



LIFE Project Number

**LIFE13 BIO/UK/000315**

# LIFE Waders for Real - Socio economic assessment.

COVERING THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES FROM 01/06/2014 TO  
10/10/2016

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## Introduction

The broader socio-economic benefits of conservation projects are often perceived to be intangible and hard to quantify. By adopting the principles of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology in conjunction with Planning for Real's visual and participative approach to community engagement we are aiming to more fully understand the breadth of economic and social, as well as environmental, benefits of this project. In doing so, we hope to develop a model to enable a better understanding of the social value (incorporating economic, social and environmental benefits) of projects which could be applied more widely across the conservation sector.

Everyday our actions/activities both create and destroy value but traditionally the only type of value we tend to measure against is in financial terms. The Social Return on Investment methodology is based on a wider definition of value and responds to the assertion that many important things get left out and decisions made based on financial impact alone may not be as good as they could be as they are based on incomplete information about the full impacts.

Planning for Real are experts in community engagement, working with and supporting communities across a wide range of projects. The ethos underpinning all their methods is that they are highly visual, tactile, participatory and community-led. This is the first time a Planning for Real approach has been trialled on a conservation project and the techniques are supporting gathering robust socio-economic data which will enable an assessment of the impact of the project. The methods trialled by Planning for Real will be adapted, tested and implemented. A positive socio-economic impact from this project could pave the way for further investment in the conservation of the Avon Valley and waders in particular. This is part of the After Life Plan.

### *Social Return on Investment*

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a framework based on social generally accepted accounting principles (SGAAP) that can be used to help manage and understand the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by an activity or organisation.

SROI is an outcomes based approach that measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created. SROI focuses on the need to measure value from the bottom up, including the perspective of different stakeholders.

### *The Theory of Change (TOC) Approach*

Theory of change is a tool which shows how a project's activities contribute to its overall mission. This is the starting point for conducting a SROI analysis. It sets out a clear path from inputs to activities to outputs and outcomes describing the change an organisation wants to make and the steps needed to make that happen.

- A good theory of change can reveal:
- Whether you are doing the right activities to meet your goals
- Whether there are things you do that do not help you achieve your goals
- Which activities and outcomes you can achieve alone and which you cannot achieve alone
- How to measure your impact?

The Theory of Change approach provides the basis for measuring the impact of an intervention. It should take into account the experience of different key stakeholder groups and the 'social value' of

a project will be reflected in the 'outcomes' identified. It is important to bring together a group of stakeholders to collaboratively develop a Theory of Change.

Social impact is important across every aspect and every scale of project work. For conservation projects we need to understand the social value we create and be able to measure and demonstrate this.

## Key Stakeholders

We have decided on four key stakeholder groups to include in our theory of change. These are; landowners and farmers, the wider community, students and the GWCT. These were chosen as the most important beneficiaries from the Waders for Real project other than the intended wildlife benefit. This is not to say that other groups will not be impacted upon by the project, but we anticipate the benefits for these four groups will be the most significant. We then investigated each stakeholder group independently to outline each benefit predicted during the project, both short-term and long-term outcomes are considered.

The 'landowners and farmers' group was chosen as a key stakeholder due to its fundamental connection to the project. As the land is privately owned and run as working farms they are essentially businesses where a profit needs to be made in order to operate. We believe that the Waders for Real project will be able to benefit them in a financial way outside of the initially predicted outcomes through a wildlife benefit.

We chose to view the 'wider community' as one key stakeholder to investigate how they may also benefit from the project. There is limited public access to most of the sites we are working on through the project, but it is particularly interesting to explore whether the local community have increased their knowledge and awareness about the local area, its national importance and wading birds during the project.

There are many benefits seen by 'students' from being part of the Waders for Real project. There are a large number of students involved through the project in many different ways and for different time periods. These benefits may be seen through a number of different forms, including personal development, future career decisions and improved grades. Without the Waders for Real project, the number and breadth of these opportunities would not have been available.

The final key stakeholder is 'The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust' itself. The GWCT is primarily a research and education charity, with this restoration type project being a relatively novel approach for us. Through this project the GWCT will see many different benefits; including creating new connections to other projects and organisations that we may not have previously had the opportunity to do. We are also raising the profile of the GWCT through promotion of the project and engagement opportunities we have through the LIFE funding.

## Developing the Theory of Change

It is always preferable to develop a Theory of Change collaboratively, through a focus group type activity so that the viewpoints and experiences of different stakeholders can be incorporated and the operating context for the project fully understood.

This was the first step in our socio-economic analysis and over the coming months we will be engaging with more representatives from our key stakeholder groups to verify the accuracy of the Theory of Change and to ensure that it represents their experiences of the project.

For each of the four key stakeholder groups activities, outputs and anticipated outcomes were discussed and captured. These discussions are represented in the four mind-map style diagrams that follow. In terms of the four main components of the Theory of Change:

- The main inputs for the project were monetary – in the form of funding, staff time and resources such as meeting venues, leaflets and posters.
- The activities summarise the key things which take place during the project to effect some sort of change in people, the community, or the environment.
- The outputs provide evidence that these activities have taken place. These are the direct result and beneficiaries, tending to be quantitative.
- Outcomes are the longer term changes, describing why each output is important in terms of the implications for, and the effect it has on a local area or a group of people. These are the changes that occur as a result of the activities.

Priority outcomes have been selected from the outcomes from each stakeholder (2 or 3 per stakeholder, these outcomes are in **bold**) and these are explored further in the second component of the theory of change model (Table 1). Given the limited evaluation capacity for this socio-economic analysis, we have had to prioritise what we anticipate to be the key outcomes for each stakeholder group. This is not to say that the other outcomes will not be achieved, rather that we have had to focus our resources on exploring a smaller number of what we deem to be the most 'material' outcomes.

Once outcomes have been agreed, the next stage in the SROI methodology is to identify relevant indicators, or ways of knowing, that the outcome has been achieved. Table 1 includes an 'indicators' column which will be the framework for our socio-economic data collection for the remainder of the project. Working in this way ensures that the data which are collected relate directly to the outcomes for the key stakeholder groups. In the past, many projects have been evaluated on the basis of outputs data, whereas the outcomes focussed approach promoted by SROI ensures that projects are assessed on the basis of the distance travelled and the changes experienced by key stakeholder groups. In order to fully understand this movement, it is important to have robust baseline data so we know the point from which any change has occurred.

Baseline data have been collected in a number of different quantitative and qualitative formats and are outlined in the 'indicators' section of the theory of change model (Table 1).

## Base-line data

Much of the baseline data have been gathered using the Planning for Real approach to community engagement, working in particular with the wider community to understand their current awareness and knowledge of the local area and the project in general.

The project officer has been working with the Planning for Real consultant and has developed and trialed a set of consultation materials aimed at:

- Raising awareness of the project – information boards produced by the Trust
- Gathering information about how the local area is used and for what activities – pin boards and flags
- Gathering information about what other wildlife has been seen in the locality, including predators - flags

- Gauging perceptions about - the national and internal importance of valley; key species of importance in the valley; trend of breeding and wintering waders and waterfowl; and the issues facing breeding waders in the Valley – question board and post-it notes.

The engagement materials have been designed to be visual, engaging, and interactive and consist of “pin boards” (a form of visual questionnaire) and a set of themed and colour coded pre-written and blank “flags” which are used in conjunction with a large map of sections of the valley.

Questionnaires and surveys, designed specifically to draw out outcome indicator data, have and will be used to gather data from key stakeholders.

## Theory of Change First Component

### *Landowners and Farmer*

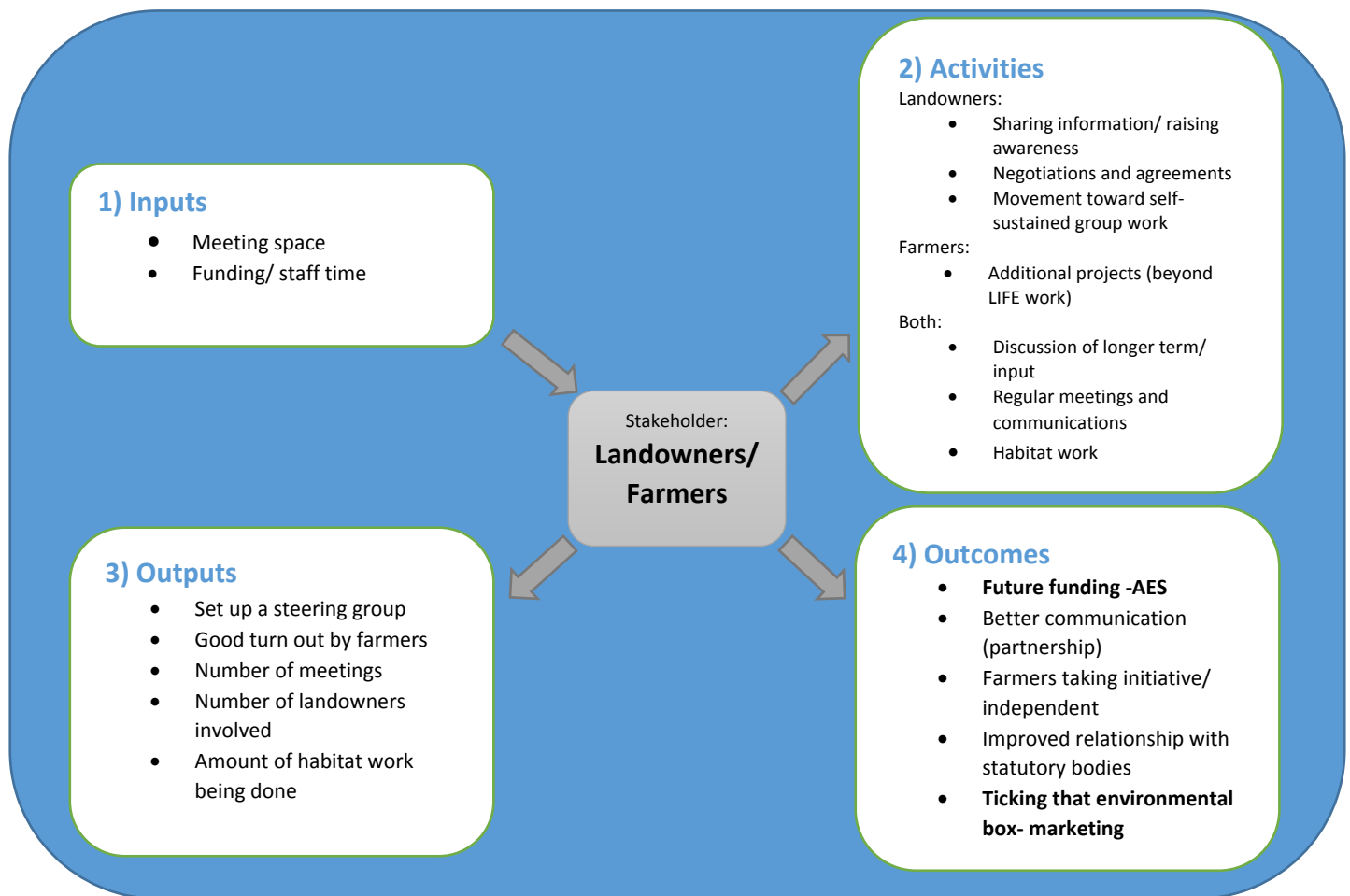


Figure 1 – Landowners/Farmers Theory of Change model

We plan to use questionnaires and one to one interviews to document the change and benefits gained by the landowners and farmers during the project. So far it has not been appropriate to start this process for the 'Landowners and Farmers' because it has taken project staff time to build trust and our priority has been delivering the project concrete conservation actions. However, we do not feel that we are behind in the process as we have been able to document this attitude change so far, we will also be able to use surveys and one to one interviews to look retrospectively and document the change in opinions over the course of the project.

In order to keep good relationships and everyone involved informed of the project progress we hold yearly farmer's meetings (farmers and landowners) and send out progress letters (Annex 12). Three farmers meetings have been held so far, one of which was before the start of the project. We were greatly encouraged at the latest farmers meeting due to the large turnout of the majority of the farmer's and landowners in the Avon Valley.

A general change in attitude of both farmers and landowners has been noticeable during the first two years of the project. During the first year of the project, seeking permission to access sites was often tricky and required large amounts of effort and communication. The project officer who was brought in at the beginning of the project was a new face for all farmers and landowners and a lot of

work and time was put into gaining their trust and respect during the first year of the project. the result of this was seen during the second year of the project where requesting access and permission for habitat work became a lot quicker and easier.

This change in attitude is very important as we anticipate it will lead to future collaboration and potential funding success. We hope that by encouraging the landowners and farmers to co-operate and work together there will be a greater chance for the breeding wader population to do better as more targeted and focused habitat work and predator management will be possible across a larger area. We hope to be able to pass over responsibility to a dedicated group of volunteers to continue to run the meetings and collaborate together in the future, after the LIFE project no longer funds a full time Project Officer.



## Wider Community

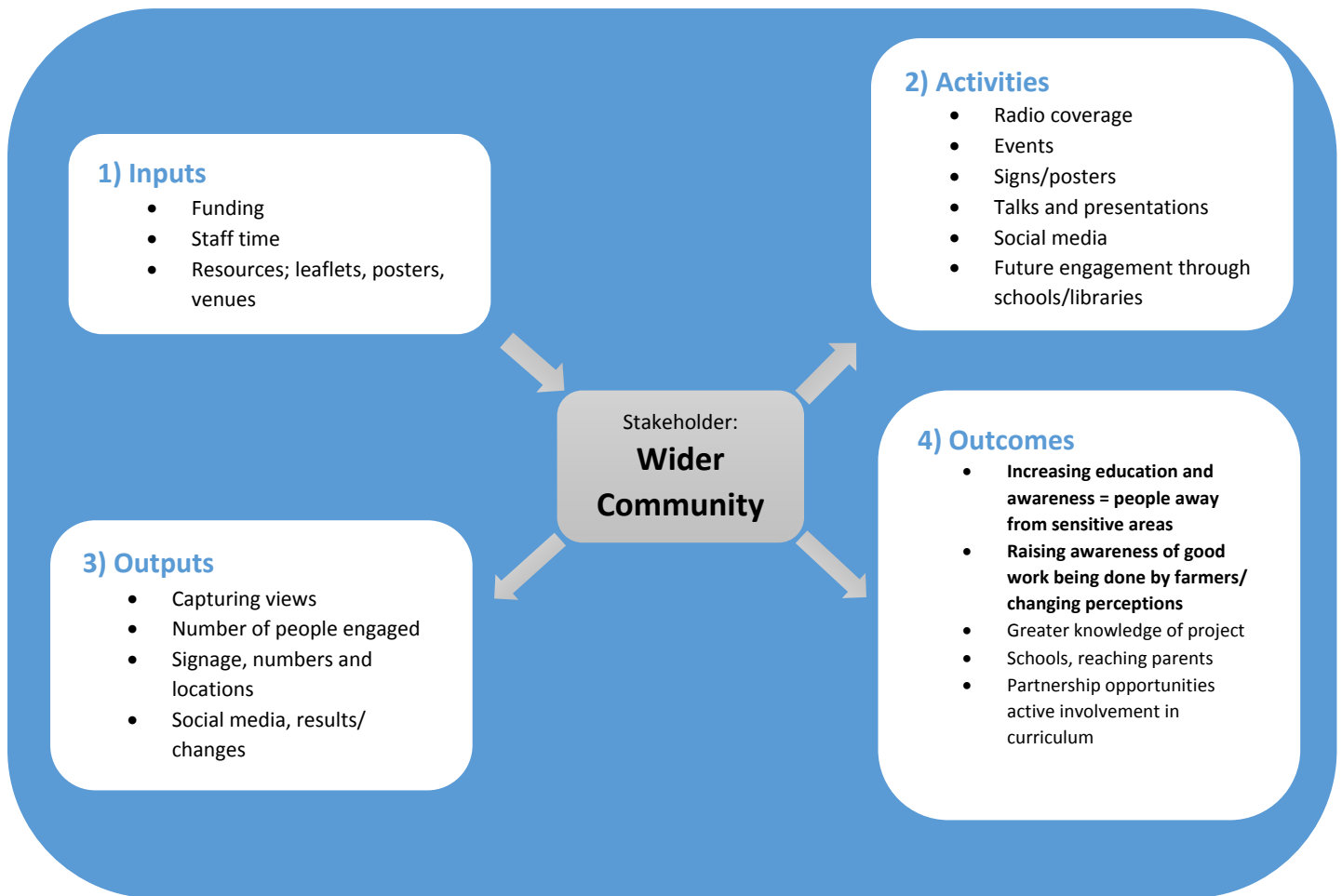


Figure 2 – Wider Community Theory of Change model

Baseline data has been gathered from the wider community from a numbers of events, talks and through publications, social media and signs and posters (Annex 4). This information will be used to document any increased understanding and awareness of the local conservation issues. We also hope to raise awareness of good work being done by farmers and try to change some negative perceptions people may have of the farming community. This benefit would also be seen by the Landowners and Farmers in the form of more local support, and may lead to better funding opportunities or increased local business and cooperation.

*Blashford lake event* - The location of Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve for the consultation days brought us into contact with people who were primarily bird watchers, walkers and photographers, and in terms of the Lakes area individuals were knowledgeable about the changes they had seen at this particular location rather than the wider Avon Valley area. As many of those we spoke to had come from outside of the local area, it is felt that it would be useful to repeat the consultation activities at various locations within the village itself.

In terms of the consultation materials, the map of the Avon Valley worked really well, as did the “flags” which people used directly on the map. The “perceptions” board worked well and generated useful information particularly relating to people’s thoughts about why there had been a decline in wading birds. The “activity” pin board was less useful because it mainly related to the activities of

people that came to Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve but the activity “flags” on the map, whilst the majority (57) were placed on Blashford, the remaining 27 were placed on a variety of locations – Fordingbridge 9; Downton 7; Ibsey 6; The Common 2; Ringwood 2; and Avon 1 – with activities being dog walking, walking including with children, and photography (Annex 3).

*Open farm day* - The main activity was a pin board provided by the Planning for Real events, this was a map of all the field sites and people were asked to add pins to the board corresponding with what activities they did or wildlife they had seen in that area. By using this method, we get a really good idea of how people use the valley, which parts are most often visited and for what reasons. We are also able to get information on the wildlife seen, some of this quite simple and some more detailed from both amateur and experienced birds and ornithologists. We received 27 engagements comprising of different activities and wildlife sightings (Annex 2).

Signs have been erected throughout the study area to both promote the project (through posters and project boards Annex 6, 13) and highlight sensitive areas where people are unaware of restricted access (Annex 7). Leaflets have been distributed to local nature reserves, a local pub and are distributed at any project meetings and talks (Annex 8). If we can improve dialogue between Landowners and Farmers and the Wider Community (namely the general public) this will again benefit both parties.

The Senior Officer and Project Officer have given many talks to local groups and organisations (Annex 4). Local and national press releases have been produced and publicised through our member’s newsletter and other social media. Blogs are also publicised through the member’s newsletter and social media, an article was written for the GameWise members and supporters magazine (Annex 15).

A website has been developed [www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal](http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal) and is regularly updated with project updates (Annex 10). Links to the website are included on all publications and press releases, leaflets and posters.

Using the information gathered we will be able to look at how the perceptions of the wider community change over the course of the project and how this may be a benefit to the different groups involved. We believe that through promoting the project and raising awareness of the local conservation concerns we will be able to reduce disturbance levels in sensitive location and improve relationships between the Landowners/Farmers and the wider community. We hope to be able to positively improve any negative perceptions that people may have of the farming community and highlight the valuable work they are doing for conservation.

## Students

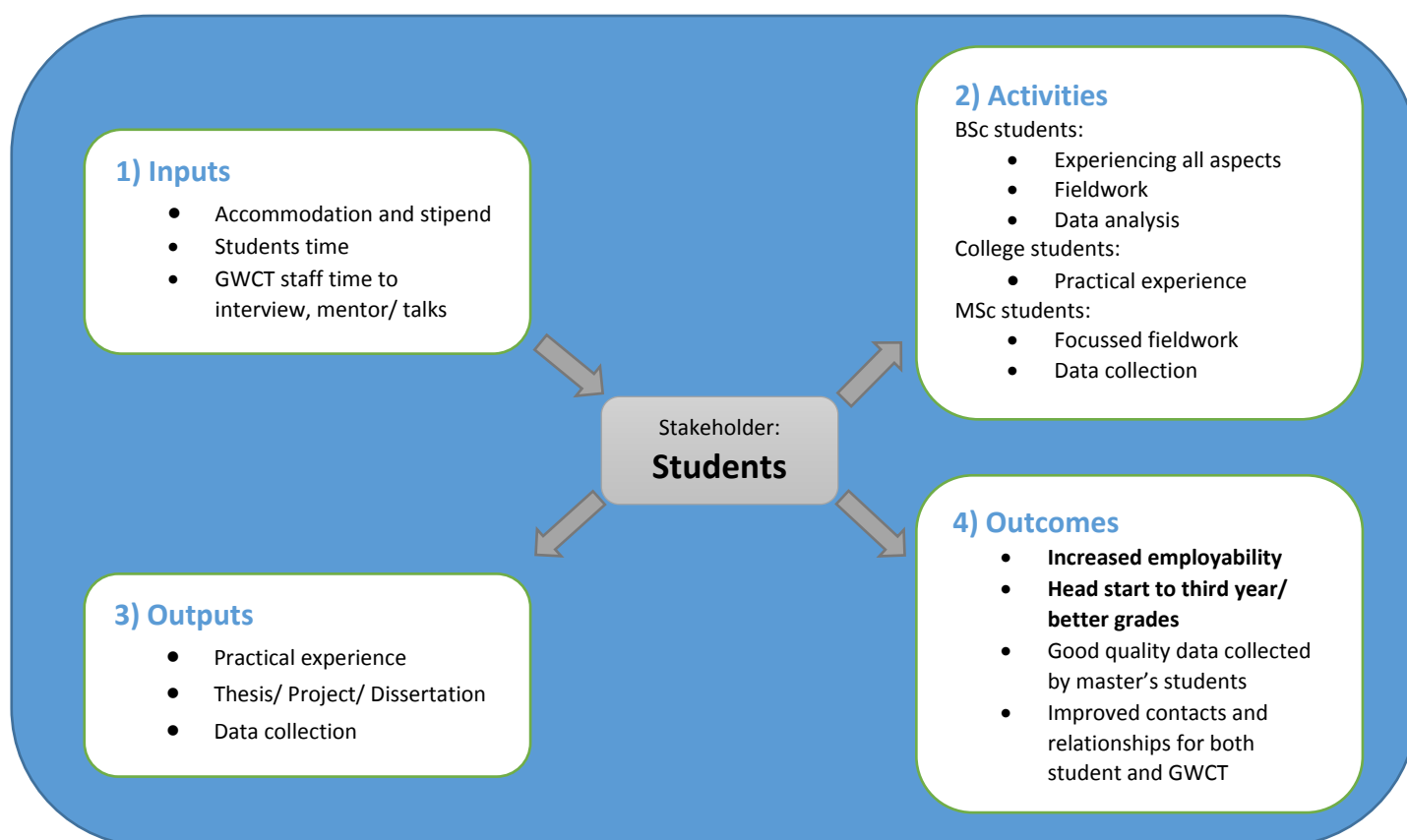


Figure 3 – Student Theory of Change model

Throughout the four years of the LIFE Waders for Real project we will see a large number of students getting involved in the project. There are three main types of student involvement;

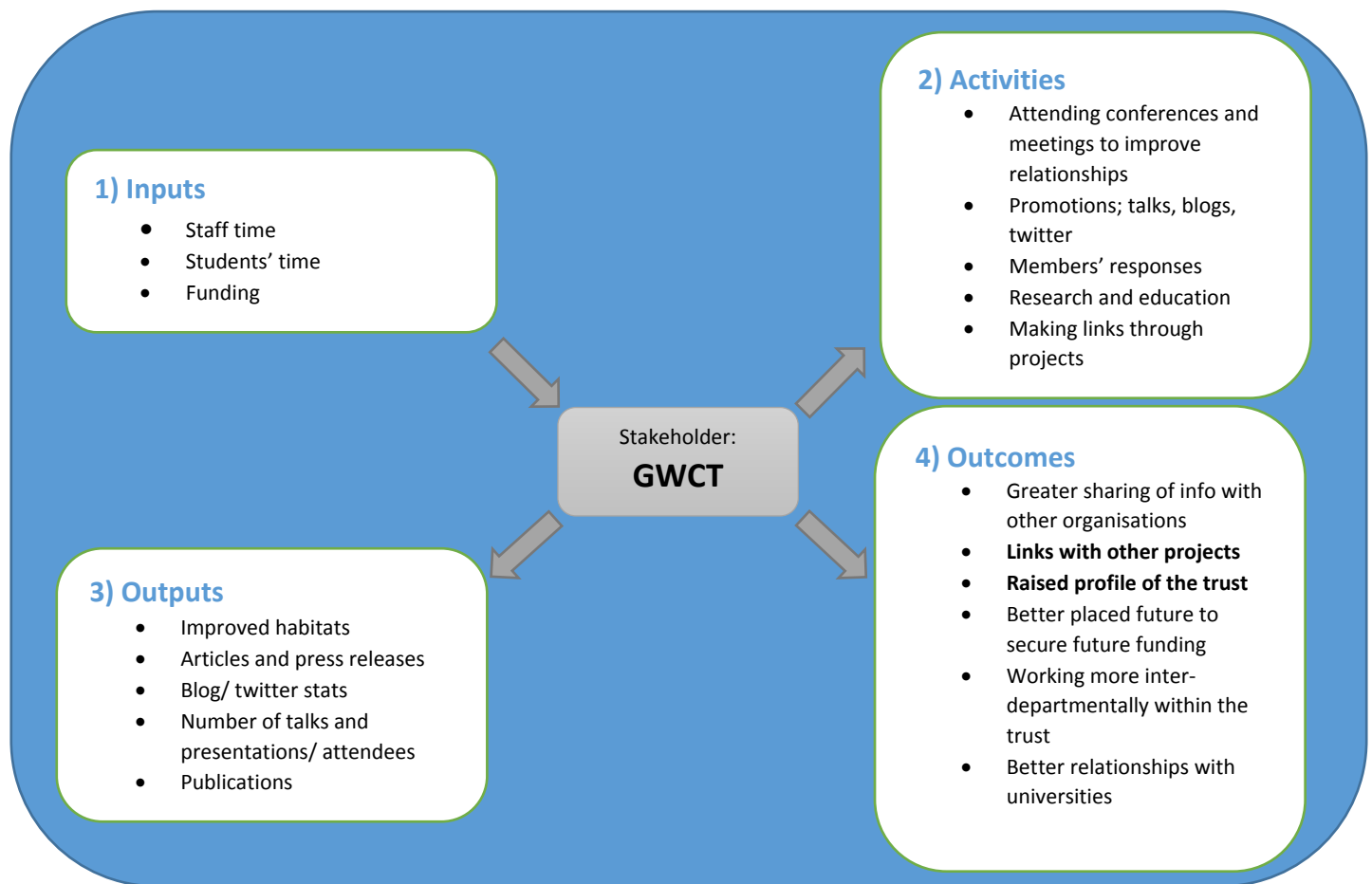
**College Students;** these students help carrying out practical habitat management give details for a day or two a year. So far we have had three sets of students with a total of 48 students, these visited for two days. Each time a talk was given at the start of the day by either the Senior Officer or Project Officer to outline the importance and relevance of the work being carried out. This was an opportunity for the students to gain experience on practical habitat management on a conservation project. The habitat management normally involved clearing areas of willow scrub that had become overgrown in the ditch systems, removing old fence lines to open up fields and cutting down dead trees that were being used as perching posts by avian predators.

**Undergraduate students;** each year we take on one or two placement students who are doing a biology or environmental degree. These placements are aimed at students gaining relevant and valuable practical experience in the workplace. The student is based at the GWCT for one year and spends around 60% of their time on the LIFE Waders for Real project. They gain valuable experience through working on the project which can help increase employment opportunities in the future.

**MSc students;** each year two or three MSc students join the team for 3 months during the field season. The MSc students help us to gather important data in the field and also run their own project for their university studies. This again provides them with practical work experience which can increase grades and career development. Two students who have worked with the GWCT's Wetland Research team have both received distinctions and one of which received "The Best

Master's Thesis in the School of Biological Sciences" award from University of Reading for the work she did with the project in 2015.

We plan to conduct a number of surveys in order to quantify the experiences that students have had whilst working on the project. We are still in the process of developing this and once finished this will be sent to all past students and current students. With current and future students we hope to gauge their impressions and opinions when they first start on the project and compare this to their opinions after their time on the project. This will enable us to understand the 'distance travelled' by students and the extent to which they attribute this change to being specifically involved in the Waders for Real project.



*Figure 4 - GWCT Theory of Change model*

The GWCT as a whole stands to gain a large amount from this project; through this project we have been able to engage with a number of different projects and organisations where before there was not an opportunity to do so. Through the employment of new members of staff, we have been able to widen the expertise of the Wetlands Research department through which the project is run.

Links have been made with other EU LIFE + projects, all communications have been documented and this will be used as evidence for the raised profile of the GWCT. Increased use of social media, blogs and publications can also be used as an indicator of a raised profile as analytics can be viewed for all online engagement.

The GWCT is primarily a Research and Education Charity so the practical Waders for Real wader recovery project is a novel opportunity for us. Wader recovery has been shown before on many reserves and areas solely owned by one individual, however, it has not been documented over a large area with many different private owners. This provides a unique opportunity for us to document the difficulties and challenges involved, as well as the success of a wader recovery project.

The change is currently being monitored through documentation of all communications and this will continue after the project finishes. Publications will still be ongoing after the end of the project so the Theory of Change for this stakeholder will be continued after the project finishes.

Through use of social media, blogs and the website we are able to better advertise the project and this will also benefit the GWCT as we will be reaching a larger audience with different interests. For

example, we can compare the Waders for Real twitter with the main GWCT twitter (Annex 1): here we see a difference in the main interests. The GWCT twitter audience have main interests in Business and News, Comedy and Science News, whereas the Waders for Real twitter audience main interests are Bird Watching, Science News and Birds. Again the audience region also differs, with both top two regions being the same (England then Greater London), but the third for the GWCT is Scotland and the Waders for Real is South East England. Hence, we are already reaching a different audience through this project than what we were reaching before.

Eight blogs have been written so far for the project, these have increased in viewers over the two years of the project, the first only received low numbers of views while the most recent received 1620 views.

The Senior Officer and Project Office had been able to attend several conferences in order to make connections with similar projects and to talk on the project and current research. The International Wader Study Group conference was attended in both 2015 and 2016. At the 2015 conference in Iceland the Senior Officer ran the workshop on Lapwing Conservation, this has led to much communication between international wetland conservation and restoration projects, one of which was the LIFE-project Limosa-habitat Hetter, Germany.

## Theory of Change Second Component – Priority Outcomes

Table 1. Measuring the socio-economic return.

The table below summarises the initial focus group session and the indicators which have been suggested for the key outcomes for each stakeholder group. This will form the basis of our monitoring framework for the socio-economic analysis. This table will be updated over the coming months and for each outcome we anticipate selecting two key indicators. The table below is a work in progress. We will keep in mind that if an outcome is important then we need to find relevant indicators. Our aim is to focus on collecting data from which we can make credible judgements about the extent of achievement of the outcomes, as opposed to tending towards the 'easy to capture' data (outputs) which is less valuable in measuring the level of impact.

Priority outcomes	Indicators	How	When	Who
Stakeholder: Landowners/farmers				
Better able to secure more funding Eg. Through Agri-Environment Schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of successful applications in relation to time spent/engagement with project</li> <li>Their perception of whether easier to secure funding as part of a project</li> <li>Numbers coming to GWCT/ voluntary engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Via internet/ ask questions</li> <li>How much is down to being a part of the project?</li> <li>Explore variations between those more involved (hot spots) and those less involved (Non- hotspots)</li> <li>Tracking contact/ communication through database</li> <li>One to one interviews</li> </ul>	Rolling Rolling  At time of land renewal agreement  Rolling	Project Officer when out and about Project Officer and Senior Officer (e-mails)
Ticking that environmental box- marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rise in price of produce from farms involved</li> <li>Improved future Agri-Environment scheme funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking contact/ communication through database</li> <li>One to one interviews</li> </ul>	Rolling	All staff members
Stakeholder: Wider Community				
Increasing education and awareness = people away from sensitive areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of signs deployed</li> <li>Number of people accessing areas</li> <li>Local understanding on importance of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our frequency of encounters with members of the public on sensitive areas at beginning and end of project</li> <li>Keepers records from begging to end of project.</li> <li>Survey of local residents asking about access and areas used.</li> <li>Information gathered at local events using planning for real location boards.</li> </ul>	Rolling  Final year of project  Events from 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of project	All staff members  Project Officer  Project Officer

Raising awareness of good work being done by farmers/ changing perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased followers on twitter over the course of the project</li> <li>Type of followers, location, interests</li> <li>Blog statistics and comments</li> <li>Local attitudes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using Analytics on twitter</li> <li>Survey of local residents on opinions</li> </ul>	Rolling (Annex 1) Final year of project	Project Officer
Stakeholder: Students				
Head start to third year/ better grades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How students valued their experience.</li> <li>Compare between student's experience of different projects</li> <li>What are the range of changes for the student?</li> <li>Number of students benefited (Especially considering the head start of third year)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveying students via university</li> <li>1-5 with a comment box</li> <li>Scoring given by students of their placement (Higher= quality of placement)</li> <li>University gives predictive grade before placement and comparison to actual grade</li> <li>Project placement tutors can give response on changes in student</li> <li>Contact with past students</li> <li>Future job prospects and how much difference does placement with GWCT help</li> </ul>	Present students-now Future students-beginning and end	Students Tutors at University
Increased employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What/ where did/ went after placement</li> <li>Other skills gained e.g. do they feel more confident about future job prospects</li> <li>Those remaining in a relevant field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveying students via university and after university</li> <li>1-5 with a comment box</li> <li>Contact with past students</li> </ul>	Present students-now Future students-beginning and end	Students
Stakeholder: GWCT (organisation)				
Raised profile of the trust through practical application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater numbers engaged via twitter</li> <li>Difference between GWCT and Waders for Real twitter page - who is following what</li> <li>Increased numbers accessing information</li> <li>Increase in membership numbers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at the shift towards more practitioners following</li> <li>Look at the position/ range of followers no and compare to different times in the future</li> <li>Survey/ question a sample of people accessing twitter</li> </ul>	Rolling	Senior Officer Project Officer



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in numbers through just giving (Annex 14)</li> <li>• Understanding a starting point</li> <li>• Greater number of enquiries over the course of the project</li> <li>• Scientific publications produced through the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stats from blogs – covering different areas e.g. scientific blog</li> <li>• Membership annual survey- ask questions as part of this</li> <li>• Analyse increase in donations- why? Through webpage- leave comment/ review for donation</li> <li>• Understand what is over and above</li> <li>• Trustees- why do they see projects like this important to trust</li> <li>• Number of publications</li> <li>• Impact factors, journal status</li> <li>• Number of collaboration</li> <li>• Attention received through social media regarding publications</li> </ul>	<p>Annual survey</p> <p>Trustee meetings</p> <p>One paper started. The majority will be produced after the final field season in 2018.</p>	
Links with other projects including Life+ projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater number of approaches</li> <li>• Looking at number of different active projects GWCT involved with</li> <li>• Increased number of invitations to speak about project / learning from GWCT experience</li> <li>• Increased invitations to events (Approached by or approach)</li> <li>• Project “opens door” to conferences wouldn’t normally attend</li> <li>• GWCT learning from other projects- staff development.</li> <li>• Collaborations with other similar projects</li> <li>• Scientific publications produced through the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture of evidence of contacts/ events/ conference/ projects.</li> <li>• Written evaluation of all communications, meetings etc.</li> <li>• Number of publications</li> <li>• Impact factors, journal status</li> <li>• Number of collaboration</li> <li>• Attention received through social media regarding publications</li> </ul>	<p>Rolling</p> <p>One paper started. The majority will be produced after the final field season in 2018.</p>	<p>Senior Officer, Project Officer, Plus, all project members and students</p> <p>Senior Officer Project Officer</p>

## Future plan

We are now halfway through the LIFE Waders for Real project, we have collected several parts of our baseline dataset and with those missing sections we have a definite plan for when and how this will be collected. There have been several reasons previously indicated why this data has not been and could not have been collected already. We feel that we are on target with our Theory of Change program and we will outline here our future plan.

### *Landowners and Farmers*

Planned management leaflet; this idea has evolved through speaking to the people most involved in the area and realising that a management guide would be a useful piece of information. Some individuals are unaware of exactly what they should be doing in order to conserve breeding waders. We feel that a friendly, informative guide could educate and encourage people to better manage their land for breeding waders.

We will continue to record all communication between project staff and Landowners and Farmers, in order to document any change in attitude or other project benefits. We plan to hold informal one to one interviews in the form of conversations during the final year of the project. this will allow us to gauge how opinions have changed over the project and any other benefits, for example ease of applying for other funding.

### *Wider Community*

We are making contacts with local school groups to try and link up with environmental work they are already doing on a more local scale. We plan to set up an information stand at the local library and hope to run several information days.

More events will be held in local community areas during the final year of the project to gauge any change in opinions and awareness of the project.

We will continue to produce blogs, press releases and use twitter to reach a wide audience to bring awareness to the project and improve relationships between stakeholders.

### *Students*

Questionnaire are being produced and will be sent out to all past students within the next two months. These will also be given to current students to fill out at the start of their time on the project. We will be using a series of questionnaires where answers will be graded on a one to five scale on whether the agree or disagree with a given statement. Statements along the lines of 'I feel my placement with the GWCT on the LIFE Waders for Real project has increased my understanding of a practical conservation project' and 'My placement at the GWCT on the LIFE Waders for Real project has influenced my future career decisions'. With the options to strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree.

Contact has been made with University and College tutors with the hope of getting feedback from them regarding average predicted grades for those students doing placements vs those not. We hope to be able to gauge opinions of the usefulness of placements from tutors and potential future employers.

## *GWCT*

Social media, blogs and publications are all being documents and will continue for the length of the project and after. Analytics are continuously being gathered from these and will be used to understand and quantify the raised profile and project links.

Scientific publications will mostly be produced after the end of the project to make the best use of the four years' worth of bird and habitat data. Therefore, this will not be able to be quantified until after the project.

By the end of the project we will be able to report against each of the key outcomes for the key stakeholder groups identified in the Theory of Change on the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved. We will also have gathered a full set of outputs data, relating directly to the activities undertaken throughout the project. This will form the basis for our final socio-economic report.

Where possible we have already captured baseline data to enable robust judgements to be made at the end of the project on the distance travelled, and where this has not been possible we will conduct questionnaires looking retrospectively at movement (the changes individuals have experienced) during the project. We will be able to gain quantitative information with the use of questionnaires. For example, with the students by using a format of agreeing/disagreeing with a given statement or asking them to use a 1-5 scale on how they rate certain aspects of the project and the placement.

The SROI methodology has been used as the basis for our approach to understanding the wider socio-economic impact of our project. The latter stages of SROI involve assigning financial proxies to outcomes in order to produce a ratio of the return (sum of benefits created through the project) in relation to the sum of inputs. Given the limited evaluation capacity for this project it may not be possible to produce an end ratio. However, our final report will include a discussion of the financial proxies which could be used in relation to the outcomes achieved to give an indication of how these type of benefits could be valued.

## Annexes

### Annex 1

#### Waders for Real Project Twitter

Values	2015	2016	(blank)	Grand Total
Tweets	57	85		142
Sum of impressions	49844	57735		107579
Sum of engagements	1323	1222		2545
Average of engagement rate	0.026952075	0.022480802		0.024275609
Sum of retweets	87	116		203
Sum of replies	8	17		25
Sum of likes	109	239		348
Sum of user profile clicks	160	197		357
Sum of url clicks	239	71		310
Sum of hashtag clicks	21	26		47
Sum of detail expands	200	189		389
Sum of permalink clicks	11	2		13
Sum of app opens	0	0		0
Sum of app installs	0	0		0
Sum of follows	6	3		9
Sum of email tweet	0	0		0
Sum of dial phone	0	0		0
Sum of media views	482	362		844
Sum of media engagements	482	362		844

#### Waders for Real Twitter audience June 2015 – October 2016

Interests		Country		Region	
Interest name	% of audience	Country name	% of audience	State or region	% of audience
Birdwatching	79%	United Kingdom	79%	England, GB	71%
Science news	68%	Ireland	3%	Greater London, GB	12%
Birds	66%	United States	3%	South East England, GB	11%
Documentary	65%	Netherlands	3%	East England, GB	9%
Biology	60%	Finland	1%	South West England, GB	8%
Geography	60%	Spain	1%	Yorkshire and The Humber, GB	5%
Green solutions	56%	Belgium	1%	North West England, GB	3%
Business and news	52%	Portugal	1%	Scotland, GB	3%
Comedy (Movies and television)	41%	Australia	1%	Northern Ireland, GB	3%
Business news and general info	39%	Isle of Man	< 1%	Wales, GB	2%

#### Gender

Male	66%
Female	34%

## GWCT Twitter audience

### Interests

Interest name	% of audience	Country name	% of audience	State or region	% of audience
Business and news	62%	United Kingdom	89%	England, GB	76%
Comedy (Movies and television)	53%	United States	3%	Greater London, GB	14%
Science news	41%	Ireland	1%	Scotland, GB	9%
United Kingdom	37%	Spain	< 1%	South West England, GB	9%
Green solutions	37%	Australia	< 1%	South East England, GB	8%
Government resources	35%	Netherlands	< 1%	East England, GB	7%
Documentary	35%	Belgium	< 1%	East Midlands, GB	6%
Business and finance	34%	France	< 1%	North West England, GB	6%
Business news and general info	34%	Italy	< 1%	Yorkshire and The Humber, GB	6%
Geography	34%	India	< 1%	West Midlands, GB	5%

### Gender

Male	54%
Female	46%

## Annex 2



ISSUE	WHERE	SUGGESTION	NUMBER
WILDLIFE	S Winkton	Lapwing chick	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Buzzard	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Kestrel	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Lapwing	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Crow	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Muntjack	1
ACTIVITIES	SE Avon	I walk my dog here	1
WILDLIFE	SE Avon	Weasel/stoat	1
WILDLIFE	Watton's Ford	Lapwing	1
WILDLIFE	Watton's Ford	Redshank	1
WILDLIFE	Watton's Ford	Fox	1
ACTIVITIES	Kingston	I fish here	1
WILDLIFE	Kingston	Buzzard	1
WILDLIFE	Kingston	Weasel/stoat	1
WILDLIFE	Kingston	Hare	1
WILDLIFE	S Ringwood	Crow	2
WILDLIFE	S Ringwood	Buzzard	1
WILDLIFE	S Ringwood	Deer Family	1
ACTIVITIES	Ringwood	I walk my children here	1
ACTIVITIES	Blashford Lakes	I regularly walk here	1
WILDLIFE	Blashford Lakes	Newt	1
ACTIVITIES	Blashford Lakes	Family day out	1
WILDLIFE	Blashford Lakes	Lapwing	1
WILDLIFE	W Ibsley	Badger	1
WILDLIFE	Fordingbridge	Crow	1
WILDLIFE	W Shallows	Buzzard	1

### *Annex 3*

#### **Findings from Initial Engagement Activities at Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve**

##### **(a) Participation:**

Over the 2 days at Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve the team engaged with 32 individuals – 15 male and 17 female with the largest number (13) representing the 61-70-year-old age group.

##### **(b) “Perceptions” board:**

The “Perceptions” board asked for participant’s thoughts on a number of key issues:

- National and International importance of the valley
- Key species of importance in the valley
- Trend of breeding and wintering waders
- The issues facing breeding waders in the valley

National and International importance of the valley: responses showed that participants were aware of the decline not only in wader birds but in birds in general. Traffic on the main road to Bournemouth was given as a reason which stopped people visiting the area and another comment put forward the suggestion that better labelling was needed for footpaths and private land.

Key species of importance in the valley: just one comment recorded indicating that there were more geese at Blashford Lakes in recent years.

Trend of breeding and wintering waders: two people said that they had seen more lapwings this year (2015).

The issues facing breeding waders in the valley: this issue generated the most number of comments (11) out of the 4 issue topics. The comments covered land management and habitat change; weather conditions; and people and animals.

3 of the comments were related to the effects of weather:

- Extreme weather conditions – flood; drought / drying out of habitat
- Declines after flooding; and
- Height of water in reservoirs affects wading birds.

4 comments related to habitat and land management:

- Habitat change – farming.
- Habitat affecting predation and availability of food.
- Land being “parceled” off making it harder for wildlife to move around.
- Footpath not clear out of Fordingbridge

The remaining 4 comments were about the effect people and animals:

- More human disturbance (including fishermen at fishing lake)
- More people and dogs
- Dogs need to be on leads
- Not as many deer.

##### **(c) Visits and activities – pin boards:**

Two pin boards were created to capture information – one about which months of the year and for what activities people visited this part of the Avon Valley; and the other about frequency and activity.

The information gathered on the whole related to frequency of visits to Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve rather than the wider area of the Avon Valley. The information gathered showed that people visited Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve every month of the year for birdwatching; family days out; photography; and walking. In terms of frequency one person indicated that they walked daily at Blashford Lakes Nature Reserve; 3 people came to Blashford Lakes on a weekly basis – one for a family day out and two for birdwatching; 7 people indicated that they came to Blashford Lakes on a monthly basis (some 2 or 3 times a month) for birdwatching and another 2 people for walking; and finally 16 people indicated that they came to Blashford Lakes once a year – 12 for birdwatching; 2 for a family day out; 1 for walking and 1 for photography).

**(d) Flags on the map:**

A total of 84 “flags” were placed on the map cover three categories: Access; Activities; and Wildlife. The main location on which the “flags” were placed was Blashford Lakes (57 “flags”) followed by Fordingbridge (9); Downton (7); and Ibsley (6). The Common passed Shallows Farm and Ringwood both had 2 “flags”; with 1 “flag” placed on the Avon.

Access:

3 of the 84 “flags” related to Access and highlighted access points at locations described as “south of Fordingbridge”; “Downton”; and “Fordingbridge/Shallow Farm”. The participant identifying the “Fordingbridge/Shallow Farm” access point added the comment that they use this footpath.

Activities:

39 of the 84 “flags” related to the following Activities:

- Birdwatching (19) with Blashford Lakes being identified as the prime location.
- Photography (4) at Blashford Lakes (3) and Ibsley.
- Regularly walk here (8) with locations being identified as Blashford Lakes (4); Avon (1); Ibsley (1); north of Ringwood (1); and on the eastern side of Ringwood (1).
- Walk with children (3) with two “flags” being placed south of Fordingbridge and one in Downton.
- Dog walking (2) with one “flag” each being placed on Common passed Shallows Farm and Downton.
- Looking for wildlife ((2) with both “flags” placed on Fordingbridge – one described as “south” and one “outside”.
- Looking for fungi and flowers (1) with the “flag” located at Blashford Lakes.

Wildlife:

42 of the 84 “flags” identified wildlife that had been seen in the area.

Birds:

- At Blashford Lakes Buzzard, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Coot, Cormorant, Herring Gull, Little Grebe, Pied Wagtail, Pochard, Red Kite, Tufted Duck, Peregrine Falcon, Siskin and Snipe have been seen.
- At Downton Kestrel, Lapwing, Raven, and Red Kite had been seen.



- At Fordingbridge Buzzard had been seen; and
- At Ibsley Buzzard, Cuckoo, and Lapwing had been seen.

Other wildlife:

- At Blashford Lakes fox, fallow deer, and squirrel had been seen.
- Otter had been seen south of Fordingbridge; and
- Deer at Ibsley.

#### Annex 4

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Presenter</i>
10/09/2015	GWCT HQ	Farmer Meeting	Land owners, farmers, keepers	40	Teresa Dent, Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
17/09/2015	Avon Valley	Habitat Work with Sparsholt	Sparsholt Game Management Students	15	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
24/09/2015	Avon Valley	Habitat Work with Sparsholt	Sparsholt Game Management Students	16	Lizzie Grayshon
01/10/2015	Avon Valley	Habitat Work with Sparsholt	Sparsholt Game Management Students	17	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
09/10/2015	Iceland	Wader Study Conference	Scientists	??	Andrew Hoodless
16/10/2015	Avon Valley	Habitat Work with Sparsholt	Sparsholt Game Management Students	18	Mike Short, Andrew Hoodless
20/11/2015	Blashford Lakes	Information Day at Blashford Lakes	Visitors of Blashford Lakes	32	Lizzie Grayshon, Margaret Wilkinson
23/11/2015	Fisheries	Staff Conference	All GWCT Staff	60	Lizzie Grayshon
03/12/2015	GWCT HQ	Sparsholt Research Morning	Sparsholt Conservation Level 3	25	Lizzie Grayshon, Andrew Hoodless, Nick Sotherton, Tom Porteus
16/12/2015	GWCT HQ	Natural England	Natural England Staff	30	Andrew Hoodless
03/03/2016	Avon Valley	Habitat Work with Sparsholt	Sparsholt Game Management Students	19	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
07/03/2016	GWCT HQ	Danish Hunting Association Visit	Danish Hunting Association	15	Lizzie Grayshon Nick Sotherton
11/05/2016	Elmley	Elmley Visit	Philip Merrics		Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
05/06/2016	Bisterne Farm	Open Farm	General Public		Lizzie Grayshon
11/07/2016	Knepp Castle	Knepp Castle Visit	Knepp Castle		Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
09/08/2016	Stanpit Marsh	Meeting CHOC	David Taylor		Lizzie Grayshon
10/08/2016	Watton's Ford	Meeting	Watton's Staff	6	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon, Mike Short
01/10/2016	GWCT HQ	Steering Group Meeting	Steering Group	120	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
09/10/2016	Ireland	Wader Study Conference	Scientists	???	Andrew Hoodless, Lizzie Grayshon
13/10/2016	Southbourne church hall	choc meeting	choc	25	Andrew Hoodless



10<sup>th</sup> November

### **Avon Valley Farmers Meeting**

This meeting was designed to give the farmers, keepers and land owners an update on the project and some feedback on how the first year had gone.

We were very pleased with the large number of people that attended the meeting and that everyone was still onside and excited to hear the results from the first year of the project.

Teresa our Chief Executive kindly gave an introduction to the meeting, thanking everyone for the cooperation and help so far. I then gave a presentation on 2015 Results, showing pairs numbers and breeding success in the Avon Valley. I also gave information on the use of temperature loggers and chick work, including the use of radio-tags and colour rings.

I then spoke about our current plans, how we plan to update the website and the use of blogs and social media to raise awareness about the project. We asked how we could help them with suggestions of providing signs for footpaths. Ideas were raised of attending local shows and fairs next summer.

Mike Short then gave a presentation on the predator work in the Avon Valley with examples of our ways of monitoring predators and how this can be then taken on as a control method if the keepers want. There were some rather surprised reactions at the extent to which predation is affecting breeding waders in the Valley.

Next Andrew Hoodless talked about the habitat work that had begun in the Valley with regards to how this will help lower the risk of predation. He highlighted the notion of 'Hot-Spots' and how we hope that by creating these areas that the lapwing should be able to move out and recolonize areas on their own. This opened up into a discussion with many questions and opinions with regards to flooding in the Avon Valley.

We finished the meeting with another thank you to all involved and there were no concerns regarding continuing the project for the following year. I feel that the meeting was extremely useful and valuable for all involved and look forward to the next.

Lizzie Grayshon

Waders for Real Project Ecologist

## Annex 6

# LIFE Waders for Real

Breeding wader recovery in the Avon Valley

## What is Waders for Real?

Waders for Real is a project seeking to reverse the decline of breeding wader birds in the Avon Valley. The project is delivered through a partnership between the private sector (farmers, landowners), conservation charities (Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust), higher education institutions (Sparsholt College) and the public sector (Natural England, Environment Agency).

**What is it trying to achieve?**

Waders for Real is creating 'hotspots' in the Avon Valley, at which it hopes to increase the numbers of lapwing and other wader birds, including snipe and redshank. These 'hotspots' are a combination of good habitat and reduced pressure from predators.

It is also hoped that the restoration of the habitat for waders will also have a positive effect on the flora, invertebrate and wintering wildfowl in the area.

**Why the Avon Valley?**

The Avon Valley has historically supported nationally important populations of breeding lapwings, redshank and snipe. In common with other lowland wet grassland sites throughout Britain, the numbers of breeding waders in the Avon Valley have declined dramatically since the early 1980s, with declines of 64% in lapwing, 75% in redshank and 97% in snipe during 1982-2002.

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust has been involved in monitoring breeding waders in the Avon Valley for over 20 years and data for 2007-2014 show that low nest survival resulting from high levels of predation is the key issue.






**For more information**

Visit our website  
[www.wadersforreal.eu](http://www.wadersforreal.eu)

Follow us on Twitter  
[@WadersForReal](https://twitter.com/WadersForReal)

Email us  
[info@wadersforreal.eu](mailto:info@wadersforreal.eu)



**Game & Wildlife CONSERVATION TRUST**

[www.wadersforreal.eu](http://www.wadersforreal.eu)



## Annex 7





## Annex 8

### Our Approach

#### Partnership working

We will deliver the project through a partnership between the private sector (farmers, landowners), conservation charities (Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust), higher education institutions (Sparsholt College) and the public sector (Natural England, Environment Agency).

**SPARSHOLT**  
COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE



**Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust**  
Protecting wildlife. Inspiring people.



**Environment Agency**

#### New conceptual approach

Considerable investment has been made in the Avon Valley through agri-environment schemes, but this has involved solely habitat management. We will test whether management of habitat and predation levels at the farm scale, to create 'hotspots' of increased breeding success, is more effective for reversing wader population declines.

#### Advice and engagement

Detailed, site-specific advice on habitat management and reducing predation will be essential to halt further decline in the waders. We will identify groups of fields suitable for the creation of 'hotspots', where increased resources will be targeted.

#### On-site actions

Life+ funding will be used to finance measures that could not otherwise be implemented through HLS. Predator exclusion fencing and nest cages will be trialled to increase wader nest survival. In-field wet features will be created to improve conditions for wader broods.

#### Monitoring

Numbers and breeding success of lapwings and redshank, abundance of predators and changes in other taxa will be monitored to measure the effectiveness of interventions.

For enquiries, send an e-mail to: [info@wadersforreal.eu](mailto:info@wadersforreal.eu)

Find out more about project progress on our website:  
[www.wadersforreal.eu](http://www.wadersforreal.eu)



Follow us on twitter - [@wadersforreal](https://twitter.com/@wadersforreal)



### Integration of processes for wader recovery in a non-reserve landscape

Integrated approaches involving both habitat and predator management are starting to be adopted on a few nature reserves. However, these sites consist of large, open landscapes with species-poor grassland reverted from arable land and are managed by single landowners with complete control over the grazing and other management of the site. At present we do not know whether it is feasible to implement the combination of habitat improvement and reduced predation in the wider countryside, such as more enclosed river floodplains with multiple small landholdings. The Avon floodplain differs from other key breeding wader sites in England in that it is not managed wholly or partially as a nature reserve by a conservation organization. The Avon Valley therefore makes a very good site for demonstrating what is achievable through a local farmer-led initiative. Achieving wader recovery at non-reserve sites is likely to be logistically more difficult than on reserves, because it requires co-operation between landowners and some of the methods employed on reserves may need to be modified in order to be acceptable to farmers. We believe that the key to success lies in tailoring a wide range of predator exclusion measures to individual circumstances based on an understanding of how different predators use the landscape.

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**The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust** is an independent wildlife conservation charity which carries out scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife. We advise farmers, land managers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats and we lobby for agricultural and conservation policies based on science. For more information go to [www.gwct.org.uk](http://www.gwct.org.uk)

### Waders for Real

Breeding wader recovery in the Avon Valley



**LIFE Waders for Real**  
[www.wadersforreal.eu](http://www.wadersforreal.eu)

**Game & Wildlife CONSERVATION TRUST**



Predated Lapwing egg

### Wader declines: a pan-European issue

Along with many other farmland birds, breeding waders have been declining across Europe for at least the last 30 years. This is primarily due to agricultural improvement of their favoured wet grassland habitats, involving drainage, fertilization of grass swards and increases in livestock densities. Agri-environment schemes in several countries have attempted to address these problems by compensating farmers for maintaining higher field water levels and practicing lower intensity farming. However, there is an increasing body of evidence from scientific studies conducted on breeding waders across Europe that high levels of predation by widespread, generalist predators is likely to be limiting wader population recovery in many situations. Methods of reducing predator impacts are being developed and trialled by some landowners and other organizations, but these are in large, open landscapes, typically nature reserves. They have focused mainly on predator exclusion fencing. However, this is unlikely to be feasible in all situations, especially river valleys and areas with regular livestock movements and is only likely to be effective against mammalian predators, not against avian ones. The Avon Valley is typical of river valley situations where other biodiversity considerations are also important and the feasibility of effectively reducing predator impacts is more constrained by the landscape and multiple land ownership.



For the lapwing, there is evidence that low breeding success, rather than reduced adult survival, is the main driver of population decline.

Lapwing chicks in the nest

### The Avon Valley

The River Avon develops into a large calcareous lowland river south of Salisbury which is of national and international importance for its wildlife communities. The floodplain consists of humid, species-rich grassland, with ditches and some standing water usually persisting through the spring months. The floodplain SPA and SSSI designations reflect its value for a wide range of species, including breeding waders, wintering wildfowl and waders, otters and certain insects, molluscs and plants of national importance. The traditional farming pattern of the valley reflects the propensity for winter flooding, with relatively low-intensity livestock farms and a predominance of grazed pastures and hay fields.



### The decline of waders in the Avon Valley

The Avon Valley has historically supported nationally important populations of breeding lapwings, redshank and snipe. In common with other lowland wet grassland sites throughout Britain, the numbers of breeding waders in the Avon Valley have declined dramatically since the early 1980s, with declines of 64% in lapwing, 75% in redshank and 97% in snipe during 1982-2002. Since 2003, farmers have been encouraged to join the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme and uptake by farmers within the valley has been high. In total, this amounts to a considerable investment in habitat restoration over the last 20 years, but to date there has been no reversal of the trend in wader numbers. The GWCT has been involved in monitoring breeding waders in the Avon Valley for over 20 years. We hold data on field conditions and wader numbers and, since 2007, we have collected data on lapwing breeding success on 15 farms. Our data for 2007-2014 show clearly that poor breeding success is driving the decline in lapwings and that low nest survival resulting from high levels of predation is the key issue.

Lapwing productivity in the Avon Valley has averaged 0.41 fledged young per pair per year, well below the threshold of 0.7 fledged young per pair per annum needed to maintain a stable population.



Clutch of Lapwing eggs

### Project aims

The project seeks to reverse the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley. We urgently need to intervene to improve breeding success, which should lead to increases in breeding density. The objectives are, through a unique combination of habitat restoration and innovative targeted, seasonal exclusion, monitoring and tracking of predators to:

1. Increase lapwing numbers in the Avon Valley through the novel approach of creating strategic 'hotspots' of optimum habitat with reduced predation pressure.
2. Increase numbers of lapwing chicks fledged at 'hotspots' to the point where breeding densities become sufficient to enable lapwings to better fend off potential predators on their own.
3. Halt the decline of redshank in the Avon Valley by increasing productivity.
4. Create conditions to encourage snipe to return to breed.
5. Using a new approach called 'Planning for Real' to deliver sustainable conservation actions.
6. Demonstrate how far habitat manipulation can be used to push the balance in favour of waders rather than predators. We will assess predator behaviour in manipulated landscapes.
7. Demonstrate the most appropriate techniques for the efficient assessment and exclusion of predators and quantify any benefit or problems associated with predation control.
8. Quantify the costs of different techniques for increasing wader breeding success and the timescale over which this translates into higher wader numbers.
9. Monitor the effects of restoration for waders on other key elements of floodplain biodiversity, particularly the flora, invertebrates and wintering wildfowl.





## Annex 9



### Habitat management in the Avon Valley



Habitat management has begun this autumn, this work is aimed at increasing lapwing and redshank productivity by;

- Removing vegetation that is blocking ditches and scrapes.
- Re-digging ditches that have dried out.
- Creating scrapes within fields.
- Removing dead trees that are being used as perches by corvids.



By creating more in field wet features we are creating more chick foraging habitat within the fields away from linear features which are used by many mammal predators when hunting. This also aims to create a more complex habitat structure, which in turn creates areas of cover which gives chicks protection from avian predators.



We have been working with students from Sparsholt College to remove fences and scrub to open up the smaller fields and make it more accommodating to breeding waders.

Follow the LIFE Waders for Real Lapwing project on twitter @WadersForReal or visit our website <http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal>



### Please look out for any colour ringed Lapwing!

We have been working hard this spring to colour ring Lapwing chicks, if you see any please let us know. This will help us find out more on how the Lapwing are using the Avon Valley and details on whether they are site faithful or not.

Please contact [info@gwct.org.uk](mailto:info@gwct.org.uk) with any sightings or for further information.



Each individual is fitted with a black flag on the upper left leg, along with an individual combination of colour rings. This allows us to identify individual birds. As they are ringed as chicks we know the nesting sites of each individual bird.

Follow the LIFE Waders for Real Lapwing project on twitter @WadersForReal or visit our website <http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal>



### Camera trap work in the Avon Valley

Can you spot and identify all the species?

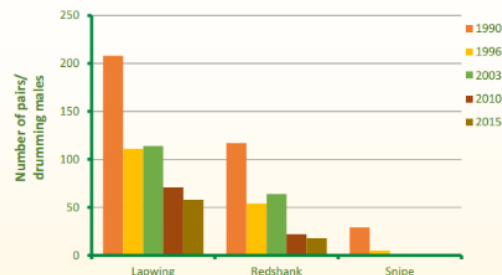


Redshank, woodcock, roe deer and nightjar, pheasant and heron, cuckoo, otter.

Follow the LIFE Waders for Real Lapwing project on twitter @WadersForReal or visit our website <http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal>



### Wader Trends in the Avon Valley



Productivity 0.36 0.59 0.23 0.69 0.17 0.43 0.48 0.92 0.38

Productivity level needs to be at 0.7 or above to create a stable population. Productivity is the average number of chicks fledged per pair per year.

Follow the LIFE Waders for Real Lapwing project on twitter @WadersForReal or visit our website <http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal>

## Annex 10



### Waders in the Avon Valley



#### Waders in the Avon Valley

##### Wader declines: a pan-European issue »

##### The decline of waders in the Avon Valley »

##### About the Avon Valley »

##### Priority issues »

##### Project aims »

##### Our approach »

##### The measure of success »

##### Integration in a non-reserve landscape »

##### Creation of hotspots »

##### Monitoring predator activity »

#### Wader declines: a pan-European issue



Along with many other farmland birds, breeding waders have been declining across Europe for at least the last 30 years. This is primarily due to agricultural improvement of their favoured wet grassland habitats, involving drainage, fertilisation of grass swards and increases in livestock densities. Agri-environment schemes in several countries have attempted to address these problems by compensating farmers for maintaining higher field water levels and practicing lower intensity farming. However, there is an increasing body of evidence from scientific studies conducted on breeding waders across Europe that high levels of predation by widespread, generalist predators is likely to be limiting wader population recovery in many situations.

There is good evidence from several countries for increases in the numbers of generalist predators such as foxes and corvids over the last 30 years, leading to the situation where, in many cases, habitat restoration alone may not be sufficient to recover wader populations. Analysis of lapwing adult survival rate indicated no appreciable change during 1960-1990 and suggests that insufficient productivity is the main driver of lapwing declines.

There is currently debate at national and international levels on the best way forward to reduce predation on breeding wader clutches and broods and hence ensure that money spent on habitat restoration and management is not wasted. In England, the RSPB, GWCT and Natural England are in agreement that solutions to the low productivity of lapwings and redshank caused by predation are urgently required.

Methods of reducing predator impacts are being developed and trialled by some landowners and other organisations, but these are in large, open landscapes, typically nature reserves. They have focused mainly on predator exclusion fencing. However, this is unlikely to be feasible in all situations, especially river valleys and areas with regular livestock movements, and is only likely to be effective against mammalian predators, not against avian ones.

The Avon Valley is typical of river valley situations where other biodiversity considerations are also important

## Annex 11

### Blog stats

Title	Date released	Views
Increasing wader numbers in the Avon Valley	Mar-14	12
Update on breeding wader recovery in the Avon Valley	Sep-15	236
Wintering waterfowl and waders in the Avon Valley.	Jan-16	336
The First Lapwing Chicks fledged in the Avon Valley!	Jun-16	372
Has the Environmental Stewardship Scheme been successful for lapwing?	Jun-16	378
Spring lapwing in the Avon Valley	Apr-16	442
Relief as lapwing hatch in the Avon Valley	May-16	633
Fascinating fox work in the Avon Valley	Jul-16	1,620

## Annex 12



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Dear .....

Thank you very much for your cooperation and help during the first year of the Waders for Real breeding wader recovery project. We had a very successful field season where I myself learnt a lot and I am looking forward to taking this knowledge into the coming spring.

Our surveys estimate there were 61 pairs of lapwing breeding in the Avon Valley this past spring which is an increase from 41 pairs in spring 2014; we believe this is partly due to the high breeding success seen in 2014. We had several flocks of non-breeding birds which we hope will breed in the valley this coming spring. Although the numbers of chicks that fledged may have been lower than desired we had an overall hatch rate of 50% and on some sites up to 75% which is extremely promising. It is rewarding to see the hard work and time that landowners, keepers and farmers are putting into the Avon Valley and how it is paying off.

Through radio-tracking chicks we were able to see which areas and micro-habitats are favoured for foraging. This is being fed back into our plans to increase chick survival in the forthcoming years. Some habitat work has already begun and we are excited to see the effects of this in spring 2016. Increasing the numbers of ditches and scrapes within fields should create ideal chick rearing habitats close to nesting sites, whilst also creating habitats for other species.

This spring we plan to operate in a similar way to last year. I hope that you are happy for us to carry on at your site, please feel free to give me a call if you would like to discuss this further. Again we will have a couple of students working with us and if you would like to meet the team before the field season begins I am happy to arrange this. I also have leaflets and posters about the project available if you would like any display material.

Best wishes,

Lizzie Grayshon



## Highlights from the 2015 field season

Out of all the lapwing pairs that fledged chicks, there was one pair in the Avon Valley that successfully raised and fledged their whole brood of four chicks. This is particularly unusual as most pairs fledge 1 or 2 chicks, this shows the dedication of what, we must assume are experienced birds.



We managed to colour ring a good number of nearly fledged lapwing chicks. Each individual was fitted with a black flag on the upper left leg, along with an individual combination of three colour rings. This allows us to identify individual birds in the field in future without needing to recapture them, which limits disturbance. Because they have been ringed as chicks, we know the nesting sites of each individual bird and this allows us to see if they are site faithful in the future.



As well as providing useful information on features used by predators such as foxes, our trail cameras recorded a snipe in June 2015. We have had occasional sightings after all the migrants have departed in April in recent years and this provides confirmation that there may still be the odd pair of snipe breeding in some parts of the Valley.



Examples of the value of colour rings have been seen throughout the year in the Avon Valley. A colour-ringed redshank was caught on one of our cameras. Previous observations of this bird tell us that it winters on Farlington Marshes, Portsmouth, but we now know that it breeds in the Avon Valley.



This winter there has been a flock of around 2,500 black-tailed godwit in the Valley. We have spotted at least 35 individuals with colour rings and some of these birds were ringed in Iceland as chicks. The oldest of those seen so far this winter was ringed in 1996 as an adult making it at least 20 years old.

Lizzie Grayshon  
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## Annex 13



## Annex 14

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Seeking to reverse the decline of breeding waders for **Game & Wildlife** because wader numbers in Avon Valley have fallen sharply.

**Game & Wildlife**

We conduct research in the countryside to help increase wildlife populations

**Story**

The 'Waders for Real' Life+ project was launched this year with the aim of reversing the decline of breeding wetland birds in the Avon Valley.

To halt the decline of lapwing and redshank, we urgently need to intervene to improve breeding success, which should lead to increases in breeding density.

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BIRDS - WADERS FOR REAL
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## Encouraging the evocative call of waders

Lizzie Gray-shon outlines an exciting project that aims to reverse the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley

“...creating these wet areas will also benefit wintering waders and wildfowl...”

(Above) The same location before (left) and after (right) the ditch has been re-dug and vegetation cleared to create new in-field wet areas.

(Below) Before (left) and after (right) a new ditch and scrape have been added to a field to create a more complex structure and chick foraging habitat.

**65%**

Lapwing numbers in the Avon Valley declined by 65% between 1996 and 2015.

The 'Waders for Real' Life+ project was launched in 2014 with the aim of reversing the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley. This project combines a local farmer-led initiative within the private sector (farmers and landowners), conservation charities (GWCT, Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust), and the public sector (Natural England, Environment Agency).

Our monitoring of lapwing clearly shows that poor breeding success is driving the decline and that low nest and chick survival is the result of high levels of predation. The Avon Valley is typical of river valley situations where other biodiversity considerations are also important and the feasibility of effectively reducing predator impacts is constrained by the landscape and multiple land ownership.

Our approach is to put into practice the three principles applied in wild game management:

1. Creating appropriate nesting habitat.
2. Creating brood-rearing habitat.
3. Reducing predation pressure.

Habitat assessments, monitoring data and tracking data from radio-tagged lapwing chicks have allowed us to effectively plan habitat improvement. EU Life+ funding is being targeted at restoring four 'hotspots' to optimal wader breeding habitat. We hope that with improved habitat and lower predation levels, nest

and chick survival will be noticeably higher over the course of the four year project.

**Improving nesting habitat**

We have been working with Sparsholt College to remove old fence lines and scrub to open up some of the smaller fields and reduce the number of perching posts for corvids. Creating open areas with appropriate swards should provide and encourage the lapwing to nest in loose colonies.

Through this work we are able to provide hands on work experience for the game and wildlife management students on a practical conservation project. In return they provide us with valuable labour for addressing some



Lizzie Gray-shon is our Waders for Real Project Ecologist who has been working on the project since it began and is passionate about waders, especially lapwing.

(Top left) Poor breeding success is driving the decline of lapwing.

(Below Left) The red circles show two female lapwing nesting within 20 metres of each other; students from Sparsholt have been removing small alders and willows to reduce the number of corvid perching posts; a flock of around 1,000 black-tailed godwit that spend many weeks over the winter in the Avon Valley.

of the fundamental habitat work. For example, last winter students training for their chainsaw licence were able to get good practice taking out small alders and willows along some of the old ditches.

Further work will enable us to try to improve designs and assess the extent of benefits from deploying these measures.

For more information on the project please go to [www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal](http://www.gwct.org.uk/wadersforreal)





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