



# Green Recovery Challenge Fund



---

## Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit Partnership Evaluation Report - FINAL

Prepared for: The National Lottery Heritage Fund (GRCF)  
Prepared by: David Dixon  
April 2022

---

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The grant from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF), together with important match funding, has helped The Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit (PHGU) partners put into action an ambitious plan for nature recovery in Wild Purbeck. The PHGU partnership wanted to create a landscape in which nature is in the ascendency, and making sure local communities benefit from it by providing better access to nature and supporting local jobs in ecotourism.

From information collected throughout the project period and presented in this evaluation report the PHGU project can celebrate significant achievements:

- **Created a 1370 hectares grazing unit by installing all necessary internal and external boundaries and infrastructure;**
- **Negotiated a ground-breaking Land Tenancy Agreement;**
- **Put in place a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring system;**
- **Launched a new digital hub for the Purbeck Heath's National Nature Reserve;**
- **Developed a collaborative Sustainable Tourism Plan created and launched with an audience of 60 stakeholders;**
- **An exemplar for co delivery and partnership working for landscape scale nature recovery programmes.**

PHGU partners can be satisfied that they managed to deliver a significant and challenging infrastructure investment despite the constraints and uncertainties imposed by the Covid19 pandemic. PHGU partners have cemented nationally important learning around establishing a large grazing unit, resolving issues of land agency agreements and putting in place robust biodiversity monitoring.

---

The pandemic severely constrained delivery of the audience outreach ambitions, originally planned to complement the PHGU infrastructure investment. As a result, many of the target numbers for communications and visitor engagement were not achieved or will not be available until after the close of the GRCF reporting. However, PHGU partners are aware that there is more, ongoing work required to fully realise the ambitions to connect and enthuse local communities and businesses about the benefits of the PHGU investments.

PHGU has also contributed significantly as a test bed for co-delivery and partnership working. This evaluation report captures the importance of new land management arrangements building on long-standing and trust-rich foundations. Having a dedicated project manager and an independent lead partner committed to helping co-ordinate delivery has clearly underpinned the success of the PHGU project.

Through the GRCF investment, the core partners of the PHGU project have demonstrated that the best way to deliver nature recovery at scale is to work effectively together and look to support each to deliver on big ambitions. Good working relationships take time to build and demand an investment of staff resources. Working well as partners takes time and is rarely the easiest option, but, as PHGU has shown, it is absolutely the way to deliver for nature at scale.

Agreeing to undertake an honest reflection on partnership working has been an important element of this evaluation, resulting in PHGU partners being better informed about the value and costs of co delivery at scale. This assessment should prove invaluable to other organisations working at scale for nature recovery and will inform finding the right metric for capturing co-delivery in future funding bids.

---

# 1. WHAT IS THE GREEN RECOVERY CHALLENGE FUND?

The Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) is a key part of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan to kick-start nature recovery and tackle climate change. Connecting people with nature is another priority theme: by increasing access to nature and green spaces, projects will support both physical and mental wellbeing.

GRCF was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies, including Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is distributing and monitoring this government money.

GRCF projects must deliver against at least one of the Fund's three themes:

- **Nature conservation and restoration**, including ecosystem restoration and species recovery.
  - **Nature-based solutions**, particularly for climate change mitigation and adaptation.
  - **Connecting people with nature.**
-

## 2. THE PURPOSE AND APPROACH TAKEN TO THIS EVALUATION

It is a condition of GRCF that recipients carry out project evaluation. The National Heritage Lottery Fund has published specific guidance on evaluation as being:

- **“proving”** (that resources have been well spent, ambitions achieved) and
- **“improving”** (capturing lessons learnt through experience of delivering the programme).

The Invitation to Quote dated August 2021 set out the requirements for an independent evaluation of impact and likely legacy; providing PHGU partners with material that will guide their future organisational and partnership activity.

To ensure funding organisations are provided with a satisfactory project evaluation, core outputs were defined as:

- Review of data requirements and development of a brief evaluation framework
- Review of PHGU outputs and outcomes evidence.

This evaluation takes as a starting point the coming together of the PHGU partnership around the GRCF bid through to delivery of outputs in March 2022. The emphasis for this particular evaluation report is on:

- Accountability - did the project deliver what it said it would?
- Impact - did the project outcomes emerge as planned?

In particular did the PHGU deliver, as planned, the:

- Range and number of infrastructure investments
  - Land agency agreements
  - Ecology monitoring plan/ baseline assessment
  - Sustainable Tourism Plan
  - Ambitions for community engagement.
-

## A Focus on Co-delivery and Partnership Working

PHGU partners agreed that the evaluation commission should explore the role of co-delivery/ partnership working in the successful delivery of PHGU outputs. PHGU partners recognise that this way of working is a key aspect of multi agency, large scale nature recovery programmes and that any learning from PHGU should be highlighted in the evaluation report. In addition, PHGU partners were keen to better understand the role of the Dorset AONB in pulling together the bid to the GRCF and acting as an impartial steering hand for delivery.

### **This evaluation commission was asked to include an assessment of PHGU partnership working to:**

- Provide an independent critique
  - Inform host organisations about the true costs of co-delivery in terms of time/ resources
  - Explore the balance of delivery across partners
  - Examine the role of the Dorset AONB as Lead partner
  - Consider the metrics required for funding bids to best present the critical investments in co-delivery/ partnership
  - Inform the future development of the PHGU and the wider Purbeck Heaths NNR partnerships. How best to enlarge the partnership to include others (private sector) not currently central to PHGU work
  - Inform others looking to create multiple grazier/ landowner agreements by presenting learning from the PHGU project.
-

## Evaluation Methodology

The following linear process was agreed by PHGU Partners for this evaluation:

- Initial discussion with all PHGU project delivery partners about their expectations of the evaluation commission;
- Production and sign off of a simple evaluation framework to guide project design and delivery with a view to providing material useable for project evaluation;
- Collation of evaluation material from all delivery partners via the PHGU Project Manager;
- Developing a simple questionnaire for PHGU partners to capture how they have worked together to bring about project delivery;
- An informal PHGU Steering Group meeting to reflect on the findings of the co-delivery questionnaire and agree key messages both internally and externally around partnership working;
- Compilation of all evaluation material into a Final Report.

### Note on the Impact of the Covid19 Pandemic

*Significant elements of the delivery of PHGU have been impacted by the ongoing health pandemic. Events have had to be cancelled, programmes postponed and re-configured to meet government guidelines for social distancing and Covid19 security.*

---

### 3. PURBECK HEATHS GRAZING UNIT PROJECTS PROGRAMME

#### Background and Context

The idea of creating a single grazing unit for the Purbeck Heaths NNR has been considered for over 10 years. The opportunity presented through GRCF, together with support from Dorset AONB helped focus the long held aspiration into a funding bid. Securing GRCF with a short timescale for delivery has helped focus partners minds and actions to overcome the practical issues that prevented earlier realisation.

Overall PHGU partners expected GRCF to deliver:

- Wilder grazing of the Purbeck Heaths NNR;
- Micro niche creation;
- Lighter forms of farming that nevertheless provide farming for landowners/graziers.

#### Who has been involved?

The PHGU project has brought together the following organisations and delivery partners:

| PHGU Project delivery Partner | Lead Officer  |
|-------------------------------|---|
| RSPB                          | Peter Robertson<br>John Ferguson  |
| National Trust                | Tom Clarke<br>David Brown   |
| Natural England               | Ian Alexander<br>Tez Otter  |
| Dorset AONB                   | Tom Munro<br>Kate Townsend  |
| Dorset County Highways        | Not a PHGU project partner as such but have been key in delivering PHGU infrastructure improvements |

---

## Organisations & Groups referred to in this evaluation report:

**Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit Project (PHGU)** - The proposed grazing unit is owned by National Trust, RSPB and Natural England. All works required to secure Natural England's boundaries are excluded from this project and will be funded from secured additional resources. Natural England is in no way a beneficiary of this GRCF project.

**Purbeck Heaths NNR (PHNNR)** - The National Nature Reserve directly welcomes over a million visitors a year through monitored access points and many more will visit through informal access points. The reserve straddles the main access road into the Isle of Purbeck and is thus an important part of the setting experienced by the many millions of visitors to Purbeck every year. The project partners directly engage with over 100,000 of these visitors annually, enhancing their understanding of the landscape and how its ecology functions.

**Wild Purbeck** - Part of the 25 year environment plan, Nature Recovery Networks can function in highly designated environments, both protecting the existing features that already make the area special, while simultaneously developing our understanding of landscape scale ecology to further enhance wildlife outcomes. Beacon projects like this are needed now, to help guide other conservation professionals as they transition from the historic focus on reserves, to the new focus on conserving whole landscapes

**Planet Purbeck** - Planet Purbeck is a movement that gathers together individuals, groups and organisations who understand that climate change and biodiversity loss jeopardise everything we hold dear – and want to do something about it.

---

## 4. WHAT DID PURBECK HEATHS GRAZING UNIT PROJECT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE?

The PHGU project is fundamentally an infrastructure investment project with associated community projects. PHGU has also emerged as a test bed for land agency arrangements, biodiversity monitoring programmes and partnership working critical to success for large scale nature recovery programmes.

The core ambition of PHGU was to create a single 1370 Ha unit of lowland heathland mosaic at the heart of the recently declared Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve. By facilitating naturalistic grazing by cattle, ponies and pigs, PHGU will help recover lost ecological processes, creating a more dynamic, complex and better-connected suite of habitats. Helping recover diversity and building resilience for some of Britain's most threatened species. PHGU is recognised as a pioneer for UK conservation practice, demonstrating how to apply principles of rewilding to restore and conserve nature in highly designated cultural landscapes.

Alongside the infrastructure investment, PHGU aimed to ensure that the restoration of the PHNNR's nature-rich landscape was at the heart of the local community, reconnecting people and nature emotionally, intellectually, and economically. By establishing a single grazing unit, PHGU will also support local grazing businesses, quality sustainable meat producers and formalise links with local schools and community groups. PHGU also set out to bring tourism and activity providers together with conservationists, to develop a sustainable ecotourism destination, harnessing the opportunity to make nature recovery an asset to the local and wider community.

Through GRCF the PHGU partners have created or supported at least 12 FTE jobs and exclusively used local contractors to deliver all the Infrastructure investments.

---

## Stated Objective - Outcomes for Biodiversity

**The main output from PHGU was to be a physical infrastructure investment to enhance the habitats and species of the PHNNR by creating a large scale grazing unit.**

Restoring larger, better connected habitats is a fundamental principal of the Wild Purbeck Nature Recovery Network and brings direct benefits. However, partners recognised that scale alone is not enough. For heathlands to recover, the ecological processes that produce dynamic habitat mosaics, create and connect complex and diverse ecological niches, also need to operate at scale.

Central to the success of PHGU was the plan to reinstate some of those lost ecological processes in the form of large herbivore activity.

## Stated Objective - Outcomes for People

Purbeck Heaths are highly valued by people as outdoor breathing spaces. Only 2.5 hours from London by train or car and less than an hour from half a million people in the Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole areas, visitor numbers are increasing annually and an estimated 1.4 million now access the PHNNR each year.

### **For visitors and residents, PHGU sought to create new opportunities to:**

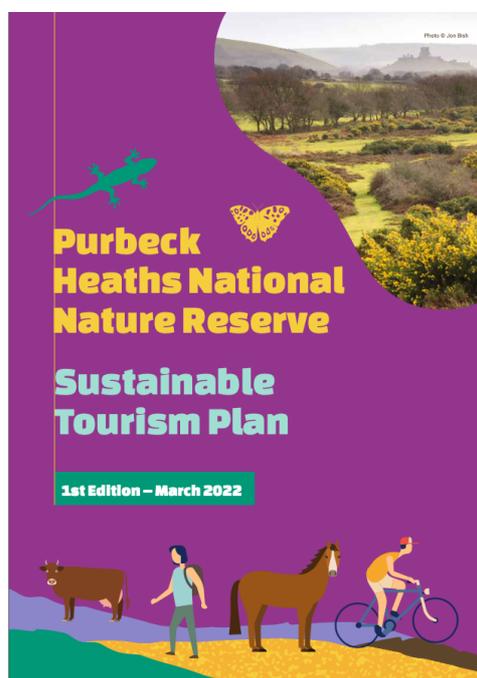
- **Become aware of the PHNNR** – co-creating new digital and print material with audiences who will directly use them, or distribute them further.
  - **Experience the heaths** – creating a new Purbeck Heaths Week, bringing the whole PHNNR together. New trails will be co-created to appeal to various ages and interests, including health, young people and heritage.
  - **Connect with the heaths** – creating participative opportunities such as building in traditional materials with the Ancient Technology Centre; co-creation of new immersive digital content.
-

- **Understand the heaths** – creating new content for the digital hubs, physical visitor hubs and third-party commercial organisations will be co-created to develop understanding of the landscape to a much wider base than currently.
- **Take action for the heaths** – developing the ways in which people can participate through practical or survey work, advocacy and decision-making.

## Audience

A key product ambition of PHGU was to co-create a Sustainable Tourism Plan (STP). The STP was to be a mechanism to knit PHNNR stakeholders in a common cause and help to extract value from the heaths as well as improve their condition for nature. Through the STP, partners sought to reach a broad range of audiences and provide a rich visitor journey for seasoned wildlife enthusiasts to families experiencing nature for the first time.

The STP will be relevant to all and stimulate awareness of the uniqueness of the landscape, encouraging repeat visits, connection with the heaths and greater understanding of the natural world.



[Sustainable Tourism Plan](#)

---

## 5. HOW THE GREEN RECOVERY CHALLENGE FUND RESOURCES WERE SPENT

### Financial Summary

The financial summary for the PHGU project is shown below. The expenditure figures are taken from The GRCF bid application and compared with the final claim costs extracted from management finance information provided by the PHGU Project Manager in April 2022.

| Budget Heading                     | Agreed Budget  | Cost on Completion | Variance |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------|
| New staff costs                    | 78,038         | 81,055             | 3,017    |
| Preliminary works                  | 21,909         | 35,305             | 13,396   |
| Evaluation                         | 2,000          | 1,925              | 75       |
| New building works                 | 533,447        | 552,532            | 19,085   |
| Full cost recovery                 | 27,472         | 28,171             | 699      |
| Equipment & materials (capital)    | 30,125         | 19,548             | 10,577   |
| Equipment and materials (activity) | 16,751         | 14,827             | 1,924    |
| Event costs                        | 12,886         | 7,011              | 5,875    |
| Professional fees (capital)        | 22,498         | 1,336              | 21,162   |
| Other costs (capital)              | 3,200          | 11,619             | 8,419    |
| Other Costs (activity)             | 15,000         | 10,201             | 4,799    |
| VAT full costs recovery            | 8,317          | 8,317              | -        |
| Contingency                        | 68,398         | 68,398             | -        |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>           | <b>549,900</b> | <b>549,900</b>     | <b>-</b> |

xxx denotes overspend

### Notes on the expenditure table:

- Much of the 'Professional fees (capital)' underspend was due to the fees being incorporated within main Dorset Council Highways Internal Transfers (invoices).
  - 'New Building Work' overspend and the 'Preliminary works' overspend were as a result of (i) increased world steel prices in May 2021 prior to DC Highways being able to order the cattle grid manufacture, (ii) increased cost of fencing wire/gates and the need for more new fencing rather than pig-proofing existing fencing, than was originally anticipated. The 'Inflation' and 'Contingency' allocations covered a proportion of this significant excess.
  - 'Other costs (capital)' overspend was due to a significant under-estimate of the cost of internal ditching required, at the time of the bid.
  - Significant underspend of 'Equipment and materials (capital)' was mainly due to savings made on gateway and interpretation signage, whilst retaining excellent quality products.
  - Budget included significant amount to fund engagement events and activities (under headings 'Event costs' and 'Other costs (activity)', most of which could not be implemented due to covid/lockdown for the entire duration of the project.
  - Remaining unallocated budget will be utilised to address further relevant anticipated costs (eg Project Manager and Support Officer costs for April 2022; Parking rationalisation leaflets for Hartland), and unanticipated / 'snagging' costs of the PHGU in its first year.
-

| Income                    | Agreed Budget   | Expected Final Income | Variance      |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Wytch Farm LF             | 248,990         | £261,009              | 12,019        |
| Other public sector (HMF) | 41,151          | 56,721                | 15,570        |
| GRCF Grant @ 65.46%       | 549,900         | £549,900              | -             |
| <b>Total income</b>       | <b>£840,041</b> | <b>£867,630</b>       | <b>27,589</b> |

#### Note and observations on the income table:

- Significant match funds offered by the Wytch Farm Landscape & Access Fund were conditional on the infrastructure works being completed by 31st March 2022.
-

## 6. PRINCIPLE ACHIEVEMENTS: WHAT WAS DELIVERED

### PHGU has been successful in achieving intended outputs:

- Infrastructure investment, delivered to a demanding schedule has extended the existing section of lowland heathland within the core of the PHNNR by 820 hectares to make a total grazing unit of 1370 hectares.
- Complex Land Agency Agreements and biodiversity monitoring systems have been developed and operationalised.
- The Covid19 pandemic severely impacted on the community elements of the PHGU project with delays, cancellations and restructuring all impacting on the intended programme of communication and visitor events.

### Infrastructure Investment

Despite the short time frame available to bring about major changes to land management PHGU successfully implemented the infrastructure requirements for the enlarged grazing unit. There were a number of issues that PHGU Partners had to deal with; planning permissions, traffic orders and contractors difficulties. In the end the PHGU infrastructure was delivered through a combination of excellent contractor/client relationships and exemplary professionalism by all parties.



Fencing and cattle grid installations - Image credit John Ferguson

---

## PHGU INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

### Planned

Extend the existing section of lowland heathland within the core of the NNR by 820 hectares to make a total grazing unit of 1370 hectares.

Cattle grids, side access pathways, gates and householder grids installed.

Install fences, banks and ditch infrastructure. Decommissioned infrastructure removed.

### Delivered

Area created of approx. 1370 hectares with all necessary internal and external boundaries created by infrastructure, as planned.

7 x new cattle grids installed including bypass gates with pig proofing  
1 x decommissioned cattle grid removed.

All new grids, plus three existing grids have become 'dedicated' highway, covered by long-term maintenance arrangements.

All signage for grids completed on each approach.

Approx. 19.9 km of new or upgraded (pig-proofed) fencing installed; including 65+ new field and pedestrian gates.

Approx. 7.3km of decommissioned fencing removed.

Approx. 8km of roadside ditch & bank created/refreshed along the three access roads across the Grazing Unit area.

Approx. 2km of internal boundary ditching cleared/refreshed.

2 x domestic householder cattle grids installed.

Parking rationalisation with parking areas created along one narrow road to minimise ad-hoc parking on roadside areas of SSSI land.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Design, commission and produce Purbeck Heaths NNR gateway signage</p> | <p>Interpretation signs designed, fabricated and installed at 14 key sites across the NNR area, providing visitors with a map, site specific information and generic 'nature code' advice e.g. dogs on leads.</p> <p>8 x 'Welcome to the Purbeck Heaths' brown road signs fabricated and installed by DC Highways Signshop at key access points to NNR area.</p> |
|--|--|

### Land Agency Agreements

The complexity of land management agreements required for the combined grazing unit presented real challenges to the established ways of setting out agreements between landowners and graziers. PHGU had to break new ground in securing a common agreement between 3 landowners and three graziers. As a consequence, securing collaboration from different Land Agents has been critical in achieving PHGU outcomes.

PHGU demanded that the wider benefits of the grazing unit needed to be elevated above individual organisational procedures and practice. This could easily have not been achieved in the timeframe available. A pivotal meeting in September 2021, between all landowners and graziers helped create a positive attitude from all sides. This fuelled them to find a way around the novelty of multiple landowners across multiple sites working with three different graziers of pigs, ponies and cattle. Resolving issues quietly without resorting to public disagreements were key to securing the 9 agreements required.

PHGU therefore offers a valuable model for others seeking to collaborate on grazing larger areas in multiple ownership. Common land agreements are already available, what is unusual about PHGU is having to accommodate private land in grazing agreements.

## PHGU LAND AGENCY AGREEMENTS

### Planned

Produce a Consultation Plan for the Grazing Unit

### Delivered

A Consultation Plan was completed with all aspects, including legally mandatory and informal consultation, implemented as required.

Operational Protocol signed and published.

Ongoing exchanges with Rural Payments Agency (RPA) regarding intended grazing management arrangements, in order to confirm agri-environmental payment schemes. Does not affect delivery of the Unit, but will continue into operational management of Unit post-project.

## Biodiversity Monitoring

Significant work has been undertaken by the National Trust, who led on this aspect of the PHGU project, to establish a baseline from which monitoring of the habitat and species activities resulting from the enhanced grazing unit can be recorded.

To date 750 ha of grazing unit has been surveyed with drone-mounted RGB and multispectral sensors. The Purbeck Natural History Forum has been established and constituted as a volunteer group who will carry out species monitoring work across PHNNR.



A Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit Monitoring Plan was submitted with the NLHF Completion Report (April 2022) summarising the methodology and identifying lessons learned for long-term biodiversity monitoring.

Image credit Mark Singleton

## PHGU BIODIVERSITY MONITORING

### Planned

Develop a plan to monitor, evaluate and report on grazing operations and ecological changes

### Delivered

The ecology baseline report and future monitoring plan for the PHGU was completed and signed off by all partners.

#### **Baseline Report**

##### **Grazing management and behaviour:**

All grazing management 1995-2018 summarised and previous grazing units mapped. Data from trial GPS collars analysed and heat maps produced indicating where cattle currently graze within the Hartland/Stoborough unit.

##### **Habitat mapping:**

Priority habitat map produced for whole PHGU. 79 fixed 20 x 20m quadrats recorded for vegetation cover. All quadrats mapped and data collated.

#### **Species Distributions**

34 priority / indicator species identified for monitoring impacts of grazing on species. All records 2015-2021 collated and mapped for all 34 species, and assessment given for 'completeness' of data coverage.

#### **Future Monitoring Plan**

##### **Grazing management:**

Template developed for all grazing managers to log animal movements. 27 GPS collars purchased to track cattle movement. 30 trail cameras installed on site.

##### **Habitat mapping:**

Future drone survey schedule still to be agreed for 2023 onwards. Resurvey schedule of 79 fixed quadrats agreed.

##### **Species monitoring:**

Survey schedule agreed for 13 species requiring full distribution mapping. 46 fixed sample points agreed (36 20x20 quadrats and 10 ponds) for bi-annual surveys of all 34 priority/indicator species; surveys to begin 20 April 2022. Project designed to assess risk of pigs targeting reptile burrows and ground-nesting birds, to be delivered 2022

## Communications and Events

The original concept of PHGU included a programme of audience outreach through development of physical and digital hubs and a number of co-created projects worked up with local partners. Unfortunately the Covid19 pandemic meant that the outreach projects had to be delayed and ultimately scaled back due to the constraints and uncertainties resulting from the of the ongoing pandemic.

The various lockdowns meant that this was really difficult to plan. PHGU Partners acknowledge that the richness and depth of engagement that we envisaged didn't materialise. Whilst many of the original co-creation ideas were never realised communication improvements and community events did go ahead within the restrictions of pandemic guidelines. PHGU partners recognise that the visitor outreach ambitions originally planned have not been fully delivered. A combination of the impacts, uncertainties and delays imposed by the pandemic allied to difficulties with event organisation and promotion.

As a result of delays the new [digital hub](#) was not launched until March 2022. Meaningful data on the number of visits to the hub are not available for this evaluation report. The print run for the PHNNR leaflet was extended and has now run to some 22,000 leaflets for distribution through local tourism stakeholders engaged in the development of the Sustainable Tourism Plan.

**WHAT LIVES HERE**  
The things to look out for

**Dartford Warbler**  
I love to perch on top of gorse bushes to keep a lookout. In Dorset, only a few of us survived the severe winter of 1963, but with all the heathland restoration, we are now thriving again.

**Nightjar**  
I migrate from Africa and spend my summer evenings making churring sounds to attract other nightjars – an experience not to be missed! I make my nest and lay my eggs on the ground. I am a nocturnal bird, watch out for my silhouette at dusk, I fly more like a bat than a bird.

**Silver studded blue butterfly**  
I love living in the heaths where our special friends, the black meadow ants, also live. We lay our eggs near their nests, where they take care of them. When our eggs develop into larvae, they secrete sugar for the ants to say thanks!

**Southern Damselfly**  
I am a very rare damselfly and because I'm not a strong flier, I can only live in certain isolated areas in southern England. By joining up the heath areas, I can move between the mires I love and meet other damselflies.

**LOVE THE HEATHS**  
Parts of the Purbeck Heaths are fragile

Some species of bird migrate from Africa and choose the Purbeck Heaths to breed between February - August. They build their nests exclusively on the ground and are at particular risk of disturbance from dogs not on leads.

Other species of birds arrive from the Arctic in August to spend their winter in our milder climate, feeding on the mudflats and shoreline of Poole Harbour.

**Help protect the nature**

- Keep dogs on leads. Visit [www.dorsetdogs.org.uk](http://www.dorsetdogs.org.uk) for more information and dog friendly sites to visit.
- Stay on the footpaths and take note of the signage. It's not just about the birds – this is a complex landscape where some endangered species need bare ground and others need protection from trampling and disturbance.
- People visit and enjoy the Purbeck Heaths for different reasons. Please be considerate and tolerant of others.
- The types of plants that survive the harsh landscape of heathlands also burn easily. Never have a fire or a BBQ here – it is illegal.
- Plan to take your litter home with you after your visit as you may not find a bin whilst you are here.

**CONNECT WITH NATURE**

The Purbeck Heaths are a wonderful place to connect with nature. Whether exploring on foot, by bike, kayak or horse you could experience wildlife spectacles, amazing sunsets or just find some space to breathe. If you are visiting for the first time, RSPB Arne is recommended.

Whatever you choose to do, and whoever comes with you, please do so respectfully – the heaths are fragile.

Photo © RSPB

*Inspire a connection to nature and place*

The Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit is being created through a dedicated partnership, with support from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and the Wych Farm Landscape and Access Enhancement Fund (WFLF). The Green Recovery Challenge Fund is funded by Defra and is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

| <b>PHGU COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS</b>   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Planned</b>  | <b>Delivered</b>  |
| <p>Design, commission and produce the physical and digital hubs</p> <p>Digital hub to attract 100,000 visits during the lifetime of PHGU</p> <p>10,000 printed material</p> <p>1,000 people will be involved in creating the heathland building with the Ancient Technology Centre;</p> | <p><b>Physical hubs (on site signage and leaflets)</b></p> <p>Interpretation signage designed, fabricated and installed at 14 x key sites across Purbeck NNR area. Signage includes a map of the whole area containing Grazing Unit, in addition to useful information designed for each bespoke site.</p> <p><a href="#">NNR leaflet printed</a> and distributed to all key sites that have public engagement across the area. Leaflet includes updated annotated map and useful information about species, the area and reiteration of useful guidelines for enjoying areas of nature with minimum human/canine disturbance. 22,000 leaflets produced for distribution.</p> <p><b>Digital hubs</b></p> <p><a href="#">Website</a> populated and launched March 2022 containing significant information about the Grazing Unit and the Purbeck Heaths NNR, with links to relevant resources, other important sites, etc.</p> |
| <p>Introduce a programme of events/activities for Purbeck Heaths Week. 10,000 visitors<br/>Develop Grazing Unit experience days.</p>  | <p>Purbeck Heaths Week ran from 20-26th September 2021. Attended by 70 people.<br/>Grazing experience events held Dec '21 and Feb '22. Attended by 18 people.</p>   |
| <p>Create a programme of living history/experimental archaeology activities<br/>Target 1000 visitors</p>  | <p>PHGU worked with the Ancient Technology Centre (ATC) to create a heathland dwelling - an iron age roundhouse at RSPB Arne. August 2021 event attended by 300 people.</p>   |

PHGU did ultimately deliver a programme of community events as part of the GRCF. However, with reduced lead in times and the lack of co-creation, questions remain over how more engaged and connected local communities are with the PHNNR as result of PHGU projects.

The National Trust is looking to reflect on actions to date, with the intention of continuing to bring people together, test ideas for future engagement and ensure people are brought along as the value of the enlarged grazing area begins to register with a wider audience.

---

## Sustainable Tourism Plan

The PHGU objective to bring economic actors together to better understand and respond to the economic model of the PHNNR was also badly affected by the pandemic. Engaging businesses suffering the consequences of pandemic lockdowns has been extremely difficult. Some tourism businesses had closed whilst others were working flat out to recover from the impact of the pandemic on their business.

Stakeholder events both informal and formal did go ahead with PHGU partners utilising online meeting platforms. A steep learning curve for many stakeholders but nevertheless invaluable in allowing engagement to take place at all.

| PHGU SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLAN   |   |
|---|---|
| Planned   | Delivered   |
| <p>Develop a Sustainable Tourism and Communications/Engagement Plans.</p> <p>10 local businesses will be directly involved in creating the Sustainable Tourism Plan with 20 further businesses consulted.</p> | <p>An engagement plan was created at the beginning of the project. Significant adjustments proved necessary throughout the implementation period, due mainly to the significant impact that covid and the 'lockdown' period had upon engagement opportunities, other than via 'virtual' methods.</p> <p><a href="#">Sustainable Tourism Plan</a> co-created with some 80 local stakeholders involved in meetings. STP published March 2022</p> <p>Sustainable Tourism Plan launch event held March 2022 attended by approx. 60 delegates from local stakeholders, businesses, tourism providers, parish and county councillors, etc</p> |

Ross Kempson of Norden-based Cyclexperience, one of the stakeholders engaged in the development of the Sustainable Tourism Plan, said:

*“It has been so useful meeting people from other local businesses as part of these networking events and actually having time to sit down and share visions and goals with likeminded people. I’m super excited at the prospect of being able to contribute to a targeted plan and build a framework for tourism which will both help the environment and our economy and hopefully we can end up with a Purbeck brand which will gather momentum and create the sort of success where the sum of the parts (ie businesses, organisations and the natural environment) will be greater than that of the whole. We’re all aware that this is the start of a process of change, as individuals, as organisations and as a landscape.”*



Credit: Middlebere Heath, Jon Bish

## DOWNLOAD THE PURBECK HEATHS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLAN

A variety of local businesses, parish councillors and elected members, land-owners, land managers, graziers and community action groups have worked together with international sustainable tourism organisation ‘*The Travel Foundation*’ to form a sustainable tourism plan for the Purbeck Heath area to help us effectively manage visitor pressures on the landscape and its local communities while ensuring we can all enjoy this amazing place.

[Download the plan](#)

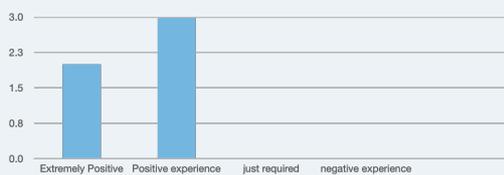
## Working Partnership Resilience

PHGU partners agreed that the PHGU evaluation commission should explore the role of co-delivery/ partnership working in the delivery of PHGU outputs. PHGU partners recognise that this way of working is a key aspect of multi agency, large scale nature recovery programmes and that any learning from PHGU should be highlighted in the PHGU evaluation report.

A questionnaire was circulated to PHGU Partners in March 2022 followed by a specific agenda item to discuss partnership working at the PHGU Steering Group meeting April 2022.

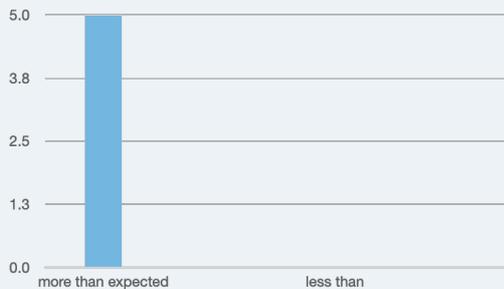
### Key findings from the PHGU co-delivery/ partnership working questionnaire:

#### Overall Value of Co-delivery



PHGU partners reflected that the co-delivery across the PGHU project had been a positive experience.

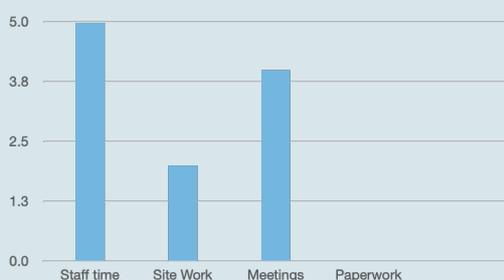
#### Resources For Co-delivery

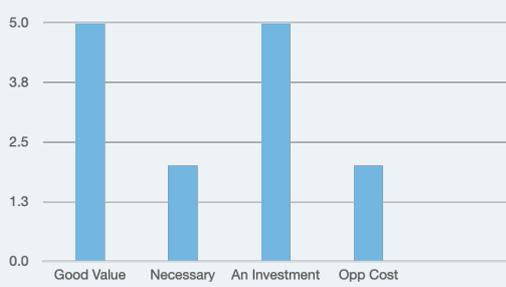


All PHGU partners reported that the input levels to the PHGU project were more than they expected.

Key draws on organisation resources were staff time and engaging in meetings.

Not all partners were involved in site work but of those who were they reported that site work was a major draw on organisations resources during the project.

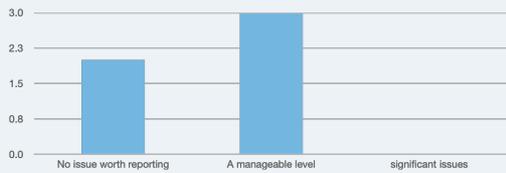




Overall PHGU partners agreed that the project had been good value and represented an investment in nature recovery.

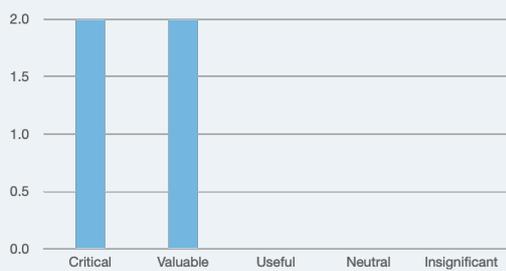
Two partners identified PHGU as a necessary or opportunity cost to their organisation.

### Organisational Boundaries



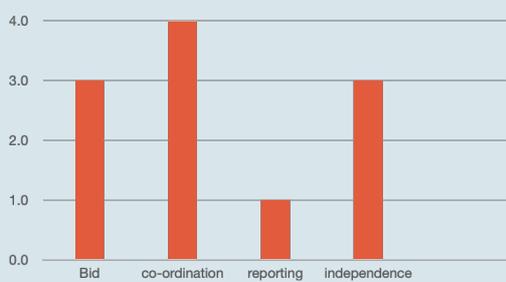
All PHGU Partners reported that there were issues with working across organisational boundaries but for most these were at a manageable level or not worth reporting.

### Contribution of Lead Partner



PHGU partners reported that the contribution of the Lead Partner (DAONB) was a positive one. Two partners considered the input of the Lead Partner to have been critical to the success of the PHGU Project.

In terms of the contribution provided by the Lead Partner PHGU partners particularly valued the co-ordination and independence that DAONB brought to the project.



PHGU partners also recognised the important role played by the DAONB in pulling together and submitting the GRCF bid.

Project management has almost entirely been run through virtual meetings and file sharing via MS Teams and other remote contact. This was quite a steep learning curve, a necessity brought about by the pandemic, but all involved in this project have participated well via those means.

Value of a dedicated Project Manager in being organisationally neutral and able to drive project delivery, feeding the funders and resolving tendering issues.

### Quotes from PHGU partners:

- *“It’s been hard work – but really pleased we’ve delivered so much in such a short period of time.*
- *There was effective sharing of workload (e.g. chairing of different sub-groups, expert input from e.g. land agents) which meant that very little work was duplicated.*
- *There was very little organizational presence in the room. Overall, the predominant mood of all discussions was of a combined effort to meet a shared goal.*
- *Operating out of your own site is so last century!”*

### When asked to consider whether the PHGU Partnership included the right membership and whether there was a need to expand the group to cover future needs PHGU Partners reported the following:

- *“The grazing management is right to continue within the smaller sub-set of partners, but new opportunities will arise to replicate this in other areas of the NNR and so it is important to communicate well to the wider NNR group, and share learnings and opportunities as they arise. Realistically the next opportunities will be with the Rempstone Estate and FE. I’m not sure that they need to be formally included in a sub-group, just make sure we have a culture of being inclusive and sharing experiences and ideas with them.*
  - *The nuts and bolts of managing the GU itself will be easily dealt with by a subset of NNR partners – AONB happy to provide a chairing role there.*
  - *I think the engagement, interpretation and visitor management needs to be separated from the PHGU project and made very clearly an NNR-wide partnership. This was attempted during the project, but I think with limited success. There needs to be investment in that as a sub-group of the NNR steering group.*
  - *The more external-facing elements of the GRCF programme – engagement and sustainable tourism – have an audience that is beyond the NNR partners, and that contact must be maintained as partners move towards the business-as-usual phase – this’ll be a challenge as the external funds have gone – and may warrant smaller, individual project bids.*
  - *More formal inclusion of Bournemouth University would have been valuable.*
  - *Possibly a formal inclusion of a tourism sector representative.*
-

- *A need to formalise the relationship between PHGU and the three graziers.*
  - *In hindsight it would probably have made sense to include all the NNR partners in the project steering group, and perhaps some of the delivery groups. The consequence of the project is that three of the landowners are now much better in sync, and have better understanding of what the NNR is and how it can grow in the future. Whilst that is a great outcome, it has left four of our NNR partners slightly behind. Need to mitigate against this becoming problem.,.*
  - *I think there will be a challenge to get the wider PH NNR group to take ownership of some aspects of the project (particularly the Sustainable Tourism Plan) as they have not been very engaged during its development, in spite of significant efforts by the PHGU project team”.*
-

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The Purbeck Heaths Grazing Unit project has achieved a great deal in a short space of time, realising a long held ambition to create a large scale grazing unit across landownership boundaries. Members of the PHGU Steering Group with the support of a dedicated Project Manager have worked extremely well to deliver a complex infrastructure project in short order.

### **Key to PHGU project success were:**

- A focused group of partners with the commitment and abilities to deliver the project;
- Long standing relationships allied to a positive and collaborative approach to delivery;
- A clear commitment amongst PHGU partners to make this project happen. All report putting in more time than expected at the outset;
- A dedicated Project Manager remaining 'organisational neutral' to drive project delivery, report on outputs and resolve the inevitable issues along the way;
- Valuable project steering, co-ordination and an independent perspective provided by the Lead Partner Dorset AONB.

The Covid19 pandemic severely constrained delivery of the audience outreach ambitions, originally planned to compliment the PHGU infrastructure investment. As a result many of the target numbers for communications and visitor engagement were not achieved or will not be available until after the close of GRCF reporting. However, PHGU partners are aware that there is more, ongoing work required to fully realise the ambitions to connect and enthuse local communities and businesses about the benefits of the PHGU investments.

Looking ahead, beyond the GRCF investment, PHGU partners agree that continuing with the small but focused PHGU Steering Group arrangements is the best way to oversee management of the infrastructure investment and continue to monitor biodiversity impacts.

---

The relationship between PHGU Partners and the three new PHGU graziers needs to be formalised. A simple proposal for two meetings a year, one indoor, one outdoor walking the unit, should be sufficient to ensure PHGU partners remain connected to the development of the core grazing project and can respond to any emerging issues in a timely manner.

PHGU partners are committed to continue reporting into the broader PHNNR Steering Group. Any new grazing projects undertaken through Wild Purbeck would do well to follow the PHGU formula and work through a small and focused delivery group.

The issue of taking forward the audience development, community engagement and sustainable tourism work that GRCF has usefully contributed to will need further thought. It may be that the PHNNR Steering Group or the wider Wild Purbeck grouping would be better placed to drive forward this more amorphous and wide ranging element of PHGU activity.

### **Leaving A Legacy – A beacon for co delivery partnership working at scale**

Through PHGU, partners have demonstrated that the best way to deliver nature recovery at scale is to ensure that organisations look to work effectively together and to support each other to deliver on the big ambitions. Good working relationships take time to build, and demand an investment of staff resources. Working well as partners takes time and is rarely the easiest option, but, as PHGU has shown, it is absolutely the way to deliver for nature at scale.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank all the PHGU delivery partners, especially John Ferguson, Project Manager and Dorset AONB who provided the information and insights that have contributed to this final evaluation. Any errors and misinterpretations are in good faith and remain my responsibility.

David Dixon April 2022

---