

Tidelines

News from Touching the Tide, a Lottery-funded Landscape Partnership Scheme, with project manager Bill Jenman



Legs up on the career ladder

One of the most rewarding parts of Touching the Tide has been our graduate trainee and archaeological intern programme. Of the four trainees to date, every one of them has gone on to get a permanent full-time job when they left us, bar one person who had always intended to take a master's degree afterwards.

Faced with more than 100 applicants for each place, it was hard to pick the very best when so many were already outstanding. I think their subsequent employment record shows we chose well, though.

It's a familiar problem to many young people - you can't get experience without a job, and you can't get a job without experience. In the conservation world, volunteering can provide a way to get started, but there's even competition for good volunteer placements. Conservation never pays much, so running up even bigger debts after you leave college



usually isn't an option either. Most young people need at least a basic income, especially if they have to live away from home. The deal we offered was three to seven months on the Living Wage, funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The trainees have each benefitted from a bespoke on-the-job training package too.

They have mainly worked as little tern wardens, employed by the RSPB for Touching the Tide. Much of their wardening work has been practising those people skills that everyone needs nowadays.

Each has also each worked for the National Trust for a couple of weeks, and helped both the TfT team and Suffolk Wildlife Trust staff with specific tasks. Each organisation has a slightly different culture, so experiencing the full range can really help to inform future career choices.

The odd one out was a six-week archaeology intern who worked for Access Cambridge Archaeology on our Dunwich dig last summer. Jobs in archaeology are even rarer than jobs in nature conservation, but Nina has just started work with Worcester County Council Archaeology Service.

Good luck to all of them in their future careers. There will be one last chance this spring - we've scraped together enough money for an extra season. After that TfT, and our graduate trainee programme, will be over. So spare a thought for all the other young people trying to start their careers. They need all the help and encouragement we can give.

Raising the standards

Planners and ecologists from across Suffolk and Norfolk gathered for a seminar that may have sounded a little dull and dry to the uninitiated. But, as **JOHN GRANT** reports in the first of a two-part series, delegates discussed some hugely important environmental issues

Think of British Standards and you might think more about kite marks on kettles than conservation. But you shouldn't be

fooled. Perhaps BS42020 does not figure very highly when it comes to popular perception. It sounds a bit dry and dusty, perhaps a bit dull but worthy.

It's not just an anorak's delight or a godsend for anyone who loves to revel in the obscure and arcane, however.

It has an importance for nature conservation and the environment that was emphasised at a seminar on planning and biodiversity held last week at St Edmundsbury Borough Council's West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds.

Organised by the Suffolk and Norfolk Biodiversity Partnerships in collaboration with the Association of Local Government Ecologists, it brought together about 80 planners, naturalists and environmentalists.

The event had a stated objective to "provide an overview of the latest national and county-level developments and best practice related to spatial planning, development management and biodiversity."

Again, it might sound a little dry for the layman but beyond those weighty words were clear, practical factors with huge environmental relevance. None shone through more brilliantly than those offered by Mike Oxford, who is chairman of the British Standards Institution's technical committee on biodiversity.

He outlined the deep significance to nature and the environment of BS42020 - the first British Standard on biodiversity management.

Mr Oxford said BS42020 was a "code of practice for planning and development" and its number had deep significance, relating as it did to 2020.

The UK had a commitment to halt overall loss of biodiversity by 2020 in line with the European Biodiversity Strategy and UN targets - a commitment that is passed down to local authorities to implement, mainly through planning policy. "Hence, British Standard for 2020, or BS42020," he said.

The code of practice offered a "coherent methodology" for biodiversity management and he likened it to a "car maintenance manual for planning and

development."

Its importance was set against a background of pressure within the planning system, said Mr Oxford. "There are currently not enough resources and time and I doubt that we will have more planners and ecologists in the coming years," he said.

"Political and economic policies are focused elsewhere - for example only 30% of English local authorities have an in-house ecologist.

"All this means we have poor delivery of biodiversity mitigation and an awful lot of confusion."

Within the system, he said,

"we have become very hooked on the planning process - there are very many stages and we see the process as important - we seem to have lost sight of the outcome.

"We need to think more consciously about the end points we arrive at - the outcomes for biodiversity.

"Planning authorities have a really important role. We need to be better at scrutiny of applications and we have got to ensure that any planning conditions that are put in place achieve what we want (for biodiversity)."

BS42020 was designed to help planners identify where and when to use conditions to achieve biodiversity. It would encourage proper scrutiny of planning applications and effective consultation and it would help in resolving outstanding issues, he said.

It would play a "vital role in helping protect and enhance UK biodiversity."

The standard contained guidelines, not compulsory measures, said Mr Oxford. "It is one of those things that hopefully is so fluffy and cuddly that you want to do it all without having a gun held to your head."

There was currently a risk that biodiversity measures were seen "blockages to the growth agenda".

He added: "There are some very influential people who think that



“It's very likely we not be able to improve things with every single planning application but hopefully we can improve things more often than we have done in the past

our passion is a problem. We have got to change the perception that biodiversity is a blockage.

"It is very likely we will not be able to improve things with every single planning application but,

hopefully, we can improve things more often than we have done in the past."

The British Standards Institution's website says BS42020 "seeks to promote transparency and consistency in the quality and appropriateness of ecological information submitted with planning applications and applications for other regulatory approvals."

It adds: "It is intended to assist those concerned with ecological issues as they arise through the planning process and in matters relating to consented development and activities involved in the management and use of land outside the scope of land use planning, which could have site-specific ecological implications.

"The standard provides:

to protect biodiversity

Angles on nature

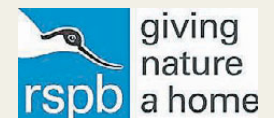
Experiencing East Anglia's wealth of wildlife, with the RSPB

The gift that keeps giving

As we reach the crest of winter's hill and begin the increasingly speedy toboggan ride towards Christmas Day, I begin to ponder how best to deal with that perennial issue - Christmas shopping.

At this time of year I'm delighted to embrace the spicy warmth of an après work mulled wine and bask in the glow of seasonal fairy lights. I enjoy the annual opportunity to dig my sparkly clothes out of the back of my wardrobe and spend quality time with loved ones. But this year I'd really like to dodge the stress induced panic buying that sets in about now!

My resolve is made all the more firm in the wake of Black Friday, a retail concept that has made its way across the Atlantic. The term was apparently coined as at this time of year retailers begin to turn a profit and go into the black. For me, the



term only serves to reinforce the dark nature of this call for unchecked, feverish consumption.

I'm still keen to treat my nearest and dearest this year but rather than soulless bargain buying, I'd like to use Christmas to show my friends and family I care in a way that supports something meaningful.

When I think about what really makes a difference in my world, the real gift that keeps giving is nature.

Whatever the season, nature's generosity never fails me. In spring, two blue tits gave me hours of pleasure as they made a home in my garden, the electric blue flash of my first kingfisher glimpsed on a summer's day created a memory for life and an encounter with my neighbourhood hedgehog buoyed my spirits on a drizzly autumn evening. As winter gets into its stride, it feels about time I gave something back.

So instead of signing up to over consumption I will make sure all my remaining Christmas shopping days are green. And what's better than combining it with a day out in nature? Why not ditch the shopping mall visit and head off to the wilds of the Suffolk coast to Minsmere?

There's plenty of choice in the shop there and you might even be gifted your very own lifelong nature memory along the way. The Minsmere shop is open daily from 9am to 4pm, apart from Christmas Day and Boxing Day (www.rspb.org.uk/minsmere). Or if you'd rather shop from your sofa, www.rspb.org.uk/shop

Rachael Murray



■ Above, Suffolk biodiversity officer Gen Broad, far right, with some of the seminar speakers, from left, Paul Cantwell, of Natural England Wildlife Enforcement, Simone Bullion, of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Graham Irving, of Natural England, Anne Casey, of Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, chief inspector Martin Sims, of the National Wildlife Crime Unit, Mike Oxford, of the Association of Local Government Ecologists and Suffolk County Council senior ecologist Sue Hooton. Inset and below, delegates at the event.

Photos: PHIL MORLEY.



“ British Standard 42020 provides guidance on how to produce clear and concise ecological information to accompany planning applications

- guidance on how to produce clear and concise ecological information to accompany planning applications
- recommendations on professional ethics, conduct, competence and judgement to give confidence that proposals for biodiversity conservation, and consequent

decisions/actions taken, are sound and appropriate

- direction on effective decision-making in biodiversity management
- a framework to demonstrate how biodiversity has been managed during the development process to minimise impact.

“It is applicable to professionals working in the fields of ecology, land use planning, land management, architecture, civil engineering, landscape architecture, forestry, arboriculture, surveying, building and construction.”

More information on BS42020 is available at www.standardsuk.com/bsi/

- Next week eaenvironment reports from the seminar include coverage of presentations on early signs of biodiversity success a Suffolk solar farm, and how simple steps can be taken to help provide swifts with nest sites.

