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OUR TEAM

WHAT'S NEXT

THANK YOU







STRATEGY

DEF specialises in identifying the most innovative and impactful grassroots nature restoration projects in Devon, providing vital kick-start or scale-up support.

We fill a funding gap for smaller, pioneering projects requiring flexible funding and mentoring support.

We are independent and agile, directing funds where they are needed quickly to deliver the greatest benefits for nature.

Our Advisory Board of leading local nature experts provides valuable feedback to optimise our grant-making process.

Since 2020, DEF has awarded over £1.4 million of grants to more than 100 local nature restoration projects.

We're excited by the power of grassroots nature restoration to tackle the climate and nature crises, while igniting hope and wider action.



6. Scale & Replicate

We use our local and global environmental networks to enable local champions to share best practice, scale, and replicate - amplifying their impact for nature in Devon and beyond.



5. Mobilise Supporters

We showcase project successes, raising awareness among potential partners, stakeholders, and donors to increase impact and leverage additional funding for local nature restoration.



We seek out prospective grantees to identify the most promising local projects, exploring their potential for impact for nature in Devon.



2. Develop the Idea

We work together to

establish opportunities and challenges, seeking **Overall Aims:** feedback from our Advisory Board of nature - Increase the funding experts to optimise our directed to local grant-making process. environmental initiatives.



3. Grant Awarded

After funding is disbursed we keep in close contact, providing mentoring and guidance, and sharing our networks, expertise and experience to give projects the best chance of success.



- Amplify the impact of

grassroots nature

restoration efforts.

4. Local Impact

measure and communicate their impact using a ramework developed by our global network. Conservation Collective, giving our grantees access to world-class expertise and support.



IMPACT GOALS HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT ACROSS

OUR PROJECTS



RESTORING **NATURAL HABITATS**



PROTECTING NATIVE SPECIES



REDUCING POLLUTION



BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

OUR APPROACH

HOW WE CATALYSE POSITIVE CHANGE

IMPACT OVERVIEW 2020-2025



PROJECTS

102



PARTNERS

46



GRANTS AWARDED

£1.4 MILLION

September 2025



PROJECT DISTRIBUTION

MAP OF DEVON

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

2024-2025



RESTORING NATURAL HABITATS

MOOR TREES:

trees planted across **Dartmoor and South Devon**

TORBAY SAVE OUR SEAGRASS:



events held

engaging people

WASHFIELD WETLAND:

new wetland biodiversity hotspot created on the River Exe



BIG DEVON MEADOW COUNT:

landowners engaged

meadow sites

295 hectares

WILD ABOUT DEVON:

218,369

habitat created



TILL THE COAST IS CLEAR:

26,000kg

coastal plastic pollution recovered **EARTH ACTION NORTH DEVON:**

71 community beach cleans

3,520Kg plastic pollution collected

3,785 volunteer hours

FRIENDS OF THE DART:

sites tested and analysed in the lab on a weekly basis to lobby for water quality in the River Dart

FLETE FIELD LAB:

up to 47%

reduction in E. coli achieved by fungi mycofiltration



PROTECTING NATIVE SPECIES

SPECIES RECOVERY CENTRE:

wildcat kittens bred

white storks hatched

and many more lost and rare species at a pioneering new captive breeding centre

HARVEST MOUSE PROJECT:

nests recorded by volunteers



TAMAR BEAVER PROJECT:

landowners engaged at

events organised by **Devon Wildlife Trust**



NATIVE KELP RESORATION

kickstarting practical Level 3 & Level 4 courses students trained

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE SCHOOL:

years of support for Apricot Centre,

across all courses to date

m2 of kelp beds initially restored,

estimated to sequester kg of atmospheric carbon



carbon removed from the atmosphere plus learnings that will enable scale up



SWIFT BOXES:

churches installed swift boxes in towns and villages across Devon









FLETE FIELD LAB BIOCHAR CRUSHER:

7,500kg

OUR WORK



Swift Boxes

Grant Awarded: £11,576.

Project Dates: 31.12.2024 to 31.3.2026.

Restoring Devon's Swift population and addressing the drastic decline in numbers over the last 25 years by installing nest boxes and audio lures into church towers to attract breeding pairs and kickstart new colonies across Devon.



Force for Nature

Grant Awarded: £8,750. Project Dates: 1.9.25 to 1.3.26.

Offering volunteers the opportunity to get involved with local nature restoration initiatives, while providing farmers and landowners with a free resource to carry out nature-positive tasks such as planting trees, sowing meadows, building leaky dams, digging ponds, removing invasive species, and much more!



Friends of the Dart

Grant Awarded: £10,000.

Project Dates: 1.10,2025 to 1.4,2026

Project Dates: 1.10.2025 to 1.4.2026.

Engaging with the community to raise awareness about the sources of river pollution and the steps householders, landowners, farmers and local businesses can take to reduce pollution; alongside lobbying South West Water to upgrade critical infrastructure.



OUR WORK



Pesticide Free Devon

Grant Awarded: £8,000. Project Dates: 1.4.25 to 1.11.25.

Launching a Devon-wide movement focused on reducing pesticide use in households, communities, and agriculture. Aiming to demonstrate that a highly localised approach, focussing on relationship building and partnerships, can deliver long-lasting results.



Washfield Wetland

Grant Awarded: £18,000.

Project Dates: 30.6.25 to 30.9.25.

Supporting the start-up costs of an ambitious new wetland habitat, enabling the collaboration of local farmers and landowners to create a new biodiversity hotspot, improve river water quality, and reduce soil run-off and flooding at key downstream sites.

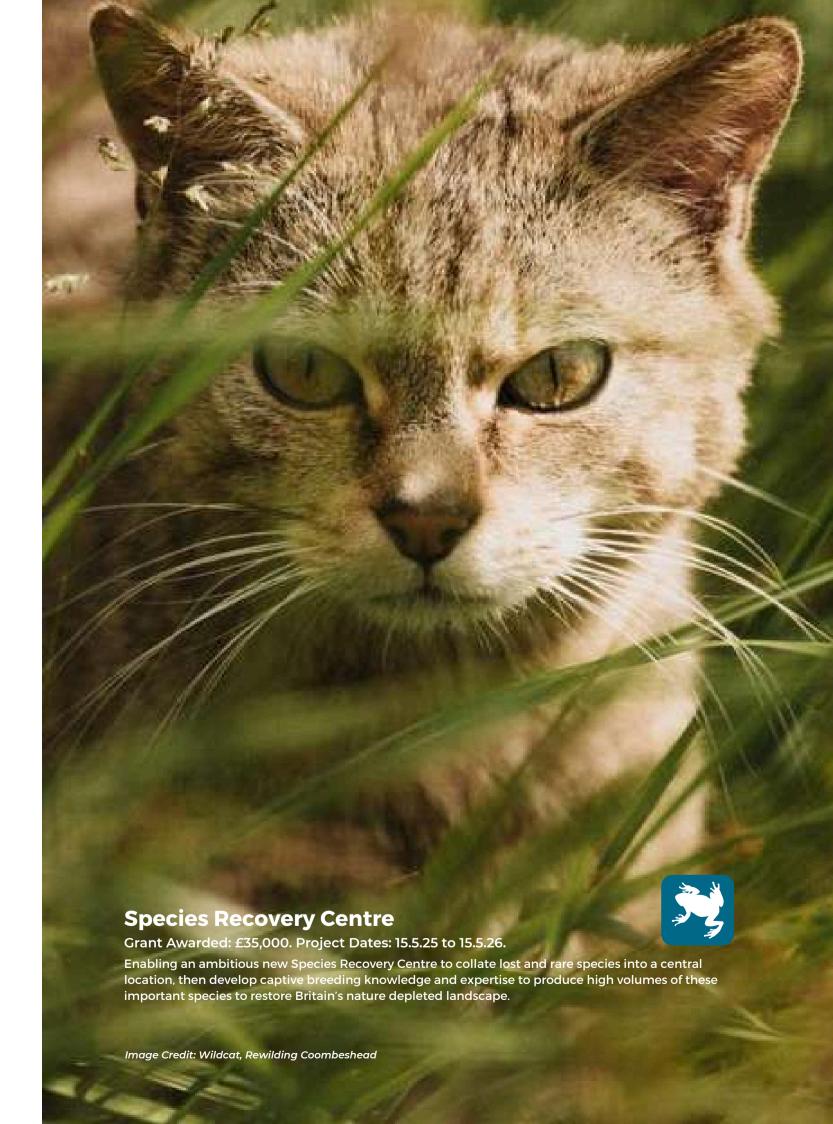


Earth Action North Devon

Grant Awarded: £19,000.

Project Dates: 30.3.25 to 30.3.26.

Tackling plastic pollution, inspiring connection with nature and facilitating sustainable behaviour change via community education, events and campaigns to foster a healthier relationship between people and the natural world.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



FLETE FIELD LAB



Dumping raw sewage into rivers is a widespread problem across the UK, with the amount released in England doubling from 1.75 million hours of spills in 2022 to 3.6 million hours in 2024, according to the Environment Agency.

Since 2021, DEF has supported Flete Field Lab (FFL) in South Devon, an experimental and collaborative initiative researching nature-based remedies to reduce water pollution, improve soil health, and sequester carbon.

They are trialling the use of mycelium (the root-like structure of fungi) to filter out contaminants from water, a process known as mycofiltration. An example of their work involves placing mycelium infused sacks in streams to capture pollutants, runoff, and reduce bacteria levels downstream.

The research, development and testing of mycofiltration carried out at FFL is unique in the UK, whilst their findings and methodologies are open source, freely shared for the benefit of all. For four years FFL has trialled highly innovative field-based experiments, to develop low-cost, low-tech, nature-based solutions that empower landowners, with potential application globally.

DEF's initial support for FFL exemplifies many of our key values; providing small grants to unknown, entrepreneurial and underfunded local groups, with brilliant ideas but without the clout or evidence to attract funding from other sources.

In the years since DEF's initial grant, Shelley, Frank and the team at FFL have proved several times over this was an extremely worthwhile concept to support.

Since 2021, DEF grants have enabled FFL to carry out seven research projects which showed mycofiltration reducing the bacterial load in surface water and specifically reducing E-Coli by up to 47%. Meanwhile nitrate and phosphate pollution was removed in significant amounts, and in the case of some of their dairy waste water experiments, by 100%.

FFL has also analysed global mycofiltration reports, built a core team of scientists, students, volunteers and community members, and delivered talks to 1,500 people. The team has worked to build a network of farmers and landowners, both to raise awareness, and to develop potential future income strands and sources of funding.

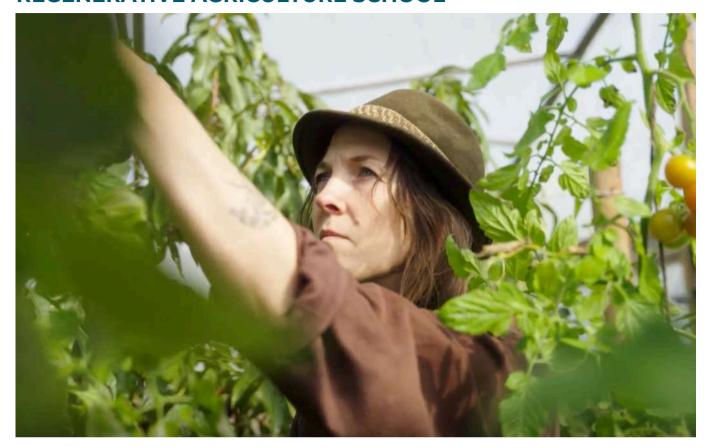
REDUCING POLLUTION



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE SCHOOL



Agriculture is central to Devon's identity, with around 487,000 hectares of farmland which accounts for about 6% of England's total (House of Commons Library, 2024 & 2021). However, modern intensive practices place pressure on the environment - from greenhouse gas emissions to impacts on soils, rivers and wildlife (Environment Agency, 2020).

Regenerative agriculture can significantly reduce the negative environmental impacts of conventional and industrial farming. It also builds climate resilience by improving soil health and structure, increasing carbon sequestration.

Regenerative agriculture reduces erosion, decreases water consumption, reduces pollution by minimising chemical pesticide and fertiliser use, and enhances biodiversity by maintaining diverse crops, increasing tree cover and integrating wildlife habitats.

DEF has supported The Apricot Centre since 2020, intially with a small grant to fund their feasibility study to develop a groundbreaking new training course to fill a skills gap and grow the next generation of regenerative farmers..

Next, we funded the certification of their Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications; then the start-up costs, which unlocked larger support from local councils and philanthopic foundations, enabling the training to be free-to-access.

Since 2022, more than 380 trainees have graduated across all levels, almost all of them now pursue land-based careers.

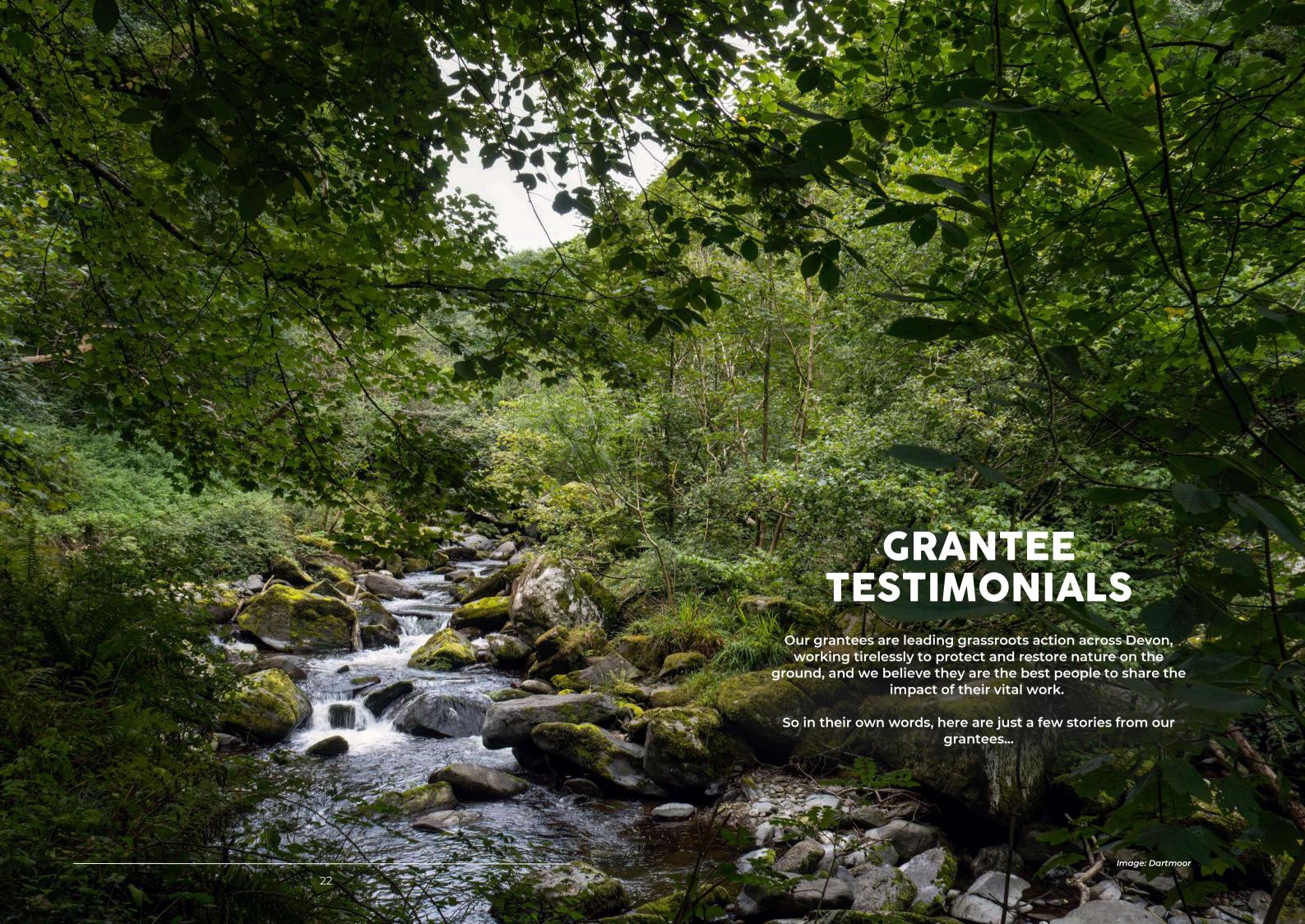
This beacon centre of regenerative excellence has now gained a new major funder which is channelling its support through DEF, enabling the project to expand and offer more people the opportunity to learn vital nature-friendly farming techniques.

"As demand for regenerative land-based training continues to grow, we have been sharing our curriculum and delivery models, along with offering guidance on how to adapt the training to reflect local landscapes, enterprises, and learner needs.

Our aim is to grow a network of regional training hubs that are responsive, resilient, and capable of scaling regenerative education across the UK and beyond."

-Rachel CEO at the Apricot Centre





RESTORING NATIVE WOODLAND

Reflections from Helen Aldis - Chief Executive, Moor Trees





Grant Awarded: £10,000 Project Dates: 15.4.24 to 15.4.25

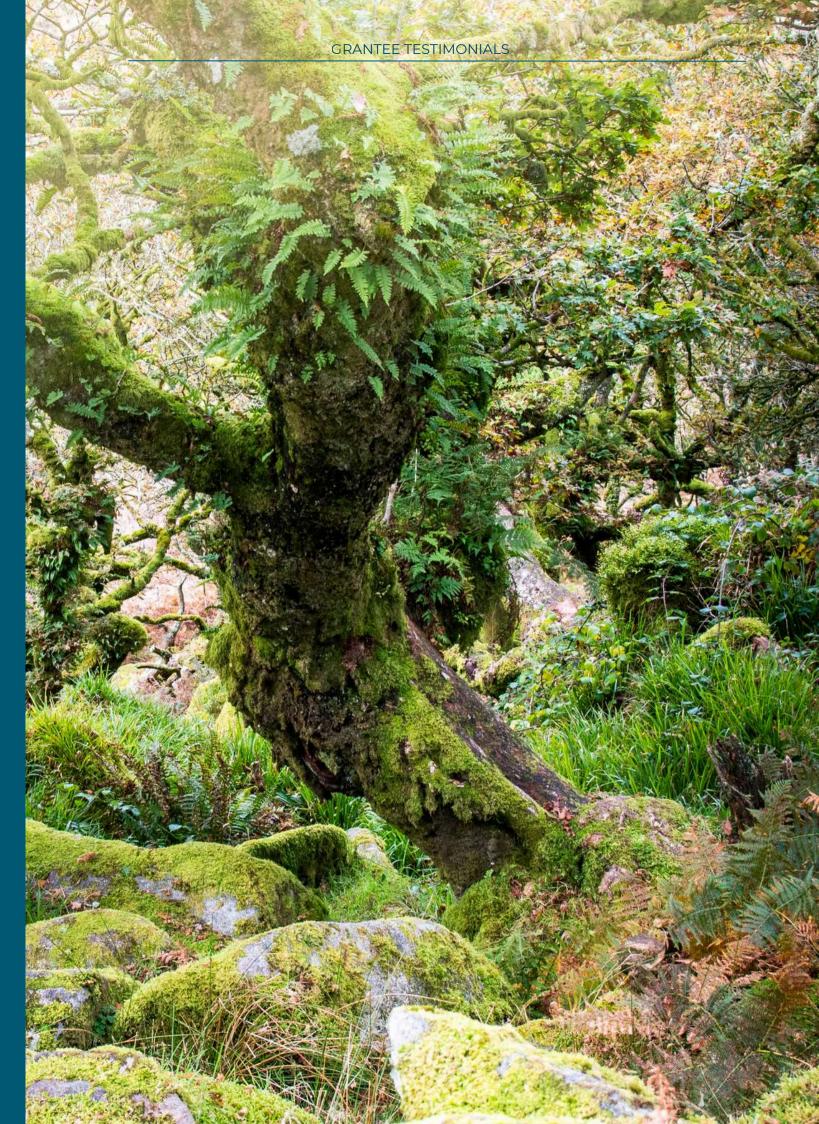
Moor Trees has for a quarter of a century been focused on restoring native woodland on Dartmoor. Over this time, with the support of the local community and an active group of volunteers, we have developed our knowledge and expertise in growing trees in our Community Tree Nurseries from seeds gathered from the ancient woodland within the National Park and local area. The nearly 300,000 saplings we have been able to nurture in this time have been planted out in their thousands each winter with our volunteers, battling increasingly volatile weather conditions as the effects of a warming climate are borne out with changes to our seasons.

With the support of **Devon Environment Foundation** we have not only been able to significantly boost our production of Dartmoor provenance trees – almost doubling the number of trees we are growing at any one time over a little more than two years – but we have also been able to be more confident about the commitments we make and the ambitions we have in terms of the speed of habitat restoration we want to drive.

As a funder they have been so supportive and encouraging. Always thinking of useful introductions and sharing ideas. It is a true partnership.

Over the years the woodlands we have created, and continue to plant, become host to a multitude of species and will in time provide refuge and habitats for pine martens, red squirrels, beavers and returning rare bird species as well as invertebrates, lichens and bryophytes. We are creating a treasure trove of species rich environments for future generations to enjoy and wonder at. All made possible because we have been able to work together to breathe more life back into Dartmoor.





REINTRODUCING PINE MARTENS

Reflections from Andrew Taylor - Devon Wildlife Trust



Grant Awarded: £10,000
Project Dates: 1.10.22 to 1.2.24

Our Pine Marten project is reintroducing one of the UK's most charismatic mammals to South West England. Equally importantly, the project is working with communities to restore and re-connect the native woodlands on which the martens, and countless other species, depend.

Pine martens play a vital role in woodland ecosystems and were once widespread in Britain. However by the 1880s, hunting and wholesale tree clearance had seen them disappear from most landscapes.

A century later, isolated corners of Scotland, Wales and Cumbria still retained enough animals to make a UK-wide comeback possible, but only with human help. Natural recolonisation would not be feasible, so targeted translocations from the few areas with good populations were needed.

After years of planning, successful reintroductions were made to Wales and the Forest of Dean; and national experts identified South West England as the next priority.

Devon Environment Foundation engaged with the Pine Martens Bounce Back project in 2022. Its funding helped Devon Wildlife Trust to embark on an intensive programme of consultations and vital preparations.

As a life-long pine marten admirer, I was delighted to find that my Dartmoor valley was to be one of the release areas. Taking part in the delivery of this amazing project – as just one member of a medium-sized army of enthusiastic volunteers - is a standout highlight of my thirty-plus years of living here.

Since the release, camera traps have been set in areas where animals seem to be establishing territories, so we can continue to keep tabs on them. At the time of writing (spring 2025) some or all of the eight females are likely to have litters of two or three kits, and we hope to see evidence of this on our cameras when the youngsters emerge from their natal dens.

Another fifteen to twenty adult animals will be brought down from the forests of Argyll for a follow-up release on Exmoor.

Meanwhile a suite of other pine marten themed activities, co-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, will include woodland habitat enhancements, public engagement and youth training schemes, all designed to create a healthier and more welcoming environment for martens and other woodland wildlife to thrive in.

Successful breeding by our translocated animals should then see a gradual spread from Dartmoor towards Cornwall and from Exmoor into Somerset, eventually linking up with animals in the Forest of Dean to create a robust pine marten population across Wales and the South West.





SUSTAINABILITY AT SOUTH DEVON COLLEGE

Reflections from Wayne Fox-Grimley - Wild About Devon



Grant Awarded: £7,000 Project Dates: 1.4.24 to 1.2.25

At South Devon College we have a proactive, cross-departmental Sustainability Group. The group members are constantly looking for new ways to enhance sustainability throughout the college. One of our recent college initiatives focused on enhancing the campus environment by planting native wildflowers. In my role on the Estates team, part of my responsibilities includes maintaining the green areas of the campus.

As a keen gardener, I identified an opportunity to introduce wildflowers to support the wildlife on college grounds. When I learned there was funding available, I researched bulbs and was very pleased to see we could bring back native bluebells. We then applied for funding to purchase a variety of British native bulbs and wildflower seeds for planting around the college campuses.

The project began with a series of seed and bulb planting events involving students. It was fantastic to see the students outside in the fresh air learning how to use gardening tools. An additional seed bomb making activity was incorporated into our annual Green Week. which aims to promote environmental awareness and sustainability practices among the college community. This seed bomb making was particularly engaging for the students, many of whom were fascinated to learn that the tiny seeds would grow into the colourful flowers depicted on the poster. However, some students were hesitant to handle the soil, highlighting a gap in their experience with gardening.

Through this project, I was surprised to learn that many students had not had the opportunity to plant seeds or be involved with any sort of gardening at all. This realisation underscored the importance of helping young people engage with the natural environment. It was incredibly meaningful when students approached me after planting events to express how much they enjoyed the activity and their desire to participate again. These positive interactions included students on special programs designed to bridge them back into education, demonstrating the inclusive nature of gardening.

Since the initial planting, we have seen the bulbs begin to sprout, and we eagerly anticipate the wildlife that the wildflowers will attract when they bloom. The project has fostered relationships across college departments, enabling us to engage these partnerships for future sustainability initiatives. This success has inspired me to envision further improvements year on year, with more areas seeded with bulbs, flowers, and trees.

My long-term dream is to bring the outdoors indoors, by incorporating plants into the buildings' central areas with planters and benches. There is also an outside courtyard that could accommodate planters, making the area more welcoming for people and wildlife. These enhancements would not only beautify the campus but also create a more inviting and relaxing atmosphere for students, staff, and visitors.

Devon Environment Foundation's Wild About Devon grant has been instrumental in making the wildflower project possible. Without their funding, we would not have been able to find the money in our budget for this initiative, as building maintenance projects must take priority for our limited funds. The foundation's support has had a significant positive impact on the college, enabling us to enhance the campus environment and promote sustainability.

The wildflower project at South Devon College has been a rewarding and impactful initiative. It has provided students with valuable hands-on experience, fostered a sense of community, and enhanced the campus environment. Moving forward, we aim to build on this success by expanding our sustainability efforts and continuing to engage students in meaningful environmental activities.

MONITORING DEPTFORD PINK POPULATIONS

Reflections from Bex House - Conservation Officer, Species Recovery Trust



Grant Awarded: £4,600 Project Dates: 1.2.22 to 1.2.23

Over the past decade at the Species Recovery Trust, we've been closely monitoring Deptford pink populations across the country. It's been a journey of highs and lows. We've watched in real time as once-thriving colonies disappeared, some lost to development, like new car parks, others simply shaded out by encroaching vegetation. These tiny seeds need high light levels to germinate, and without the right conditions, they silently vanish. But it hasn't all been loss. We've also seen remarkable turnarounds, places where targeted management has helped these wildflowers return.

One success has been at a surprising locationalong a dual carriageway near Plymouth. In partnership with National Highways and Amey, we created a bespoke cutting regime, and now a once-forgotten roadside verge has become a haven for Deptford pinks. Yet nowhere has inspired me quite like Buckfastleigh.

Thanks to DEF funding, we were able to return to this special town and build on our 2013 report with a full survey. From the beginning, the difference here was clear: the passion of local people. With the help of Dartmoor National Park, Devon County Council, the Buckfastleigh Action for Nature Group (BANG), Vincent Wildlife Trust, and supportive ecologists, we set up annual monitoring and brought in contractors to clear areas where vegetation was becoming too dense. These aren't easy sites, they're steep, rocky, and physically demanding. But the commitment never wavered.

The local community played an incredible role too. After we put up signage and shared a social media appeal, people began telling us where they'd seen pinks growing. And then, on a sunny day in July, we followed up on one of these tips and stumbled across a stunning sight: two swathes of grassland, rich with blooming Deptford pinks, stretching nearly 150 metres along the road. It was breathtaking and completely new to us.

What's happened in Buckfastleigh is extraordinary. The town has become a national stronghold for the species, not just because of its habitats, but because of the people who care for them. Businesses at the local industrial estates: Voyager Coffee, Camperbee, The Brew Hub, Waldrons Patisserie, Johnsons Builders Merchants & Tool Hire, have all adapted their land management to support wildflowers, including the Deptford pink.

For me, the Rare Wildflower Recovery project in Buckfastleigh is more than a success story it's a blueprint for the future. It's shown us the incredible impact that communities, businesses, and conservationists can have when they work together. It's given me real hope. And it's inspired me to take this model to another town where Deptford pink is struggling, in the hope that the same spark of local passion can drive change again.



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SURVEYING WILDLIFE ON THE CLIFFS OF DEVON

Reflections from Andrew Whitehouse - Head of Operations, Buglife



Grant Awarded: £10.000 Project Dates: 15.4.24 to 15.4.25

In Devon there are pockets of soft cliffs along the south coast, with particular highlights being the cliffs at Wembury, and around Prawle Point – the combination of geology and land management having led to these becoming hotspots for insects. I have spent days surveying these places for Black Oil Beetles (Meloe proscarabaeus), Long-horned Bees (Eucera longicornis), elusive Six-banded Nomad Bees (Nomada sexfasciata), and many more species, learning about their ecology and lifestyles. The Long-horned Bee males are quite amazing - they have these incredibly long antennae that mean they are very distinctive flying along in search of flowers and a mate.



The wildlife that calls the coast home is guite unique, A partnership of Buglife, South Devon National but is it also struggling. Over time, the wildflower-rich Landscape, the National Trust and others, was coastal grasslands and other habitats upon which these special invertebrates rely have been lost, damaged and fragmented. They are now limited to thin strips and small pockets – not large enough to enable nature to thrive and too disconnected to enable wildlife to move through the landscape.

In 2007 Buglife published a report recommending that there was an urgent need to restore wildflowerrich cliff-top grassland in South Devon to prevent species extinctions and support nature recovery. And Here is where **Devon Environment Foundation** in 2015 we published a B-Lines map for South Devon – comes in. A new funder, dedicated to supporting highlighting the opportunities to restore wildflower- nature restoration in Devon, a perfect fit for Life on rich habitats and reconnect the coast.

Some progress was made, small pockets of habitat restored, but not at the scale required to turn around us to apply for funding not just for the project but the decline of our threatened species. The local entomologists (me included) continued to document was vital in giving the partners time to develop a the decline of Black Oil Beetles, Long-horned Bees and others. The Six-banded Nomad Bee, now only known from Prawle Point, was last recorded in 2020! partnership to unlock other, larger funders like the We needed to do better: we needed to have confidence and ambition - to think big for nature's

formed – to come up with a bold solution. The result is 'Life on the Edge' – a five-year project to restore wildflower-rich coastal habitats at a landscapescale, and create the conditions where our threatened invertebrates, plants and other wildlife can survive, recover and thrive. The project works with local communities and landowners to inspire, inform, support and empower them to help address the biodiversity crisis in their local area.

the Edge!

DEF were supportive from the start, encouraging also the development of the project. This support strong project, embedded in the local area, with a powerful legacy - and the DEF funding enabled our National Lottery Heritage Fund.

OUR TEAM



Amanda Keetley Executive Director



Maisie Layla Gass Operations Officer



Tom Amey Projects Officer



Ben Goldsmith Founder



Simon Nicholls Chair



Kendra Walsh Conservation Collective

STEERING COMMITEE

Simon Nicholls (Chair) Mitch Tonks Ben Goldsmith **Wynne Griffiths Galahad Clark** Laura Maxwell Stuart

Robin Bowman Chris Sowerbutts Keld van Schreven **Philip Everett-Lyons** James Pike Kendra Walsh

DEF is a branch of **Conservation Collective**, an environmental charity on a mission to protect and restore the wild places we all know and love. CC's growing global network, of 20 local foundations, channels funds to impactful grassroots nature restoration initiatives.



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