

Pop-up shops, trailers for farm open days and pond clearance

Farming in Protected Landscapes in Cranborne Chase AONB – the first year’s report.

The new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme offers funding to farmers and land managers for projects that are outside normal agri-environment schemes. The projects must offer tangible benefits for wildlife, nature, people and landscapes.

The programme runs until March 2024 and applications are open until January 2024. The first year has already proved fruitful and there some great projects underway. Funding from £1,000 - £150,000 is available per project.

If you're looking for some inspiration head to the Farming in Protected Landscapes pages of our website where we have a summary of projects.

Helena Darragh is the Farming in Protected Landscapes Officer for Cranborne Chase AONB – if you would like to discuss your project idea, please email helenadarragh@cranbornechase.org.uk



Tree planting, wildlife surveys and the creation of lapwing plots are just a few of the projects underway. Find out how the tail of the Swan Lake at Wardour Castle, shown here, is being improved thanks to funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme.

My Farming Life in Cranborne Chase: Liz Birkett



Favourite season: Spring when the days are getting longer and everything is starting to green up and downland is coming to life with cowslips and insects. We also get out a bit more on longer walks exploring the area.



What I love about Cranborne Chase: The multitude of "secret" valleys you can see often only when you are walking along the Ox Drove. It's like a hidden world down there and they're often the best places to stand and spot wildlife.



Best wildlife spotting: Finding Marsh fritillary and Adonis blue butterflies on our farm. I also watched a barn owl one evening that was being nudged by a cow as it was sitting watching them. It eventually flew off – fabulous to watch!.



Favourite walk(s): White Sheet hill walking east with magnificent views over the chalk valleys. Broad Chalke along Church Bottom up to the Ox Drove, making a loop down the valleys into Bishopstone.



Favourite wildflowers: Some of the orchids - the early purple and pyramidal orchid with their vibrant purple colour standing out against green herbage.

Liz Birkett is a member of the local assessment panel for the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme at Cranborne Chase AONB. Liz farms in the Chalke Valley and is an active member of the Chalke Valley Farmer Cluster.

Restoring the tail of the swan at Wardour

Farming in Protected Landscapes is helping to fund a programme of works at the Wardour Estate to restore elements of its original design, showing off some of its former glory, as The Hart discovered on a recent visit.



Wardour Park is one of the most popular attractions in Cranborne Chase AONB thanks to Old Wardour Castle which is managed by English Heritage. Lord Arundell of Wardour commissioned Richard Woods to design the Park in the 1760s and 1770s; the Park consists of a series of classic features which includes a Palladium mansion, New Wardour Castle, Old Wardour Castle, a chain of lakes, parkland trees and a Great Terrace.

Those involved in the ownership of the estate would like to see aspects of restoration of some of its 18th century designs.

Richard Arundell, who is the principal landowner, said: "This is phase two of the plan to help us restore Wardour. Phase one was possible thanks to funding from Natural England which helped pay for a comprehensive survey and includes a proposal for the management of the landscape."

Phase two of the plan came about through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme. The work at Wardour includes tree and scrub clearance on the dam and banks of Park Pond, the final pond in the chain of lakes that starts at the A30. It was designed originally to be a visible, eye-catching water feature that you would see from other areas of the Estate. The second element is the restoration of the tail of Swan Pond, the pond designed in the shape of a Swan which is at Old Wardour Castle.

Richard continued: "When this new programme was identified to us at the end of 2021, we applied and are very happy to have been granted funding that falls within our plans."

This eastern end of the park attracts a huge number of visitors and the pond at Old Wardour Castle will be familiar to many. As a first step towards enhanced public amenity a stretch of the fence surrounding the pond has been removed so that people can sit on the benches provided and enjoy a scenic view of the lake. Over Covid, this has been incredibly popular with the public and this funding is paying for the next stage of the plans for Swan Pond which includes enhancing the shape and visibility of the lake and access to those who wish to enjoy it.

It is hoped that future funding may pay for a footpath for buggies and wheelchairs which will go along to the corner of the pond, and new benches so people can enjoy the view and see the gothic pavilion.

Farming in Protected Landscapes has also funded the creation of swales, shallow drainage channels, on other Wardour land to alleviate flooding.