

Appendix

Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme

Background

In September 2006 the Neroche LPS was formally awarded £2M from the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a comprehensive package of projects embracing improved public access, biodiversity conservation, landscape enhancement, environmental education, heritage interpretation, volunteering, skills training and community engagement. In addition to the Lottery Funding, a further £300k was secured from 11 funding partners (including SSDC) and £645k secured from in-kind contributions and other grants. The Lottery funded programme comes to an end in April 2010.

South Somerset District Council has committed a total of £10,500 to the Scheme in four annual instalments of £2,625 covering the period up to April 2010.

Achievements so far – across the wider Somerset area

The Neroche LPS has achieved a great deal over the last 3 years. A number of the key headlines are as follows:

- ❑ 13.5 miles of new multi-user circular trail established with innovative digital trail guide.
- ❑ 300 hectares (740 acres) of linking butterfly habitat and open space created following plantation harvesting.
- ❑ 90 English Longhorn cattle acquired to graze butterfly habitats and establish a new added-value beef business for a local farmer.
- ❑ 1000 metres of new all-ability trail and viewpoint suitable for wheelchair users.
- ❑ 50 health walks assisted catering for over 500 people with special needs.
- ❑ 25 staff from 17 primary and secondary schools trained as Forest School leaders.
- ❑ 500 volunteer days generated by local people on heritage projects including a community excavation on a lost Medieval village.
- ❑ 300 children and adults took part in the first 'Punkie Night' reviving a Blackdowns tradition.
- ❑ 1,250 people attended Neroche events with a further 250 adults and children taking part in family bushcraft activity.
- ❑ 3 local young people successfully completed NVQ Level 2 qualifications through an 18 month bespoke apprenticeship scheme and went on to secure local employment.

Achievements so far - in South Somerset District

While the formal Neroche boundary only embraces two parishes in SSDC (Buckland St Mary and Broadway), it has delivered a number of valuable benefits directly to the local area including:

- ✓ The head and two teachers from Neroche Primary School in Broadway have been trained as Level 3 Forest School leaders. The project has also helped set up their own local Forest School site. Two teachers at Combe St Nicholas have now also been trained.
- ✓ The 13.5 mile new Herepath, new car park and improvements at Castle Neroche, have all been heavily used for recreation by SSDC residents.
- ✓ At least 25% of the participants in Neroche events, bushcraft and volunteering activity have come from Chard, Broadway and Ilminster.
- ✓ Significant social benefits from the summer Health Walks programme and activities have been reported by the Casework Team Leader from the Local Service Team at SSDC (West).
- ✓ The South Somerset Outdoor Learning Partnership is now directly involved in the planning of future 'Punkie Night' celebrations involving local schools.

- ✓ The community archaeological dig at Playstreet on the SSDC border attracted large numbers of volunteers from Broadway.
- ✓ Somerset Arts Week (SAW) based at Langport have been supported by the Scheme and involved in the delivery in a wide range of art and story telling events..
- ✓ SSDCs contribution of £10,500 helped the partnership to lever in £2.9M from external grant sources. An extremely high level of gearing for the Authorities investment.

Legacy projects – 2010 to 2015

In addition to maintaining the above projects, the Neroche Scheme will be delivering 5 new programmes to 2015 which are of direct relevance to SSDC. These include:

1. **Beef and Butterflies** – Working with private landowners within Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) the Neroche Scheme will be helping farmers to develop co-operative grazing and marketing programmes using traditional beef animals grazing on important butterfly sites. Key target SNAs within SSDC include Buckland St Mary, Whitestaunton and Wambrook. An area covering 1500 hectares (3700 acres). Project value **£750,000+**
2. **Forest Schools Support & Development Service** – Having trained a significant number of local teachers in the delivery of Forest Schools we intend to provide a comprehensive support programme ensuring that local primary and secondary schools are equipped to deliver their own Forest School as a regular part of school life. Project value **£360,000**
3. **Earthhouse Project** - The huge success of our community events, heritage activities, family bushcraft and forest school has resulted in the need for a covered space within the forest estate which can provide an all weather venue and inspire people of all ages. To this end we intend to build a large roundhouse (250 seat capacity) with a turf roof and as an exemplar sustainable construction. The community will be involved in all aspects of this from design through to build and operation. Project value **£600,000**
4. **Five 2 Year Apprenticeships** – Following the success of the Neroche Apprenticeship programme, we have secured the funding to deliver 2 year Forestry Apprenticeships for five local young starting in December 2009. Project value **£280,000**
5. **Green Infrastructure + new foot and cycle access** – In partnership with SCC and TDBC we will be co-ordinating the delivery of a new multi-access route linking Vivary Park in Taunton to Orchard Hill and the Herepath Network. In addition to this important link and further loop trails, we will also be helping local landowners to access and secure enhanced grants for woodland planting and diversification opportunities in the zone between the Blackdown Hills and 'growth point' Taunton. Project value **£700,000+**

With all the above programmes, our intention is to ensure that they have sustainable funding exit strategies in place to ensure that they continue beyond 2015.

Match Funding to 2015

In order to take forward the above programmes we are negotiating the following match funding contributions with Neroche partners:

Partner	Total £ Match Funding
Forest Enterprise (Peninsula)	£125,000
Forestry Commission (SW Region)	£50,000
Somerset County Council	£150,000
Taunton Deane Borough Council	t.b.c
Natural England (via RDPE)	£50,000
South Somerset DC	£15,000
Mid Devon DC	£12,000

National Trust	t.b.c
Devon CC	t.b.c

Benefits to SSDC of further investment in the Neroche Scheme

- ✓ SSDCs proposed match funding contribution of £15,000 will help the Neroche Scheme to attract in excess of £2.5M from external grants to be invested in projects in the area. This is an extremely good rate of return.
- ✓ The Neroche Scheme has demonstrated a proven track record of delivery over the last 3 years with direct benefits to residents and the countryside within the SSDC area.
- ✓ The five Neroche Legacy programmes proposed to 2015 offer direct local benefits to SSDC and help to achieve a number of the Councils key strategic goals including: Enhancing the local environment, improved public access to the countryside, increased rural business vitality, effective community engagement, education, tourism benefits to market towns, arts and cultural development, and sustainable living.

Further information

We would be delighted to provide further information on the Neroche Scheme including its past achievements and future programmes. If it would be helpful we could also provide a short presentation to the Committee on the Scheme.

David West
Development Manager
Forestry Commission (Peninsula)