant presence in an area that would not have been concentrated on otherwise.

The project provided a holistic view of the trial area and a central point of contact, which enabled partners to work together with farmers and landowners to achieve a common goal. It raised awareness of biodiversity, and co-ordinated efforts on national BAP and locally important habitats and species to be delivered at a local level.

In 1996, FRCA established the trial area as a Countryside Stewardship target area to encourage applications. Despite the scheme being particularly competitive and difficult to enter during 1996-1999, a total of nine successful applications were achieved in the trial area between 1997 and 1999. In addition, the project successfully lobbied FRCA to include field margins on intensive grassland, which were previously available only for arable land. As a result, FRCA set up a trial in 1998 for these margins and, from 1999, they were a standard option in Stewardship. The six metre margins were particularly beneficial to the trial area, and achieved the creation of linear habitat along the priority rivers (River Lydden and Caundle Brook).

A close working relationship with the Forestry Commission was established, at a national and local level. Woodland management was promoted in the Vale, and a joint Woodland Management Practical Demonstration Day was held, which resulted in two successful WGS Management Challenge Funds (out of a total of four in Dorset) for the re-instatement of traditional woodland management. The Dorset Small Woods Management Challenge Fund was established in direct response to the trial area.

The Project also worked closely with the Dorset Wildlife Trust, on Site of Nature Conservation Interest land and BAP species. The Dorset Biodiversity Project part-funded a pond and great crested newt survey throughout the trial area, which encouraged appropriate management of ponds and their margins and led to the restoration of five ponds.

Funding from the Environment Agency was also specifically made available to the project. This included part-funding the pond great crested newt survey, and the funding of three pond restorations and two otter holts.

The Hawk and Owl Trust welcomed the opportunity to promote barn owl conservation in an area where they had not previously worked. With funding from the HRP, the Trust provided habitat management advice and barn owl boxes for 30 individual farms/holdings.

3.4 The greatest obstacles to habitat restoration and creation

3.4.1 Farm constraints

The current economics of UK agriculture is by far the greatest obstacle to habitat restoration in the Vale. It is an extremely difficult period financially for farmers and the rural community. In an area dominated by small dairy farms, many farmers are currently facing substantially reduced profits, if not outright losses (the average farm income in 1998 was the same as in 1973). Milk prices are severely depressed (down to under 20 pence per litre compared to 28 pence per litre five years ago). There are production restrictions via the milk quotas, and the

lengthy BSE crisis has caused severe problems (which has led to cull cows and calves turning from a profitable by-product of the dairy farm into a potential cause of financial loss).

Dairy farming requires intensive management to maximise forage production and to maximise milk yields from the dairy herd. Regulations have become more stringent and the amount of paperwork has increased significantly within the last five years, putting farmers (especially livestock farmers) under increasing pressure to ensure records are kept accurately and up to date. The time available and economic constraints are leading to a concentration of spending on those aspects of the business that yield a financial return; in preference to those, including nature conservation, which do not. Furthermore, the depressed economic situation is leading to the cessation of farm enterprises (such as dairying) and changes in land ownership and usage (see 2.5).

In an agricultural landscape such as the Blackmore Vale, the development of a sustainable and co-ordinated conservation plan is far more difficult to implement. Whilst farmers are keen to restore farmland habitats for wildlife and landscape, the financial liability is the real limiting factor and challenge in the future.

3.4.2 Limited grants for capital projects

There were several limited local grant schemes available for small conservation projects. Grants from the County Council, Environment Agency and the project itself paid the majority of the work costs, and encouraged farmers' own labour time as part contribution.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme provided payments for a wide range of capital projects, which were phased over the ten years of the agreement. However, the payments contributed only 40-50% of the cost which necessitated the farmer/landowner funding the remainder, especially of more specialised work such as tree pollarding and hedgerow restoration, where an outside contractor was required.

One-off grants for capital work were quick and simple to apply for and often acted as a catalyst for further habitat restoration (eg the Dorset County Council Landscape and Conservation Grant). They enabled farmers to address one conservation project at a time, to suit their farm business and the time and labour available. They were particularly relevant and beneficial to farms in the Vale, and emphasised the need for more funds for one-off capital projects to be made available.

3.4.3. Competitive nature of existing agri-environment schemes

Throughout the life of the project, the national funding allocation for Countryside Stewardship has been too low to meet the demand from farmers and this has caused high competition to enter a scheme. In Dorset as a whole, just 40% of Countryside Stewardship applications were successful in 1998, in line with the Wessex region average. This low success rate caused disillusionment and made farmers reluctant to make applications the following year. The situation was worsened with the introduction of a quota system in 1999 for partner organisations. The strict criteria and scoring system used was often unable to be fully met by farmers in the Blackmore Vale, due to the small size of farms with little existing semi-natural habitat and limited areas to carry out significant habitat restoration or creation. Despite the

competitiveness of the scheme, a total of nine successful applications was achieved in the Vale (one in 1997, four in 1998 and four in 1999), with only one rejection.

A complete change is now underway for 2000 onwards, following the launch of the Rural Development Plan and the Government's plans for re-directing agricultural support in England to the broader rural economy. A total of £1.6 billion over a seven year period will include £500 million for Countryside Stewardship and £140 million for organic conversion.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is now looking to offer twice as many agreements throughout the Wessex Region in 2000. It is anticipated that the scheme will be available to a wider section of farmers, and the criteria have been relaxed in that applications must now meet one objective, as opposed to two objectives previously.

3.5 Implications for delivery of international (Habitats and Species Directive), national (BAP) and local (NAP) objectives

The targets originally set by the Project were based on those in *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report*, the *South-West Regional Biodiversity Action Plan* and *The Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile*.

Over 80% of the English countryside is productive farmland, and semi-natural habitats and the species that depend on them are scattered throughout an agricultural landscape. Therefore, any habitat restoration or creation on farmland ultimately depends on the willingness of the owner or land manager to participate. The farm business has to remain viable, and any conservation projects will need to be integrated with agricultural production, in an economical and practical way.

Conservation organisations, advisers and the media are responsible for raising awareness of wildlife issues, and for delivering on-the-ground advice and assistance. There are an increasing number of organisations, groups and individuals providing conservation advice, which can cause confusion for landowners in knowing who to approach. It is paramount that advisory groups deliver the same message to landowners and land managers, both on a national and local level, and a co-ordinated approach is taken. The Biodiversity Action Plans provide a shared agenda for conservation organisations, around which co-operative effort can focus. However, duplication and differences over methods need to be avoided through centralised organisation, eg at county or Natural Area level which can also ensure that no significant priority habitats or key species in the area are neglected, while prioritising and setting achievable timescales for local targets. The project provided an example of this approach on a smaller scale

The publicity and message given can sometimes be negative which causes annoyance to landowners. To deliver any wildlife objectives on private land successfully, it is essential to gain the confidence of farmers and landowners, and assist them with finding an economic and practical way forward. Agri-environment schemes are promoted as one of the main means for achieving habitat restoration and creation. However, the funding levels and competitive nature of these schemes greatly limits their ability to deliver the national BAP habitat targets such as flower-rich grassland creation. While farmers are keen to restore and create habitats such as hedgerows and ponds if funding is available, additional incentives with greater and more realistic payment rates are required to encourage restoration or creation of other BAP

habitats on productive farmland. These should certainly be available for key locations where the most can be achieved for biodiversity, such as areas adjacent to existing sites that support scarce BAP species. If habitat and species targets cannot be achieved at a local level, then it is probable that the same constraints will apply at a national level.

3.6 The implications of the project timescale

The Habitat Restoration Project in the Blackmore Vale was initiated by English Nature in 1997 and ran for 32 months until the end of March 2000. The start date in August caused some difficulty in initially contacting farmers as they were busy with silage-making and harvesting.

It takes time for trust and interest to grow, and for conservation projects to be carried out. For instance, the nearby Blackdown Hills ESA has been running for six years and is only now starting to make a difference. There have been a number of farm sales and land ownership changes in the Vale, which necessitated new contacts to be made. In addition, the gentle proactive approach needed in this area resulted in more time being spent with individual farmers and a longer lead in to conservation projects, particularly when work was seasonally dependent. A project time scale of five years would have permitted greater wildlife benefits on the ground.

Discussions with farmers and the evident increasing interest have shown that perceptions have changed during the course of the trial, and that there is potential to increase and widen the growing enthusiasm. The continuity of a single point of contact is needed to continue helping the increasing number of landowners wishing to carry out conservation projects. Although further works projects are currently planned, advice and assistance with grant schemes will be needed at the time of work.

4. The vision for the trial area and its implementation

4.1 Background to the vision

The purpose of the vision was:

- to select nationally important and locally characteristic habitats that have suffered the greatest losses to their quality and extent;
- to identify the most appropriate locations for their restoration or creation;
- to set realistic targets for restoration and creation;
- to highlight the species that may respond to habitat restoration.

This was achieved by:

- mapping the past and present distribution of semi-natural habitats and farmland;
- consulting *Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report*, *The South-West Regional Biodiversity Action Plan*, *The Wessex Vales Natural Area Profile* and *The Dorset*

Biodiversity Audit which identify those habitats that are under most threat nationally and locally.

4.2 The aims of the vision

The ultimate vision for the Blackmore Vale is to create a mosaic of wildlife habitats which will maintain and enhance the populations of priority species.

The vision for future habitat restoration aims to create a diverse arrangement of rich wildlife habitats, in co-operation with the farming community, by:

- protecting and maintaining existing habitats;
- restoring existing unmanaged habitats;
- improving under-managed habitats for wildlife;
- buffering and extending existing habitats;
- creating linkage between remnant habitats;
- creating new habitats;
- encouraging management of farmland by less intensive methods.

The vision map (Figure 5) clearly shows the areas where particular types of habitat restoration and creation will be of most benefit to wildlife. The map was designed to show interested farmers and land managers how their land fits into the ecological landscape of the Blackmore Vale as a whole, and presents options, which if adopted would benefit wildlife through the area as a whole.

4.3 Delivery of the vision

The Blackmore Vale project was initially introduced to farmers and landowners at an NFU meeting in Sturminster Newton. The NFU actively supported the project from the outset, and invited FWAG and English Nature to their meeting to promote and discuss the project and its aims. The strong links between farmers, the NFU and FWAG raised interest and trust in the project from the start. FWAG and English Nature held a further meeting, which was well attended by farmers and landowners who welcomed the opportunity to discuss openly the aims and vision of the project.

There were initial concerns that the vision map would be seen by farmers/landowners as being too idealistic and restrictive. A personal approach was taken to deliver the vision map, whereby it was taken to farm visits and used to illustrate and discuss the project. Farmers and landowners found it useful for ideas on habitat restoration, particularly when related to target species such as barn owl and brown hare, and they particularly welcomed the project officer as a single point of contact, and practical advice being delivered on-the-ground.

4.4 Target habitats and species

The Biodiversity Action Plan and the Natural Area Profile identified that the habitats and associated species of the highest priority for restoration in the trial area:

- lowland hay meadow (including all lowland unimproved neutral grassland);
- ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows;
- lowland wood-pasture and parkland;
- wet woodland;
- purple moor grass and rush pasture (fen meadow);
- cereal field margins;
- woodland (other broadleaved, planted coniferous);
- lowland farmland (other boundary features - arable, improved grassland);
- freshwater systems (standing open water, rivers, streams, ponds).

Table 2 illustrates the species that are likely to benefit from habitat restoration and their national (BAP) or local (natural area) priorities.

4.5 Habitats and species monitoring

The monitoring of created and restored habitats was an objective of the Habitat Restoration Project. A ten year programme of site-based ecological monitoring commenced in 1999 in order to establish a baseline for the future.

The aims of the monitoring are:

- to chart the success of the establishment and development of new or restored habitats; and
- to record the extent to which target species, particularly those identified in BAP, are able to colonise them.

Ten types of habitat creation/restoration are being monitored, and these are:

- woodland restoration through coppicing;
- neutral grassland ride restoration in woodland (for marsh fritillary);
- scrub establishment by planting;
- neutral grassland restoration through scrub removal (for marsh fritillary);

- neutral grassland establishment by hay strewing;
- damp neutral grassland restoration (managed by grazing) for wetland birds;
- riverside margins from improved pasture;
- pond restoration;
- new arable field grass margins (by natural regeneration);
- hedgerow restoration (by laying).

In addition, transect monitoring of bats and butterflies is being carried out, and the use of barn owl nest boxes is being recorded.

Table 2. Target habitats and species in the trial area

Target Habitat	Target Species	BAP	NAP	DBP	DFB	Present
Broadleaved woodland	Dormouse	✓	✓			✓
	Natterer's bat		✓			
	Pipistrelle bat	✓				✓
	Lesser spotted woodpecker		✓			
	Nightingale		✓			
	Song thrush	✓			✓	✓
	Brown hairstreak butterfly		✓			
	Pearl-bordered fritillary	✓	✓	✓		E
	Small pearl-bordered fritillary		✓	✓		✓
	Double line moth	✓				✓
Greater butterfly orchid		✓				
Lowland wood pasture and parkland	Natterer's bat		✓			
	Pipistrelle bat	✓				✓
	Serotine bat		✓			✓
	Lesser spotted woodpecker		✓			
	Deadwood beetles**					✓
	Lichens of veteran trees	✓	✓			✓
Ancient/species-rich hedgerows and scrub	Dormouse	✓	✓			✓
	Natterer's bat		✓			✓
	Pipistrelle bat	✓				✓
	Barn owl		✓		✓	✓
	Bullfinch	✓				✓
	Grey partridge	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Linnet	✓			✓	✓
	Nightingale		✓			✓
	Song thrush	✓			✓	✓
	Tree sparrow	✓			✓	+
	Brown hairstreak butterfly		✓			✓
	Small eggar moth**					✓

Target Habitat	Target Species	BAP	NAP	DBP	DFB	Present
Lowland neutral grassland	Brown hare	✓				✓
	Barn owl	✓			✓	✓
	Curlew		✓			+
	Grey partridge	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Skylark	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Grass snake**					✓
	Marsh fritillary butterfly	✓	✓			✓
	Small pearl-bordered fritillary		✓			✓
	Narrow-bordered bee hawk	✓		✓		✓
	Bithynian vetch		✓			✓
	Corky-fruited water-dropwort		✓			✓
	Devil's-bit scabious		✓			✓
	Green winged orchid		✓			✓
Meadow thistle		✓			✓	
Arable farmland and improved grassland	Brown hare	✓	✓			✓
	Barn owl		✓		✓	✓
	Corn bunting	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Curlew		✓			✓
	Grey partridge	✓	✓		✓	+
	Lapwing**		✓		✓	✓
	Kestrel		✓			✓
	Skylark	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Song thrush	✓	✓		✓	✓
Rivers, streams and ditches	Otter	✓	✓			✓
	Water vole	✓	✓			✓
	Kingfisher		✓			✓
	Reed bunting	✓				✓
Farm ponds	Kingfisher		✓			✓
	Grass snake**					✓
	Great crested newt	✓	✓			✓

- + locally extinct in 1990s
 E extinct since early 1980s
 ** other priority species within the Blackmore Vale

BAP : Biodiversity Action Plan Priority
 NAP : Natural Area Priority
 DBP: Dorset Biodiversity Project - Habitats and Species
 DFB: Dorset Farmland

5. Results of the trial and discussion

5.1 Summary

The main learning points emerging from the trial are as follows:

- The vision map provided a succinct summary of BAP and Natural Area targets for the trial area. Landowners found the vision map useful for ideas on habitat restoration and the most beneficial location to carry out work.
- The targeted and pro-active approach of the project officer was an effective catalyst for encouraging landowners, and achieving habitat creation and restoration.
- Farmers/landowners and partner organisations particularly welcomed the constant presence and single point of contact provided by the project officer.
- Working together with other key organisations co-ordinated efforts and enabled a greater input of resources and knowledge to be pooled together.
- The delivery of practical, on the ground advice to farmers/landowners was essential in achieving habitat restoration, together with the assistance of finding suitable grant sources.
- There was far more restoration of existing semi-natural habitat rather than creation of new habitat.
- Farm constraints (economic, labour and land ownership) were the main restrictions for achieving habitat creation and restoration.
- The relatively small farms and holdings typical of the Vale do not have land available to take out of agricultural production to create significant areas of new habitat.
- The majority of habitat creation and restoration schemes were carried out with some form of funding, using a wide variety of financial incentives.
- One-off capital projects were popular on farms/holdings that had limited scope to carry out further habitat schemes.
- Farmers and landowners were particularly keen to carry out creation and restoration of habitats that primarily focuses on individual species.
- Many farmers/landowners needed time to become involved, due to farm business and agricultural difficulties and also to allow time to see the results of habitat restoration on neighbouring land.
- There was an obvious snowball effect underway by the third year of the project, with an increasing number of farmers/landowners wanting to carry out various habitat schemes.

5.2 Wildlife benefit achieved within the trial area

Table 3 and Figure 6 summarise the creation and restoration achievements made towards the vision targets, within the project period August 1997 to March 2000. It also includes some conservation measures that are planned for the near future, such as woodland management to take place during the next season (winter 2000), and farms/holdings that have entered the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and have a phased work programme over the ten years of the agreement.

For each habitat, quantitative creation and restoration targets were set based on biodiversity targets taken proportionately from national and regional BAPs and the Wessex Vales Natural Area profile.

There was more restoration of existing semi-natural habitat such as woodland, parkland and neutral grassland, than the creation of new areas which would increase the overall area of the habitat. This indicates that the relatively small farms and holdings typical of the Vale do not have land available to create conservation areas, or that the costs of conversion were too great.

For clarification purposes, the term 'farmer' is used to include farmers who derive their main income from farming; and 'landowner' is used to include private owners who do not derive their main income from farming.

5.2.1 Broadleaved woodland

Existing resource: 474 ha.

Target: Increase area by 25% (118 ha) by 2010 within the preferred areas.

Habitat objectives: Restore and enhance the wildlife value of existing woods, especially ancient woodland.
Extend and/or link existing woodland habitats, especially ancient woodland.
Restore areas of wet woodlands and former withy beds alongside streams.

Achievements: 9 ha created. 101 ha restored.

Creation

- A total of 9 ha of new woodland has been created, of which 2.7 ha was within the preferred area for woodland creation.
- The majority of the new woodland (5.7 ha) was a Woodland Trust site, which was outside the preferred area. This site was within the marsh fritillary core area, and it is intended to manage the woodland rides for the marsh fritillary butterfly.

Table 3. Summary of habitat creation and restoration achievements

Habitat	Area/length of existing habitat	Original target	Area/length of creation/ restoration to 2000	% Target created/restored to 2000	Projected area length of creation/ restoration to target date	Projected % target created/restored to target date
Broadleaved woodland	474ha	Increase area by 25% (118ha) by 2010 within the preferred areas.	9 ha created 101 ha restored	7.6% (21.4% of total area)	(2010) 39 ha (2010) 437.7 ha	(2010) 33.1% (2010) 92.7%
Wood-pasture and parkland	74ha	Increase area by 10% (7ha) by 2010	9 ha created 32 ha restored	129% (43% of total area)	(2010) 39 ha (2010) 139 ha	(2010) 557% (2010) 188%
Hedgerows	871km Inc. 45km of species-rich hedges	50% (826km) of poorly managed hedgerows to be well managed by 2005. 25% of hedgerows in the area where brown hairstreak butterfly exists to be suitably managed by 2010. †	1.4 km created 19.1 km restored	n/a 2.3%	(2005) 3.7 km (2005) 51 km	n/a (2005) 6%
Neutral grassland and fen meadow	261ha	Increase area by 25% (65ha) by 2010. Restore 5ha, and create 10ha of habitat for the marsh fritillary by 2010	19 ha created 39 ha restored	29% n/a	(2010) 82 ha n/a	(2010) 126% n/a
Ponds	7.1ha	In all clay areas, to ensure that at least 5 ponds per km ² are managed for wildlife, and that 75% of ponds within 500m of great created new sites are suitably managed by 2010. *	7 (0.4 ha) created 21 (0.7 ha) restored	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
Arable margins	undefined	Create field margins to buffer existing habitat and create wildlife corridors. †	3 km created	n/a	n/a	n/a
River margins	205km (both banks)	To manage 200m per km of river bank, and 100m per km of stream bank as a wildlife habitat by 2010. *	2 km created 1.6 km restored	n/a n/a	(2010) 8.7 km (2010) 6.9 km	n/a n/a

* target proved to be too difficult to evaluate

† no quantifiable target set - initially considered beneficial but not a priority

- The remaining new woodland consisted of small individual woods adjacent to species-rich hedgerow, and areas of tree planting in field corners and a linear strip along the Caundle Brook.
- One small orchard (0.3 ha) was restored and replanted with traditional Dorset fruit tree varieties.
- The majority of small areas of new woodland was carried out by farmers and funded by the district council and the Environment Agency, while the larger plantings were funded by the Woodland Trust and WGS.

Restoration

- Eleven woods totalling 101 ha have been restored. With the exception of one small 0.5 ha wood, all restoration occurred on SNCI woodland. Two of the SNCI woodlands are adjacent to Lydlinch SSSI and candidate SAC.
- Four of the woodlands are owned by an estate and managed by a forestry company. One is owned by a farmer and the others are privately owned.
- Restoration work involved re-instating the traditional management of thinning and coppicing, and woodland ride management.
- The woodland rides in two woods adjacent to Rooksmoor will be managed to provide suitable habitat for small pearl-bordered fritillary and marsh fritillary butterfly.
- One woodland restoration was funded by the owner, and the remaining received WGS funds. Two of these received 100% grant-aid through the WGS Management Challenge Fund.

Discussion

A total of 9 ha of broadleaved woodland has been created, increasing the overall area by 2% and meeting 8% of the target to date. Assuming the same rate of creation over the next ten years, the habitat is projected to increase by 39 ha (8%), and to meet 33% of the target by 2010. The majority of new woodland occurred on one Woodland Trust site, with the remaining created areas being small in size and carried out by farmers. It is evident that farmers do not have available land to take out of agricultural production to create woodlands, although smaller areas of tree planting was popular on less productive land such as field corners. The original creation target of 25% (118 ha) by 2010 has therefore proved to be unrealistic for the Blackmore Vale.

A target for woodland restoration was not set, and it is apparent that a restoration target would have been appropriate and of greater value than a creation target. A total of 101 ha of woodland was restored, equating to 21.4% of the original area of broadleaved woodland. Nearly all restoration occurred in SNCI woods with a high biodiversity value, of which most were privately owned. The majority of woodland restoration carried out resulted from the collaborative promotion by the Forestry Commission, SNCI project officer and the HRP project officer, with work funded through WGS and the Management Challenge Fund. Farm

to agricultural production. It is evident that grant-aid is required to re-instate woodland management, as work can be expensive and there is little, if any, immediate financial return.

5.2.2 Lowland wood-pasture and parkland

Existing resource: 74 ha.

Target: Increase area by 10% (7 ha) by 2010.

Habitat objectives: Maintain existing areas of valuable habitat.
Restore the quality of wood pasture and parkland.
Sympathetically manage associated grassland.

Achievements: 9 ha created. 48 ha restored.

Creation

- A privately owned parkland of 9.1 ha is being created on a former parkland site, with funding from Countryside Stewardship. Wildflower seed which originates from a SSSI meadow will be used to enhance the grassland. Although a change of ownership is imminent, efforts will be made to encourage the new owners to continue with the project.

Restoration

- A total of 48.6 ha of parkland restoration was carried out in Stock Gaylard Park. Twelve parkland trees have been planted to provide a diversity of tree ages, and provide future veterans. The deer park is the oldest existing parkland in Dorset : adjacent to a SSSI wood.

Discussion

The 9 ha of parkland creation included neutral grassland creation with planting of parkland trees. Consequently, this area has been included within the neutral grassland target (see 5.2.4). Assuming that the new owners will carry out the parkland creation, the overall habitat will be increased by 12% by 2010 (compared to a 10% target by 2010). It appears that wood-pasture and parkland was not created elsewhere due to the lack of available land.

A target was not set for wood-pasture and parkland restoration, and it is apparent that a restoration target would have been appropriate, especially for the historically important Stock Gaylard Park where restoration has occurred. The other existing areas were small wood-pastures that had limited scope for restoration.

5.2.3 Ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows and scrub

Existing resource: 870.6 km (870,613m) - includes 45.4 km (45,420m) of species-rich hedgerows (see discussion below).

Target: 50% of poorly managed hedgerows to be well managed by 2005. 25% of hedgerows in the area where brown hairstreak butterfly exists to be suitably managed by 2010.

Habitat Objectives: Protect and enhance existing hedgerows.
Sympathetic management of hedgerows.
Restore/create new hedgerows to link existing valuable habitats.
Maintain overall numbers of isolated trees.
Manage, maintain and create important scrub areas.

Achievements: 1.4 km created. 19.1 km restored.

Creation

- A total of 1.4 km of hedgerow was created, all of which was carried out by private landowners.
- The new hedgerows joined to existing hedgerows and woodland, and were all funded through Countryside Stewardship.
- There was little scope to create more hedgerows, due to the existing intricate network of hedges throughout the trial area, and small field size.
- One private owner has created a mosaic habitat of scrub, flower-rich grassland and wet grassland with funding from the Countryside Stewardship. Management of the scrub will aim to provide suitable habitat for nightingale, dormice, and brown hairstreak butterfly (which are present 5 km away).

Restoration

- A total of 19.1 km of hedgerow was restored, of which half was carried out by farmers and half by private owners.
- One hedgerow was restored with funds from Dorset County Council, and one with funds from the Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT) to benefit great crested newt. The majority of hedgerow restoration was funded by Countryside Stewardship.
- One farmer carried out a whole farm hedgerow plan, to plant hedgerow trees to replace those elms previously lost to Dutch elm disease.

Discussion

A target for hedgerow creation was not set due to the intricate network of hedgerows already existing in the Blackmore Vale. The hedgerows that were created (1.4 km) provided linkage to existing semi-natural habitats (such as woodland and existing hedgerows) and were all carried out by private landowners and funded through Countryside Stewardship. The Phase I survey showed 5% of hedgerows were species-rich, although it is evident that the true extent was greatly underestimated. A specific hedgerow survey would be required to assess the original and current extent of 'poorly managed' and 'well-managed' hedgerows, with distinct

definitions. Consequently, it is apparent that the target for poorly managed hedgerows, and suitably managed hedgerows for brown hairstreak butterfly, was unrealistic and immeasurable.

19.1 km of hedgerow was restored, equating to 2.2% of the original length. Hedgerow restoration included coppicing, laying and gapping up, and providing hedgerow trees (by planting new trees or allowing existing young trees to grow on). The majority of restoration was carried out as part of a whole farm/holding plan and funded through Countryside Stewardship. Most of the hedgerows in the trial area were already in good condition and did not require restoration work. Sympathetic hedgerow management was therefore of greater benefit in the trial area, and many farmers and landowners now trim their hedges on rotation, and later in the winter.

In addition to the scrub creation project (see above) scrub restoration is being carried out at Lydlinch Common, primarily to restore the neutral grassland, although the existing scrub is being managed by coppicing to continue to provide suitable habitat for nightingale and brown hairstreak butterfly.

5.2.4 Lowland neutral grassland and fen meadow

Existing resource: 261 ha.

Target: Increase area by 25% (65 ha) by 2010. Restore 5 ha, and create 10 ha of habitat for the marsh fritillary by 2010.

Habitat objectives: Protect and maintain existing areas of neutral grassland.
Restore and extend existing areas of neutral grassland.
Protect and enhance species-rich roadside verges.
Maintain and enhance areas of wet grassland.

Achievements: 19 ha created. 39 ha restored.

Creation

- A total of 19 ha of flower-rich grassland has been created.
- The majority of neutral grassland creation (11.5 ha) is being carried out on one holding which is within the marsh fritillary core area, and will include the planting of parkland trees (see 6.2.2). The land is privately owned and the work is being funded through Countryside Stewardship.
- Woodland rides have been created in woods adjacent to Rooksmoor, and will be managed to provide suitable habitat for marsh fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly. Funding was received from WGS.
- One farmer has created a wet grassland area with scrapes to provide suitable habitat for curlew, with funding from the HRP.

- The mosaic habitat creation of scrub, flower-rich grassland and wet grassland (see 5.2.3) will direct grassland management to provide suitable habitat for small pearl-bordered fritillary and great-crested newt.

Restoration

- A total of 39 ha of flower-rich grassland were restored, of which 32.7 ha were within the marsh fritillary core area.
- The majority of restoration involved the enhancement and/or sympathetic management of semi-improved species-poor grassland.
- 2 ha of restoration took place on Lydlinch Common where work involved scrub removal and management for marsh fritillary.
- One farmer changed the management of a wet grassland area, by fencing it as a separate area and extensifying stocking densities. This was funded by Countryside Stewardship.

Discussion

19 ha of neutral grassland and fen meadow has been created, increasing the overall area by 7% and meeting 29% of the target to date. With the same rate of creation over the next ten years, the overall area is projected to increase by 82 ha (31%), and to meet 126% of the target by 2010. However, this cannot be presumed to happen, especially without the resource of a full time project officer. One area of 11.5 ha is being created in the marsh fritillary core area, and will include the planting of devil's-bit scabious plugs and suitable management for the butterfly. This will meet 115% of the target by 2000, compared to the target of 10 ha by 2010. In addition, woodland rides will also be managed for the marsh fritillary to provide linkage between existing sites. The creation of flower-rich grassland is particularly difficult to achieve on dairy farms, as intensive grassland management is needed to support the dairy herd. The majority (97%) of flower-rich grassland creation was carried out by non-farming landowners.

A target was not set for neutral grassland and fen meadow restoration, and it is apparent that a restoration target would have been appropriate. A total of 39 ha of neutral grassland has been restored, equating to 15% of the overall existing area. Restoration work included scrub removal, enhancement of species-poor grassland by sowing local seed and plugs, and extensifying management.

The restoration of flower-rich grassland is difficult to achieve on farmland where forage production needs to be maximised. It is more likely to be achieved by extensifying management (eg reduced applications and lower stocking densities) with a compensation payment from a scheme such as Countryside Stewardship. However, floristic enhancement of improved grassland through cessation of fertiliser use is a slow business and quicker results can be achieved through ploughing and/or harrowing and seeding with species-rich hay (a good example of this method already exists in the trial area).

5.2.5 Farm ponds

Existing resource: 379 ponds, with an average of 3.8 ponds per km².

Target: In all clay areas, to ensure that at least 5 ponds per km² are managed for wildlife, and that 75% of ponds within 500m of great crested newt sites are suitably managed by 2010.

Habitat objectives: Ensure the favourable management of potentially valuable ponds and their catchment areas to maintain and enhance their conservation interest
Restore unmanaged and neglected ponds, where desirable.

Achievements: 7 ponds created. 21 ponds restored.

Creation

- A total of 7 ponds were created, 5 of which were within a kilometre square with great crested newt records.
- Seven ponds were created, six of which were carried out by private owners and funded through Countryside Stewardship, and one by a farmer who did the work at his own cost.

Restoration

- A total of 21 ponds were restored, 16 of which are within a kilometre square with great crested newt records.
- Two thirds of pond restoration were carried out by farmers, half of whom carried out the work at their own cost.
- Approximately one half of all the ponds restored were done with funding from Countryside Stewardship.
- The Project secured funding from the Environment Agency for two pond restorations, to manage for great crested newt.

Discussion

The majority of pond creation was carried out by private landowners with funding by Countryside Stewardship. Of these, 72% were within a kilometre square with great crested newt records and will be suitably managed to provide linkage to other ponds with great crested newts present. There are numerous existing ponds throughout the Blackmore Vale, particularly on the clay areas where most ponds are hidden and overgrown in field corners. Since most farms and holdings already have ponds present, there is often less need to create new ones and as such, a target for pond creation was not set.

A target for pond restoration was more applicable and beneficial for the Blackmore Vale, although the target set has proved difficult to evaluate. The Phase I survey (1997) did not assess the existing pond resource, and consequently the number of ponds present and their

condition was not known. A pond and great crested newt survey was carried out in 1999 which identified 379 ponds, and the presence of great crested newt. A total of 21 ponds were restored (5.5% of the total), of which 72% were within a great crested newt kilometre square. Ponds are very popular with landowners, and farmers in particular. They were keen to restore neglected ponds, and to manage them well for wildlife.

5.2.6 Arable farmland and improved grassland

Existing Resource: 8150 ha.

Target: Create field margins to buffer existing habitat and create wildlife corridors.

Habitat Objectives: Protect and maintain existing areas of valuable farmland habitat.
Enhance existing areas of farmland.
Adopt a whole farm approach.

Achievements: 3114 m field margins created.

Creation

- A total of 4.5 km of arable margins have been created, two of which were game strips at the farmers' own cost.
- One farmer has created a network of margins, which were funded through Countryside Stewardship.
- There was limited scope to create field margins.
- Less intensive management of arable land and intensive grassland has been achieved (eg by reducing applications) although this is unable to be quantified.

Discussion

A total of 3 km of field margins were created. Two game strips were created, primarily to benefit the farm shoot although they also provided cover, feeding areas and corridors for other wildlife. One farmer entered the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and created a network of arable field margins. In addition, one farm is currently applying to Countryside Stewardship (2000) to create 2 m and 6 m grassland margins. There was limited scope to create field margins as there was little arable land (or land in rotation) in the trial area, and the only funding mechanism for margins has been through Countryside Stewardship. Even if farms can enter into the scheme, some are reluctant to create 2 m or 6 m margins, especially when field sizes are small. During the life of the project, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme has been difficult to enter, and even where it was possible, some farmers are reluctant to create 2 m or 6 m margins, especially when field sizes are small. Furthermore, the option for margins on intensive grassland was available only in the last year of the project, in 1999. Two successful applications included grass margins alongside rivers, and further margins are planned for 2000/2001.

There has been a change to more environmentally responsible farm management practices. Less intensive management of arable land and intensive grassland has been achieved (such as reduced applications), although these are unable to be quantified. There has also been an increased interest in organic farming, particularly in dairy farms, with a number of farms in organic conversion and further ones planned.

5.2.7 Rivers, streams and ditches

Existing resource: 205 km (205,266 m) both banks.

Target: To manage 200 m per km of river bank, and 100 m per km of stream bank as a wildlife habitat by 2010.

Habitat objectives: Maintain and restore the quality and biodiversity of rivers, streams and ditches.
Promote the sympathetic management of rivers, streams and ditches.

Achievements: 2 km (2,042 m) riverside margins created. 1.6 km (1,618 m) riverbanks restored.

Creation

- A total of 2.1 km of riverside margins were created, of which the majority was along the priority rivers - the River Lydden and Caundle Brook.
- One farmer created 6m buffer strips and a fenced 6m wildlife margin along the River Lydden, with funding through Countryside Stewardship.
- Two landowners created habitat for otter, by fencing off a meander and providing an otter holt. Both projects were funded by the Environment Agency.
- Generally, farmers and landowners are keen to leave a riverside buffer strip to protect the watercourse. A 6m margin is often viewed as taking up too much productive land, and funding is required for those willing to create such margins.

Restoration

- A total of 1.6 km of riverbanks have been restored.
- Two farmers have carried out bankside pollarding and coppicing with funding through Countryside Stewardship.

Discussion

2 km of riverside margin was created, equating to 1% of the total length of rivers and streams (both banks). All margins created were 6 m wide and consisted of fenced sown margins, unfenced buffer margins, and fenced unsown margins. All margin creation were carried out by farmers with funding through Countryside Stewardship. Approximately 50% of these margins were along the River Lydden, with the remainder along a tributary to the River Lydden.

Generally, farmers and landowners were keen to protect the watercourse, and many voluntarily left an unsprayed buffer strip along rivers and streams. A fenced margin, particularly 6 m in width, was often viewed as taking up too much productive land, and where farmers/landowners were keen to fence a watercourse margin, they required funding to compensate for the loss of forage area.

1.6 km of riverbanks was restored, equating to 0.8% of the total length of rivers and streams (both banks). Restoration work included bankside tree pollarding and coppicing, to reduce shading of the typically overgrown watercourses, and to create a diversity of tree and shrub ages and to encourage ground vegetation to develop. Approximately, 50% of bankside restoration took place along the River Lydden and were carried out by farmers with funding through Countryside Stewardship. Rivers and streams were a key feature for farmers and landowners, who were keen to look after the visual value and to encourage wildlife such as otter and kingfisher.

5.2.8 Habitat fragmentation and connectivity

Most of the BAP habitats present are scattered throughout the trial area, and are separated by large areas of agricultural land (improved grassland and arable land) (see Figure 3 Distribution of BAP broad habitats). BAP priority habitats covers only 3.3% of the trial area, or 8.1% if all broadleaved woodland is included (Figure 4).

The patches of non-linear semi-natural habitat are isolated with large distances separating them. It is unrealistic to achieve any significant connections between these habitats, as the connecting distance is too great and the land between them involves many separate owners. There are clusters of small sized broadleaved woodland in closer proximity to each other that would be more achievable to connect, although it is not viable for most farmers to take land out of agricultural production, especially where farm sizes are small.

The non-linear semi-natural habitats are connected by an intricate network of hedgerows, many of which are species-rich, and to a lesser extent by the flower-rich roadside verges, rivers and streams. The hedgerows, roadside verges and rivers provide valuable wildlife corridors and connection between the semi-natural habitats.

As a result of the various habitat schemes carried out, a total of 27.1 km of linear habitat has been created/restored, including hedgerows, arable field margins and riverside margins. They have provided valuable links to, and buffering of, existing habitats, but their creation has not been extensive enough to significantly reduce the level of fragmentation within the trial area.

Lydlinch Common, Deadmoor Common and Rooksmoor are the focus of the prime biodiversity area in the Blackmore Vale, and consist of a mosaic of woodland, fen meadow and scrub. Lydlinch and Rooksmoor are a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive for the marsh fritillary butterfly. An extensive plan is currently underway to link these two sites, covering a distance of two and a half kilometres. The land between the two sites is part of the Stock Gaylard estate, and the estate manager has recently acquired its tenancy. A Countryside Stewardship application will be submitted this year (2000) to re-create the fen meadow habitat on former arable/improved grassland fields, amounting to approximately ten hectares of new habitat. In addition, a network of six metre field margins will be created to provide linkage between Lydlinch, the re-created meadows,

and Rooksmoor. Hay cuttings from Lydlinch will be used where suitable, and an emphasis placed on the provision of devil's-bit scabious for the marsh fritillary.

This extensive plan for neutral grassland creation will have significant benefits, for the BAP habitat, BAP species and connectivity between prime biodiversity sites.

5.2.9 Pond and great crested newt survey

A pond and great crested newt survey was carried out in the trial area, and funded by English Nature, the Environment Agency and the Dorset Biodiversity Project.

Ponds are a traditional feature in the Blackmore Vale, and are a popular feature for both farmers and landowners. The survey generated a large amount of interest in great crested newts, and beneficial management of ponds and their surrounding habitat. As a direct result of the survey, five ponds were restored to benefit great crested newt. In addition, the survey revealed that of the total 21 ponds restored throughout the trial area, five were within a great crested newt kilometre square.

5.2.10 Barn owl boxes

A barn owl box scheme project for the trial area was established with the Hawk and Owl Trust, and funded by the Habitat Restoration Project. An evening talk was held on British owls, which was well attended with more than 40 landowners present.

The Hawk and Owl Trust were contracted to make a detailed site visit to 30 farms/holdings, and to erect one box at each location. Approximately half of the farms/holdings already supported or were adjacent to areas of unimproved or semi-improved grassland, together with other suitable habitat. The remaining sites contained suitable owl feeding habitat such as rough grassland, riverside margins, hedgerows and woodland. The Trust are carrying out individual site assessments, and will advise the farmer/landowner on appropriate habitat management, and the importance of wildlife corridors (April 2000). They will continue to monitor each site and box for the forthcoming years.

The barn owl is a high profile, popular farmland bird, and farmers and landowners are particularly keen to carry out restoration and creation of habitats that primarily focuses on an individual species. It gives a specific interest point and instigates conservation work that encourages further interest in habitat management across the farm/holding.

5.3 Achieving better working relationships with landowners and partners

5.3.1 Landowners' involvement

The distribution of creation and restoration schemes shows that the vast majority of work has occurred on farms and holdings that participated in the initial Phase I survey and who had expressed an interest in the project from the start (Figure 5). This suggests that the targeted and pro-active approach of the project officer is an effective catalyst for achieving habitat creation and restoration. There were significant groupings of habitat schemes that involved a variety of land management and capital works, and these occurred on farms and holdings that

had entered the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. There were no farms or holdings that had entered Countryside Stewardship prior to the project, and most landowners had limited knowledge of the scheme and found the paperwork and application process too complicated. This highlights the importance of practical advice and encouragement for habitat restoration and agri-environment schemes, and assistance with applications.

Other habitat schemes were mostly capital projects and scattered throughout the trial area. They occurred on farms and holdings that either had limited scope to carry out further works, or where the farmer/landowner preferred to address one project at a time. The location of barn owl boxes was also scattered, with some within the main clusters and many in isolated places. Many farmers/landowners that were already involved in habitat restoration were keen to aim their work to benefit a target species such as the barn owl. Furthermore, it encouraged interest and new contacts, and a lead in to habitat management.

It is evident that a pro-active approach was highly successful in initiating restoration schemes. Farmers/landowners who carried out restoration work in the first year of the project were those who already had an interest in conservation, but needed an impetus to initiate work. Many farmers/landowners needed a longer time to become involved, which was partly due to farm business and agricultural difficulties, and also to allow time to see the results of habitat restoration on neighbouring land. By the third year of the project, an obvious snowball effect was underway, with an increasing number of landowners wanting to be involved. Whilst the need for a pro-active approach lessens as a network of contacts is established, the need continues for sending information (such as newsletters and updates on grant schemes) and a single point of contact.

5.4 Value of the partnership approach

The pro-active approach and single point of contact provided by the project officer was found to be the most effective means of communicating the aims and objectives of the vision to landowners and partner organisations.

The continued support of the NFU (who were represented on the Advisory Group) from the outset of the project significantly contributed to providing contacts, raising interest and gaining the trust of the Blackmore Vale farming community. This was furthered by the pro-active delivery of the project through FWAG, the farmers' own wildlife conservation organisation, which enabled a close working relationship to be established with farmers and landowners, in an area that very few conservation organisations had previously been involved in.

The project was actively supported by individuals and organisations represented on the Steering Group. A farmer who farms in the trial area provided invaluable knowledge of the local area and community, and practical advice. FRCA designated the Blackmore Vale as a Countryside Stewardship target area, and their project officers made frequent pre-application visits and gave continued help and advice. They helped to promote the project by passing on Countryside Stewardship enquiries to the project officer, and contributed to a farm walk (that was held jointly with ADAS) to look at the benefits achieved through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The Environment Agency were keen to raise awareness and promote wetland conservation, and part-funded the pond and great crested newt survey. As a result of the survey they funded the restoration of three ponds, and funded the creation of two otter

holts and habitat. They are keen to continue the promotion and funding of wetland conservation, and further projects are planned for 2000.

The project was also supported by organisations represented on the Advisory Group. Dorset Wildlife Trust gave considerable time to promote the project and provide advice on SNCI land. They liaised and worked closely with the project officer on Countryside Stewardship applications and SNCI sites, and contributed to the woodland management practical demonstration day. They helped to promote the project to a wider audience, by including an article on the Blackmore Vale project (written by the project officer) in their SNCI newsletter. The Trust also worked with the project officer and the Herpetological Conservation Trust to promote the conservation of great crested newts, and part-funded the pond and great-crested newt survey through the Biodiversity Project.

The Forestry Commission was also highly supportive of the project, and established the Management Challenge Fund for small woods in Dorset (100% funding) in direct response to the project. With their advice and guidance, two out of the four successful applications in Dorset were in the trial area. They helped to promote woodland management in the trial area, and jointly held a woodland management practical demonstration day with the project.

Dorset Butterfly Conservation were already involved at Lydlinch Common, for which they had prepared a management plan and co-ordinated restoration work (scrub removal and management). They had an established monitoring survey of the Common and Rooksmoor which they shared with the project, and they carried out the first of a ten year butterfly monitoring programme in the trial area.

Dorset County Council and North Dorset District Council helped to secure some funds for capital projects such as hedgerow and pond restoration. The funds available were limited which restricted more capital projects being carried out. The Hawk and Owl Trust became involved with the project during the final six months, and hosted an evening talk on British owls. With funding from the HRP, the Trust is contracted to provide 30 barn owl boxes in the trial area (in 2000), and carry out site assessments and future monitoring. They are keen to continue to work with FWAG after the project, to promote a further barn owl box scheme elsewhere in the county.

The Blackmore Vale project established a close working relationship with a number of key organisations, and raised good relations and communications between the groups. It enabled a greater input of resources and knowledge to be pooled, and to work together to achieve common objectives. The co-ordinated efforts delivered through a single point of contact (the project officer) were particularly welcomed by farmers and landowners, and raised the profile of both conservation projects and the organisations.

The partnership approach has built on existing good relations, and created new ones. It has been extremely beneficial for the project, and has created opportunities for the future. As a direct result of the project, Dorset FWAG are very keen to continue and build on the success of the project. They have found the pro-active biodiversity targeted approach employed in the trial area very successful in securing real wildlife gain and will extend this to other areas. As such, they are in the process of securing funds for the establishment of a continuation project to provide both farm business and nature conservation advice, to start in summer 2000. The

proposed area will centre within the Wessex Vales Natural Area, and extend the Blackmore Vale trial area (see 6.3 Extending the scope of the project).

5.5 Funding for habitat restoration and creation

The majority (90.6%) of habitat creation and restoration schemes were carried out with some form of funding. A wide variety of financial incentives were used (Figure 9), and reasons for the high uptake of grant-aid include:

- the depressed agricultural economy ensured that there was less time and money available to spend on non-income generating work on farms;
- the targeted and pro-active approach of the project provided information on the sources of grant-aid available and assistance with applications;
- the Blackmore Vale was made a Countryside Stewardship target area, which enabled farms and holdings to enter the scheme who would otherwise not have been able to do so;
- additional funding sources were made available specifically for the trial area.

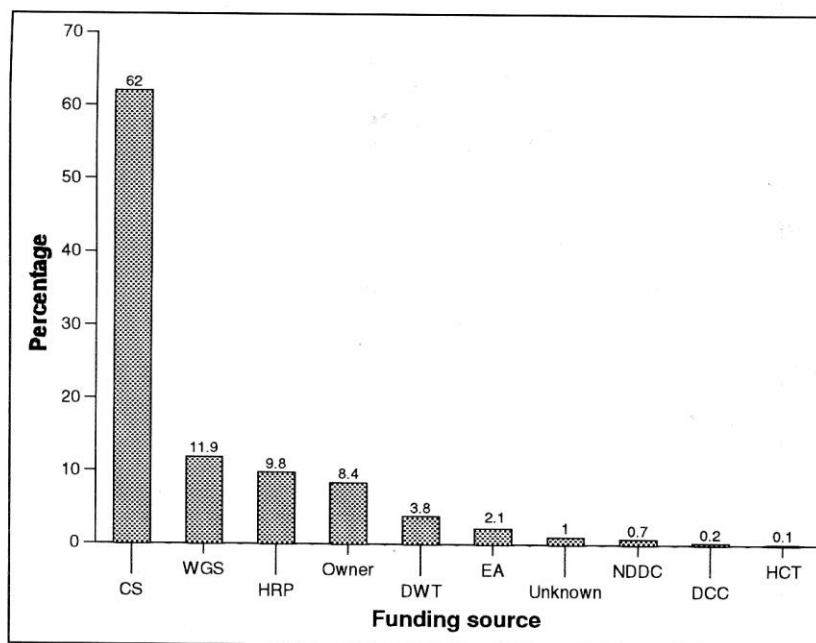


Figure 9 : Summary of funding sources

Tables 4 and 5 summarise the funding sources for creation and restoration work, by area of habitat and by percentage of funds for each habitat.

Key:

CS	Countryside Stewardship	EA	Environment Agency
WGS	Woodland Grant Scheme	NDDC	North Dorset District Council
HRP	Habitat Restoration Project	DCC	Dorset County Council
DWT	Dorset Wildlife Trust	HCT	Herpetological Conservation Trust

Table 4. Summary of funding sources for creation and restoration work by area

Habitat	Owner	HRP	CS	EA	DCC	NDDC	HCT	WGS	DWT	Unknown	Total
Woodland creation	1.8 ha			0.21 ha	0.25 ha	0.38 ha		0.39 ha	5.68 ha		8.71
Woodland restoration	1.8 ha							99.14 ha			100.94 ha
Parkland restoration		32.1 ha									32.1 ha
Wood pasture/scrub restoration								10.83 ha			10.83 ha
Orchard creation			0.3 ha								0.3 ha
Neutral grassland creation			18.83 ha			0.19 ha					19.02 ha
Neutral grassland restoration	0.04 ha		38.9 ha								38.94 ha
Wet grassland creation		0.92 ha	0.47 ha								1.39 ha
Scrub/neutral grassland creation			2.4 ha								2.4 ha
Scrub neutral grassland restoration	27.8 ha										27.8 ha
Hedgerow creation			1367 m								1367 m
Hedgerow restoration			18691 m		191 m						19069 m
River margin creation			1930 m	112 m & 0.06 ha			187 m				2042 m & 0.06 ha
River margin restoration			1618 m								1618 m
Arable margin creation	226 m & 1 ha		2888 m							1 ha	3114 m & 2 ha
Pond creation			0.4 ha							0.03 ha	0.43 ha
Pond restoration	0.09		0.3 ha	0.2 ha		0.04 ha	0.01 ha			0.06 ha	0.7 ha

Table 5. Summary of funding sources for creation and restoration work by percentage

Habitat	Owner	HRP	CS	EA	DCC	NDDC	HCT	WGS	DWT	Unknown
Woodland creation	20.67			2.41	2.87	4.36		4.48	65.21	
Woodland restoration	1.78							98.22		
Parkland restoration		100								
Wood pasture/scrub restoration								100		
Orchard creation			100							
Neutral grassland creation			99.00			1.00				
Neutral grassland restoration	0.10		99.90							
Wet grassland creation		66.19	33.81							
Scrub/neutral grassland creation			100							
Scrub neutral grassland restoration	100									
Hedgerow creation			100							
Hedgerow restoration			98.02		1.00		0.98			
River margin creation			94.52	5.48						
River margin restoration			100							
Arable margin creation	7.26		92.74							
Pond creation			93.02							
Pond restoration	12.86		42.86	28.57		5.71	1.43			8.57
Total	8.39	9.78	61.99	2.14	0.23	0.65	0.14	11.92	3.84	0.92

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme provided the greatest amount of overall funding (62%), and was the only scheme available to provide annual revenue for land management (eg neutral grassland, arable and river margins), and to fund a whole farm/holding conservation plan. The scheme funded the majority of works for BAP priority habitats, including neutral grassland, hedgerows, ponds and linear grassland margins (arable and riverside).

The Woodland Grant Scheme provided nearly all the funding for woodland restoration, and included the restoration of a wood pasture/scrub site. The WGS Management Challenge Fund was established in direct response to the project, enabling the restoration of two SNCI woodlands that achieved 100% funding, out of a total of four in Dorset.

Most of the woodland creation occurred on a Woodland Trust site, and was funded by the Trust and by monies raised by the local community.

The HRP provided funds for tree planting (as future replacements) in Stock Gaylard Park. A further project is planned for the park, to prepare an historic parkland restoration plan with English Nature, and to apply for Countryside Stewardship in 2001. The project also funded the repair of a weir and the creation of a wet grassland and scrape area. The HRP funding allowed the owners' time and labour as part contribution, and enabled two habitat creation/restoration schemes that would not have otherwise been able to obtain grant-aid from another source.

Approximately 8% of habitat works were privately funded by landowners. Scrub/neutral grassland restoration occurred on Lydlinch Common and was funded by the land owner. Dorset Butterfly Conservation were responsible for the management plan, and for carrying out the work. Farmers created and self-funded field margins where they were an advantage to the farm. Two farmers created game strips to benefit the farm shoot, and the margins contributed to their set-aside requirements. Landowners also self-funded tree planting, which mainly occurred in field corners and other inaccessible areas, and to benefit the farm shoot.

The Environment Agency Make a Difference Grant provided funds for wetland conservation projects, including pond restoration (for great crested newt), otter holts and fencing river meanders, and small strips of riverside tree planting. The funds for these projects were available to support the project and arranged by the project officer, and would not have been otherwise obtainable by landowners. Further wetland conservation projects are planned for 2000.

The North Dorset District Council and Dorset County Council provided funds for capital projects including pond restoration, tree planting and hedgerow restoration. Their Landscape and Conservation Grants are generally known to farmers and landowners, and require the works to be seen from a public right of way. It is popular with landowners as it involves a quick and simple application process, and enables one project to be addressed at a time. Unfortunately, the funds available were limited and restricted further uptake of this grant.

5.6 Value of a project officer

The project officer provided a constant presence and single point of contact for farmers and landowners in the trial area. This was essential for the close farming community of the *Blackmore Vale, where very few conservation organisations had previously worked with*

landowners. Furthermore, there are an increasing number of individuals and organisations providing conservation advice and it can be confusing for landowners to know who to contact.

The pro-active approach of the project officer led to farm visits and face-to-face discussion, and stimulated interest in habitat restoration. The assistance given to landowners was tailored to suit their individual requirements, and included practical on-the-ground advice, habitat creation/restoration management plans, sourcing and applying for grant-aid, and follow-up visits and advice. The project officer was able to deliver advice directly to landowners, and to channel specific enquiries to appropriate organisations (eg by arranging organic farm visits through the Organic Advisory Service).

The project officer also helped to co-ordinate efforts between partner organisation (see 5.4 *Value of the partnership approach*), and helped to ensure that criteria for grants such as Countryside Stewardship were targeted towards the priority habitats. Prior to the project, no farms/holdings in the trial area had entered the scheme and it is evident that the project officer's assistance with applications was essential and resulted in better quality applications. The project officer completed six successful applications and was involved (with the Wildlife Trust) with two further ones. The proportion of successful applications has been greater in the trial area compared to elsewhere (100% in 1998; 89% in 1999 compared to 40% in Dorset and the South West region). As a result, over 60% of habitat schemes in the trial area were funded through Countryside Stewardship.

The project officer was involved in the majority of habitat schemes carried out, and was essential in securing additional funds that would not otherwise have been available. This included the pond and great crested newt survey, and Environment Agency funding for pond restoration and otter holts.

5.6.1 Value of good advice

There were several important functions that were carried out by the Blackmore Vale project including:

- providing a pro-active approach to farmers/landowners;
- providing a continued single point of contact for landowners and organisations;
- having the sole aim of increasing biodiversity;
- providing a holistic vision of priority habitats to restore within preferred areas;
- providing free conservation advice;
- providing a one-stop-shop for grant advice;
- assisting with grant applications.

6. A vision for the future

6.1 Suggested improvements to the project

The following aspects worked well at a local level and could be used on a wider scale to help implement the aims and objectives of the Habitats and Species Directive, BAP and the Natural Area Profiles:

- continuity of a single point of contact for landowners and organisations;
- regular farm/holding visits and face-to-face contact;
- an holistic vision of an area identifying the priority habitats and preferred areas for restoration;
- on-the-ground practical advice.

Provision of the following could help to increase the effectiveness of the project:

- a longer project time to achieve more changes on the ground - especially important for a farming community such as the Blackmore Vale where a longer lead-in time is needed to gain the confidence of farmers/landowners and to instigate restoration projects;
- a smaller trial area than 100 km² - 150 individual farms/holdings were present in the Blackmore Vale which initially took considerable time to find out the names and addresses of landowners and to gain permission for the Phase I habitat survey to be carried out. The high number and small size of farms/holdings meant that where habitat schemes were carried out, they were relatively small in size (unless they were part of a whole farm/holding Countryside Stewardship Scheme) and scattered throughout the trial area;
- a smaller trial area would be most suitable centred around the prime biodiversity area based on Lydlinch Common and Rooksmoor - this would enable a more specific targeting of habitat schemes to extend and connect the prime areas, and achieve the most benefit for BAP habitats and species;
- additional funding for the restoration and management of the prime biodiversity habitats;
- additional funding for one-off capital projects - particularly important for an agricultural landscape to enable farmers to address one conservation project at a time to suit their farm business and their available time and labour;
- more realistic payment rates for management of unimproved and semi-improved grasslands - particularly important for dairy farms to retain important old grasslands and to compensate for reduced forage production.

6.2 Extending the scope of the project

The 100 square kilometres of the trial area are in many respects a typical representation of the rest of the Wessex Vales Natural Area. The proportions of agricultural land and semi-natural habitats are similar, and the conflicts between agricultural requirements and nature conservation occur throughout the Natural Area.

The Blackmore Vale Habitat Restoration Project has demonstrated that with a targeted and pro-active approach, effective habitat restoration can be achieved on farmland, despite severe financial constraints. As a direct result of the project and the lessons learnt, it is clearly evident that there is an urgent need to co-ordinate advice in the rural sector, to integrate farm business, rural development and nature conservation advice. Dorset FWAG are in the process of securing funds for the establishment of a continuation project, to provide both farm business and nature conservation advice. The proposed area will centre within the Wessex Vales Natural Area, and extend the Blackmore Vale trial area. The main objectives of the proposed project are:

- to use business consultants to provide advice that will help to stabilise farm businesses;
- to use FWAG to provide whole farm and nature conservation advice, to include recommendation of suitable grants and completion of applications;
- to set up a one-stop-shop advisory service based at Dorset FWAG's offices, so that farmers/landowners know where they can obtain advice or be told where to go for advice. This networking service would involve a partnership of farmer groups, farmer networks, local authorities and all conservation organisations in the county.

Liaisons are currently underway to establish this project, named The Dorset Rural Sustainability Project, and it is intended to secure funding in spring 2000 and to commence delivery of the project in summer 2000.

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Appendix 1. Farmers' interest survey - questionnaire

Introduction

A questionnaire was designed to establish a baseline of attitudes to restoration, and to find out whether landowners and land managers had created or improved any habitats in the past or intended to do so in the future; whether they had used environmental land management schemes to assist them; their levels of satisfaction with the schemes and whether improvements could be made to the schemes to make them more attractive.

Questionnaires were sent to all landowners in the trial area, although few returned completed forms. Thirty-two questionnaires were completed, (21% of the total), the majority of which were done in person during farm visits.

Main conclusions

- The majority of landowners and land managers value the rural landscape and the wildlife that it supports.
- 79% had a very high level of interest for wildlife on their land. Deer was the most popular animal seen on their land, and other popular wildlife included hares, owls, wild flowers, birds and all wildlife.
- 71% had already created habitats on their land. Pond creation and hedgerow planting were the most popular habitats (41% and 30% respectively), together with woodland and arable field margins. The main reasons for habitat creation were to encourage wildlife and for visual amenity.
- 29% had recently created habitats at their own cost and without a grant. Four landowners had joined WGS, and two landowners had planted hedgerows with grant from the local council.
- 58% were keen to manage or create habitats on their land with the main reason to benefit wildlife. Ponds were the most popular, together with trees to replace the lost elm trees.
- Landowners were aware of the following schemes:

Countryside Stewardship	71%
Woodland Grant Scheme	71%
Organic Farming Scheme	42%
County Council Grant	25%
SNCI Management Grant	3%

- Level of satisfaction of the schemes:

OFS	High x 1	Moderate x 1	
CSS		Moderate x 2	
WGS	High x 2	Moderate x 1	Low x 2

- Benefits of the schemes included:
 - financial help - could not have done it otherwise
 - new woodland
 - improved management
 - higher prices and better grassland from OFS

- Problems encountered with the schemes:
 - limited funding available
 - time delays from submitting an application to hearing outcome
 - no aftercare assistance and advice
 - difficulty in understanding Woodland Management Grant

- Reasons for not joining a scheme:
 - too much paperwork, and too complicated
 - lack of information supplied
 - too competitive, don't think they would qualify
 - doing work at own expense

Appendix 2. Financial options for restoration

A number of different grant schemes were used to fund conservation projects within the trial area. These are summarised below:

MAFF

- **Countryside Stewardship Scheme** - capital and annual payments are made for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes, wildlife, historic features and public enjoyment. A wide range of payments is available. The scheme offers 10-year management agreements, and acceptance is discretionary.
- **Non-Rotational and Rotational Set-Aside** - annual payments for set-aside land, eligible under field margin, grassland or natural regeneration management options under the Arable Area Payments Scheme.
- **Farm Woodland Premium Scheme** - annual payments for planting new woods on land currently in productive agriculture, in addition to the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme.
- **Organic Farming Scheme** - annual payments for the conversion to organic farming from conventional practices. Payments are progressively reduced over 5 years and vary depending on current land use.

Forestry Commission

- **Woodland Grant Scheme** - capital payments are paid in instalments for the planting of new woodlands and restocking. Additional supplements are also available to assist the projects, including planting conifers or broadleaves on arable land or improved grassland, compensation for excluding stock from woodland and encouragement of natural regeneration.
- **Woodland Improvement Grant** - capital payments of up to 50% are made to enhance existing woodlands, eligible under Providing Public Recreation in Woodlands, Under Managed Woods or Woodland Biodiversity options.
- **Woodland Management Challenge** - payments are made in addition to WIG to top up funding to 100% for the Management of Small Dorset Woods. Available for 2 years to March 2000, specifically set up in response to the trial area.

Dorset County and District Councils

- **Conservation Grants** - capital payments of up to 50% of costs are made for small conservation projects including tree and shrub planting, hedgerow restoration, fencing, pond restoration, pollarding and coppicing.

Environment Agency

- Make a Difference Grants - capital payments of up to 50% of costs are made for small waterside restoration projects including tree and shrub planting, and otter holts.

English Nature

- Wildlife Enhancement Scheme - annual and capital payments for managing SSSIs and other important wildlife sites.
- Habitat Restoration Project - a fund was allocated for each trial area, for capital payments for the restoration of priority habitats within the trial area that were unable to be funded through other schemes.

Other Mechanisms

The following were also used as options to assist in the implementation of the project:

FWAG Landwise and Whole Farm Plans

Grants from the Herpetological Conservation Trust

Funding for pond surveys from the Environment Agency

Funding for great crested newt survey from Dorset Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Fund

Landowners' own funds

Enriching the Vale

Figure 1

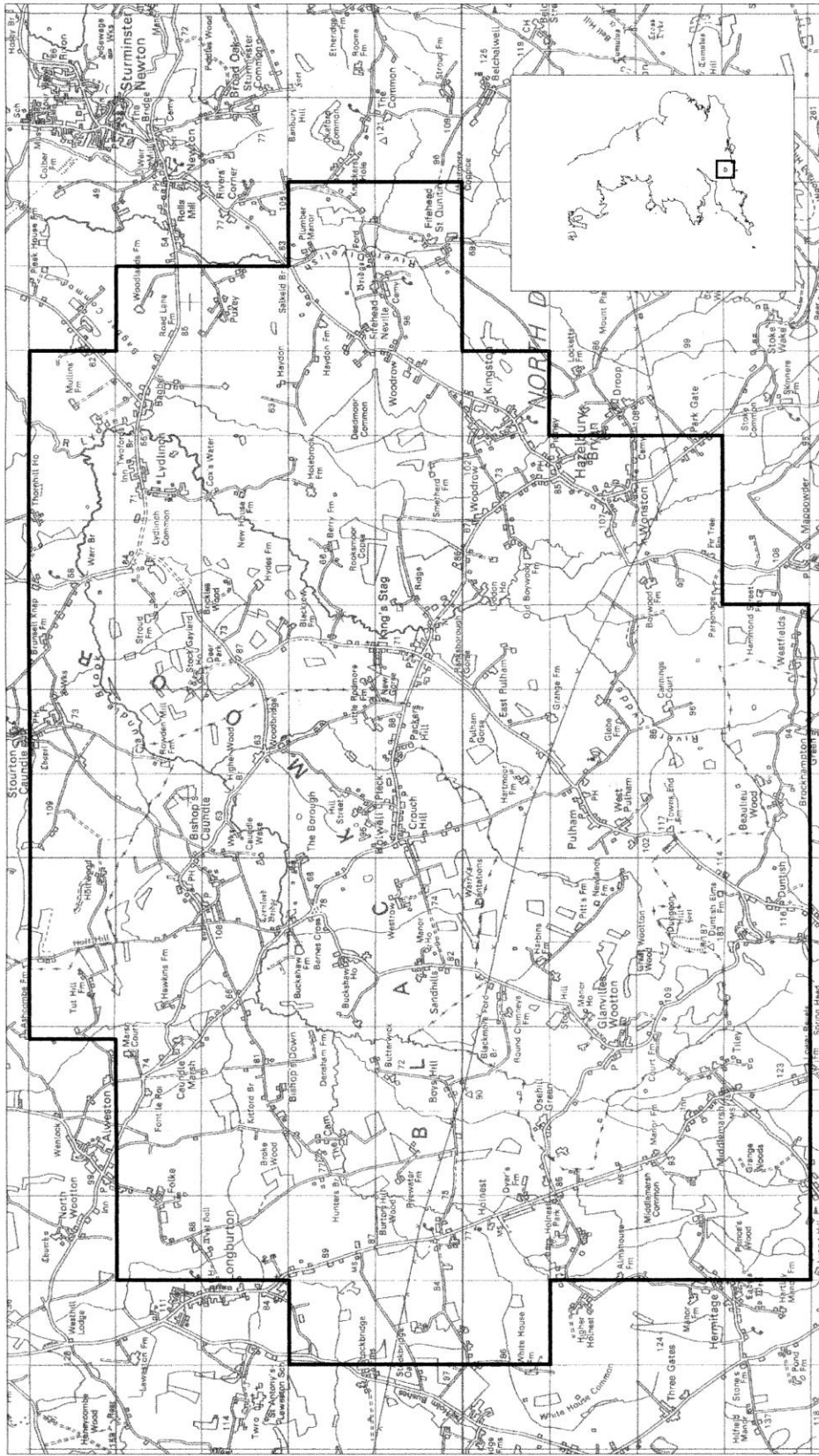
Location of Trial Areas



Enriching the Vale

Location of Trial Area

Figure 2



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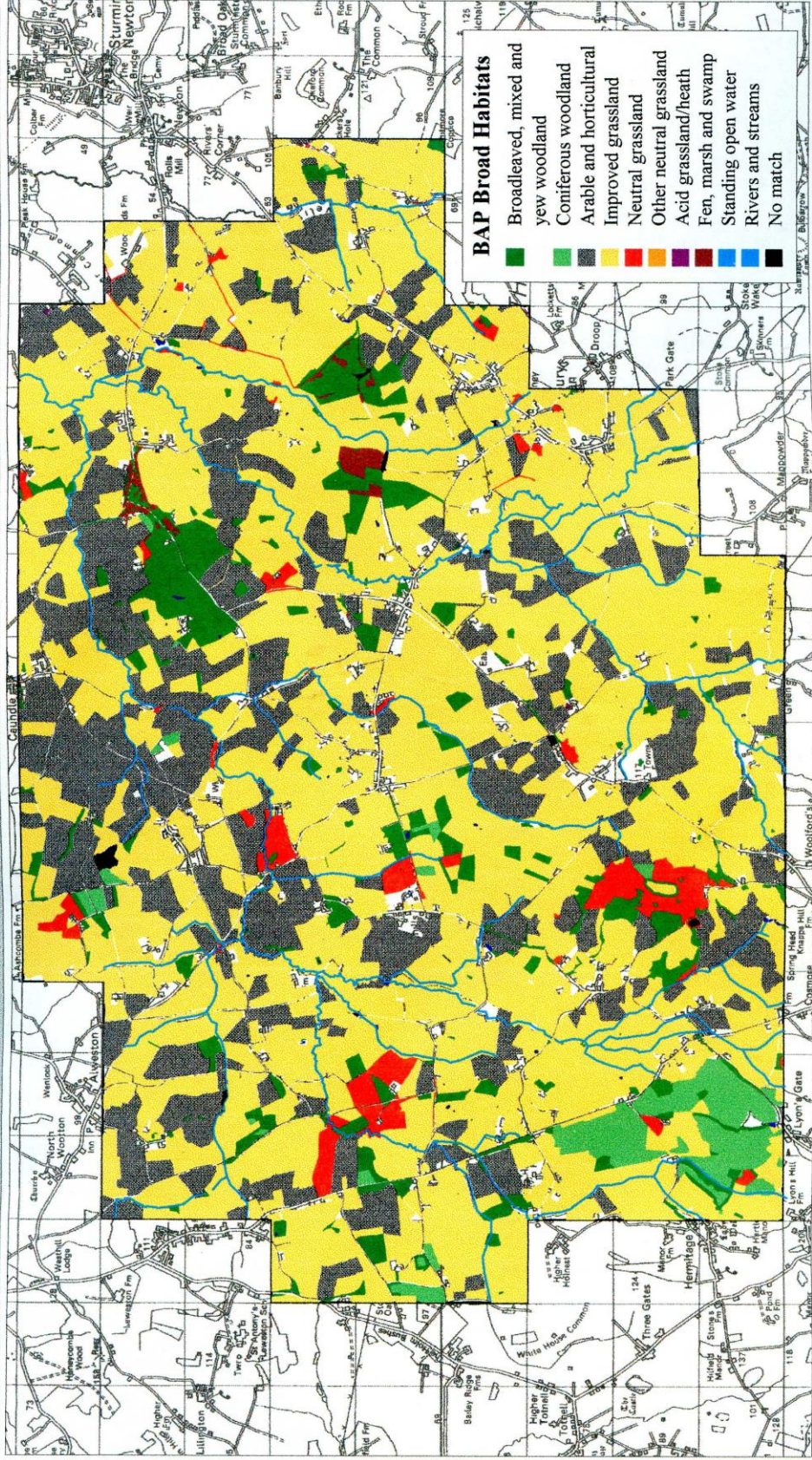


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Enriching the Vale

Distribution of BAP Broad Habitats

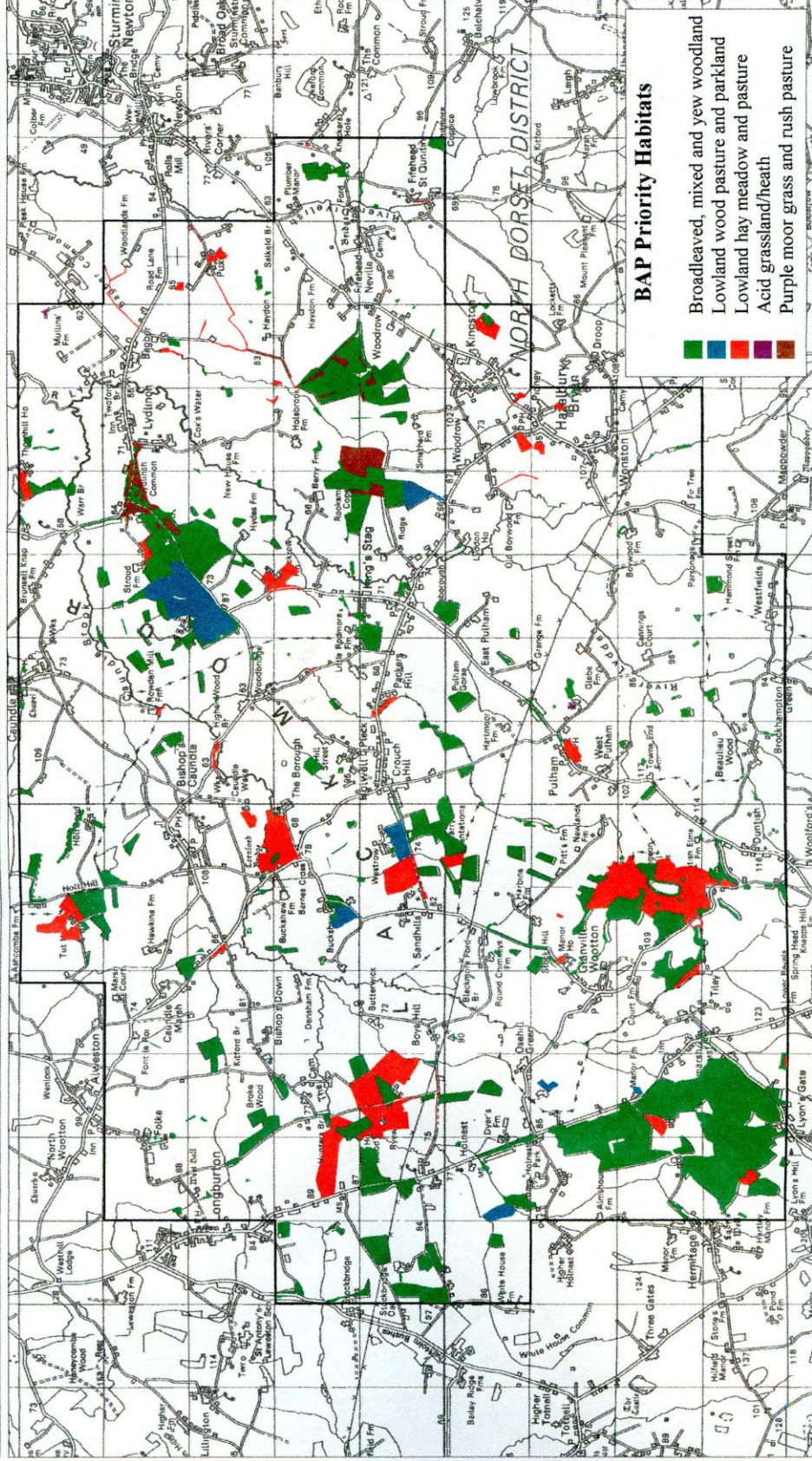
Figure 3



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Figure 4 Distribution of BAP Priority Habitats with Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland

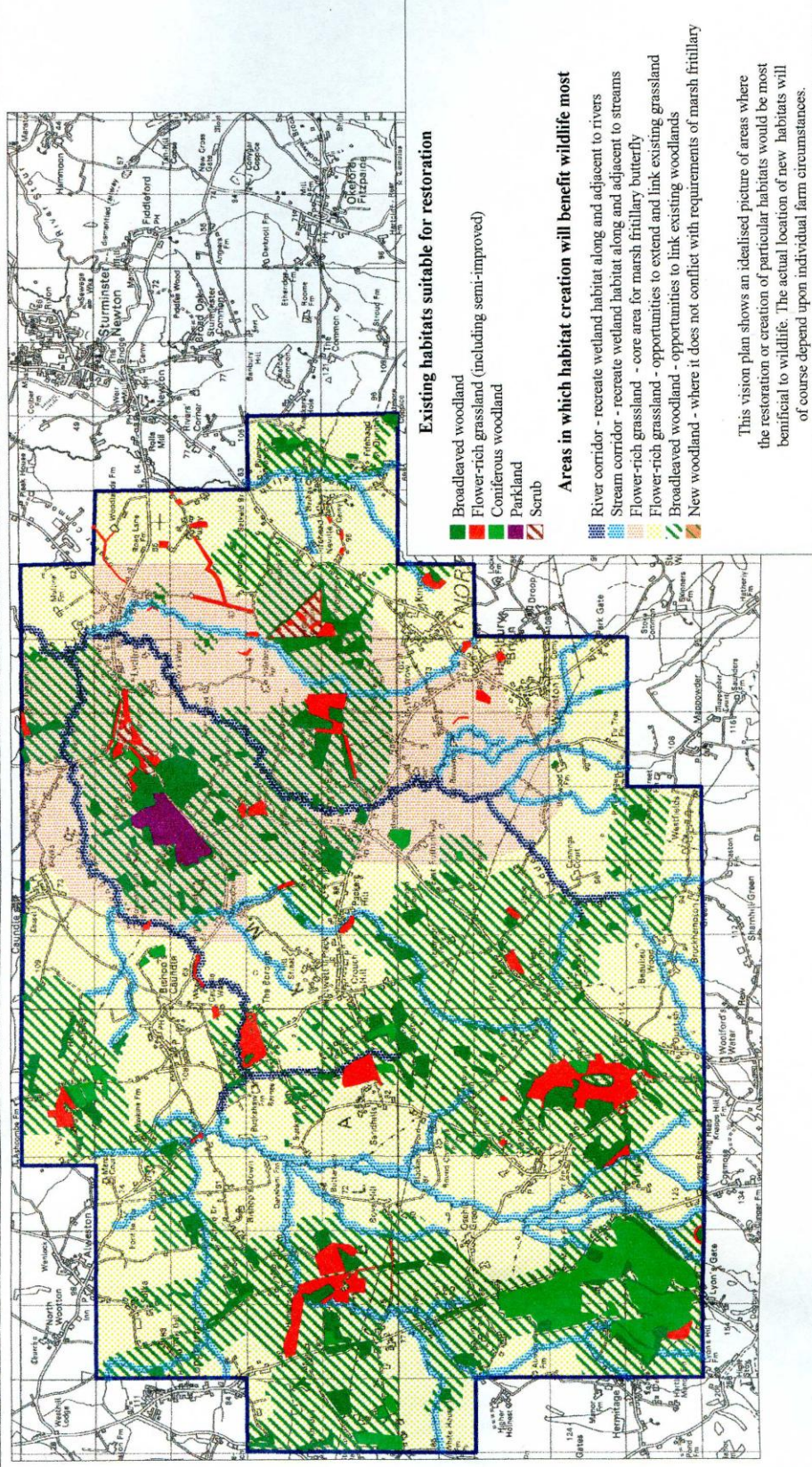


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Enriching the Vale

A 'Vision' for Habitat Restoration

Figure 5



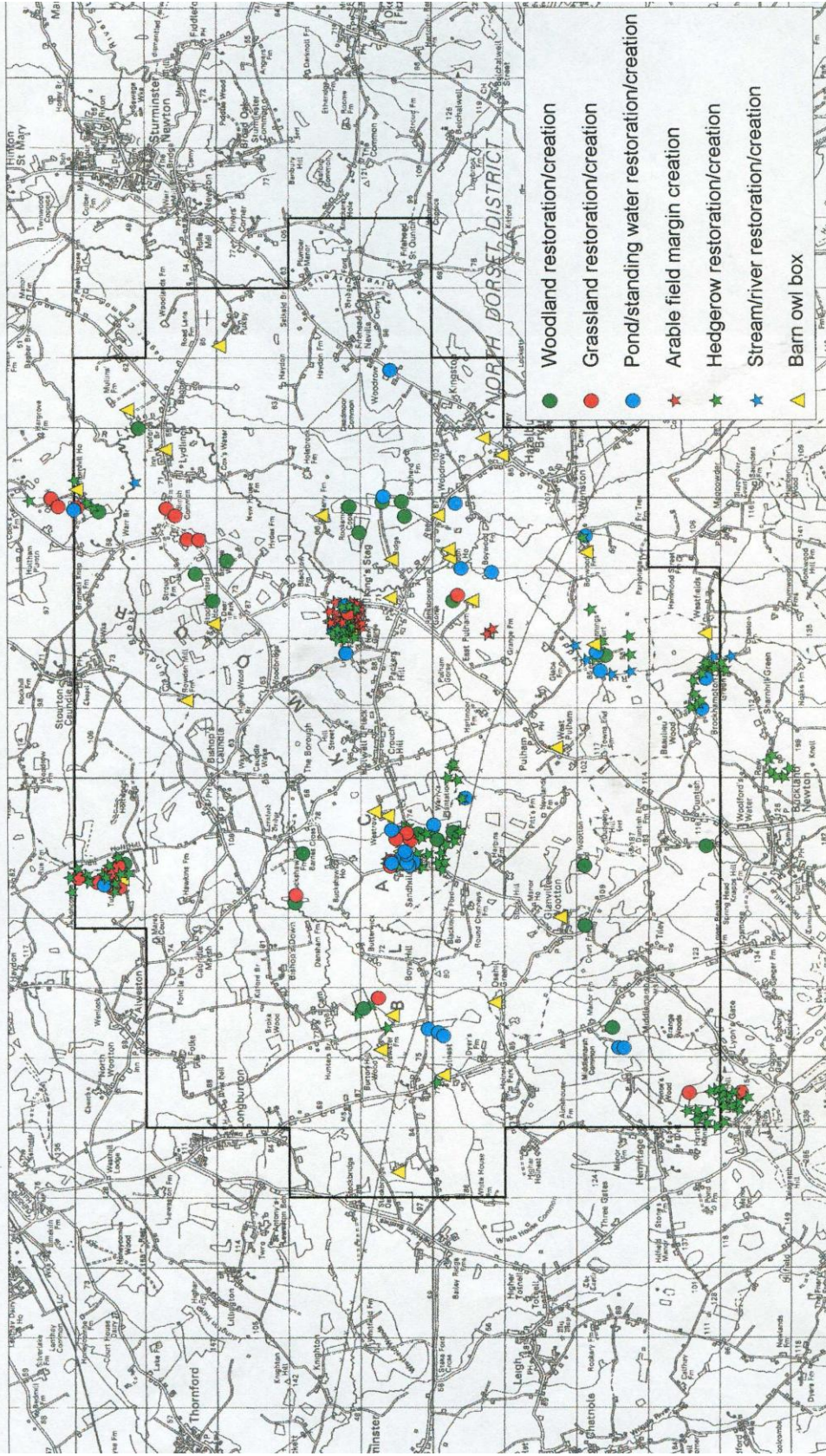
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Enriching the Vale

Distribution of restoration/creation schemes

Figure 6



Size of dot does not reflect area of work undertaken

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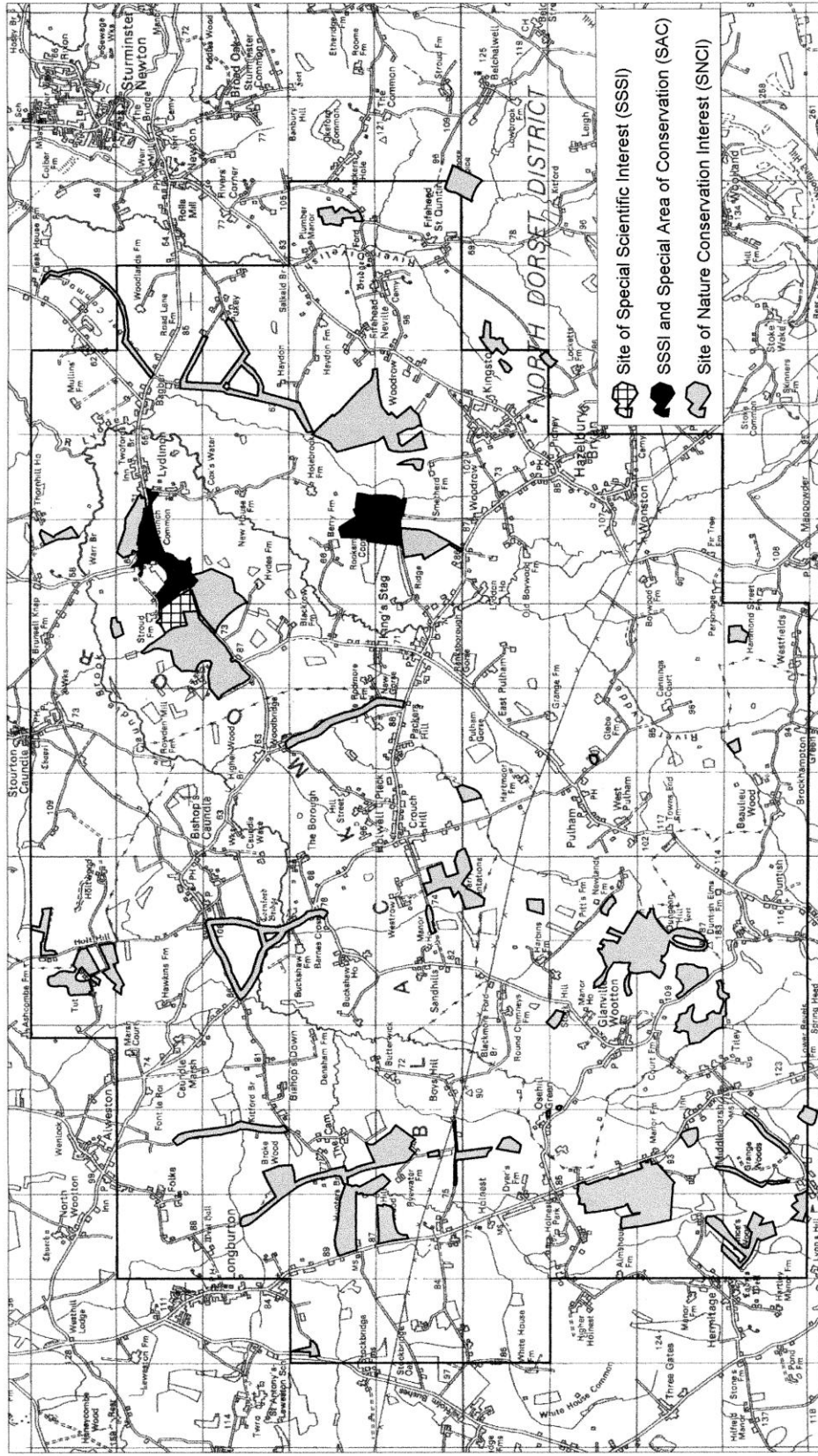


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Enriching the Vale

Location of Designated Areas

Figure 7



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