

Lincolnshire Limewoods Project

Improving access to Lincolnshire's ancient woodlands



Lincolnshire may be best known for its wide open Fenlands, but it is also home to Britain's biggest concentration of traditionally managed small-leaved lime woodland dating back over 10,000 years. Thanks to the power of partnership working, these ancient woodlands are now enjoying a revitalised and more accessible future through the Limewoods Project. Involving 10 public partner organisations, the project is boosted by the enthusiastic participation of local landowners. They are working together to improve visitor facilities and raise public awareness of its value and untapped potential for education and relaxation.

objectives

- To enhance the conservation value of the woods and create new habitats for wildlife.
- To promote awareness of the natural and historic environment of the Lincolnshire Limewoods, which, in turn, will encourage community ownership.
- To develop an access network and visitor facilities within the project area.
- To improve opportunities for education and interpretation around the Limewoods.

actions and achievements

Supported by a Project Officer and Education Ranger the project has so far achieved:

Heritage management (biodiversity and archaeology):

- Over 80 hectares of new woodland planting by local farmers and landowners to extend and join up existing woodlands.
- Over 20 km of new hedgerow planting to create links between established habitats.
- Dormice have been successfully introduced.
- Plants such as wood anemone, woodruff, yellow archangel and rare butterflies such as the brown hairstreak, white admiral and speckled wood are flourishing due to coppice management and the creation of open, sunny routes.

Access:

- Over 20 km of managed routes have been improved to provide access.
- A new trail providing access for people of all abilities.

Education and public enjoyment:

- Chambers Farm Wood Centre has been refurbished and a new toilet block built. There have been 25 school visits and 15 training events, and a Wildlife WATCH group has been formed.
- 48 public events have been held including a 'working woodlands' day, craft demonstrations, guided walks and countryside skills training.

background

Covering over 60 square miles east of Lincoln, the Lincolnshire Limewoods contain Britain's greatest concentration of woodlands dominated by small-leaved lime. They are also unusually rich in historic and archaeological remains and are home to rare and endangered species like the White Admiral and Brown Hairstreak butterflies. The Limewoods project is a great example of multi-partner landscape-scale working as promoted by the Regional Forestry Framework. By working across ownership boundaries, rich and diverse woodlands can more easily make links for wildlife, improve the quality of an area's heritage and cultural assets and ensure the area is available for the public's enjoyment and understanding.

The Bardney Limewoods National Nature Reserve (NNR) covers some 500 hectares of the Limewoods Project woodland. A further 500 hectares of plantations are being restored to native species by the Forestry Commission, lead partner for the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan for ancient semi-natural woodland.

The key to conservation management within the NNR is restoring open habitats and using traditional coppice management. A management plan for the NNR and Statement of Intent for the management of associated woodlands has been signed with Natural England.

The project has been running since 2005 and will run for five years initially. During this time additional funding will be sought to continue the project after 2010.

quotes

"Although the Limewoods Project area covers just over 2% of Lincolnshire it includes over a quarter of the ancient semi-natural woodland remaining in the county. The Project partners are making a real difference in a region not renowned for its woodlands – and it is particularly pleasing to see how many landowners have taken advantage of the opportunities to create new habitats to link up the remaining woodlands." Liz Fleuty, Project Officer with Lincolnshire Limewoods.

"Naturalists across the country have known about the unique qualities of the Lincolnshire Limewoods for a long time but sadly people on the doorstep haven't. However, as the woodlands are being made more accessible through this scheme, more and more people in Lincolnshire are able to appreciate and enjoy this beautiful, natural resource." Dr Richard Keymer, Area Manager, Natural England.

partners

Bardney Development Trust
East & West Lindsey District Councils
English Heritage / Woodland Trust
Forestry Commission
Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
Natural England

funding

Total £1m
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund
Defra (Countdown 2010)
Forestry Commission
Heritage Lottery Fund (£700,000)
Lincolnshire County Council
Natural England

lessons learnt

Starting from fairly humble beginnings with a working group made up of the Forestry Commission, Lincolnshire County Council and English Nature, the project has grown to include 10 partners – the latest to join being the Woodland Trust. Each group has contributed funding, resources or expertise to carry out different aspects of the project – from identifying local projects to submitting major funding applications to increase the scope of the Project. Enthusiastic participation by local landowners has been a key ingredient for success, along with the expertise of the partner organisations.