

# Mid-project Review Report of Truleigh Hill YHA

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## The project

**Background & Need for Project:** Truleigh Hill YHA is ideally placed as a key visitor information point for the South Downs National Park and the South Downs Way National Trail. The YHA at Truleigh Hill currently receives between 6-10,000 day visitors who use the existing café. This is a large passing trade but only equates to 15% of the capacity. There are 5,000 overnight guests per year stay at the Youth Hostel. This is equivalent to a 25% capacity over the year but with seasonal variations they are generally booked at 45% capacity in the summer months and only 7% in the winter months.

**Project aims:** This project aims to create a flagship habitat, access and learning package for what is currently a 1 hectare field in need of regeneration in immediate proximity of the Rampion route. This will be carried out through targeted habitat restoration, improvements in learning opportunities and interpretation, improved access to the site and volunteer development.

**Project need:** Whilst the site benefits from the South Downs Way passing immediately next to it the field itself is currently not accessible to people with mobility issues. The dew pond is not visible from the South Downs Way and the chalk grassland habitat only partially visible from the current accessible route. There is a need to increase the opportunities for all people to access this site and to benefit from the improvements that are planned.

## Main project activities:

### A. Habitat improvement

- To restore the derelict pond (and erect a dipping platform)
- To re-fence the field
- To re-introduce grazing
- Diversify scrub age structure and remove overhanging vegetation from the pond
- Encourage the spread of chalk grassland species throughout the field

### B. Learning and Interpretation

- To develop habitat sessions linked to the National Curriculum that increase day visits and residential stays at YHA Truleigh Hill as well as self-guided school visits.
- Install onsite interpretation in the YHA courtyard

### C. Access Improvements

- To create an easy access trail around the site linking to the South Downs Way

**D. Volunteer development**

- To establish a Friends of Truleigh Hill group

**Measures & indicators:**

Measure	Indicator	Notes
Volunteer Days Created	50 Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45 volunteer days completed (DofE and Green GYM TCV)</li> </ul>
Dew Pond Restored and dipping platform created	Work carried out by volunteers & contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dew pond restored</li> </ul>
Field Re-Fenced	Broken fencing fixed & new fencing created where required	
Access Trail Created	Trail created with input from local groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting held with Disabled Ramblers to review and comment on easy access path proposal</li> <li>• Possability People – booked in to provide user assessment of access trail using their lived experience to inform service providers how to make their site or building more accessible for people living with a range of disabilities and impairments</li> </ul>
Habitat and landscape learning resources created	4 Online resources	
Onsite interpretation complete	Interpretation installed in courtyard	
Ecologically improved dew pond	Ecological Report produced	
Sheep Grazing the field	5 sheep	
Quality of visitor experience		
Partnership with YHA, the conservation volunteers, SDNPA.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership using volunteers from both the YHA and TCV in the management of the field.</li> <li>• YHA have hosted Duke of Edinburgh students on the 9-11<sup>th</sup> April and have further students booked for August (twice a year in future years).</li> <li>• TCV aim to bring youth clubs from nearby Fishersgate and Green Gym attendees (part of wider project with Adur &amp; Worthing District Councils).</li> </ul>
<del>Measureable increase in site use by all visitors</del>	<del>200 additional visitors</del>	Discussion at TPB agreed to replace number of visitors with the quality of the visitor experience.
<del>Establish Volunteer Group</del>	<del>8 Volunteers</del>	Replaced by partnership

### **What are the project successes?**

- Landowner and tenant permission obtained
- Ecological surveys finalised and method statements produced
- Planning application submitted – going to committee in May
- Contractors booked in for next phases of work – all dependent on planning permission
- Contractor - Pete the Pond on BBC Radio Sussex 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018 talking about the project
- YHA to do write up of volunteering week
- Increased engagement with users of the hostel and the South Downs Way

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### **What are the concerns and why?**

The planning application process was quite lengthy and required more detail than anticipated. As a result there was a delay in submitting the application. This has delayed the delivery of some elements of the project. Planning permission was granted in May 2018. As a result there will now be no further delays and the project will be finished by September.

The SDNP Interpretation Officer is currently working on content for interpretation in the YHA Courtyard area which will involve applying for advertising consent. The detail and scale of the panels planned has yet to be decided. Though we don't anticipate any further delays.

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### **What changes are required and why?**

The timeline of planned works has been adapted and updated. Project end date remains the same.

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**Assess the current financial status of the project.**

<b>Truleigh Hill Habitat and Access Improvements</b>		Original grant: £49,000.00		
<u>Activity</u>	Timescale	Year	Projection (£)	Spend
Chalk grassland restoration / enhancement	April / September	2018	2000	830
Restore Dewpond	January	2018	9950	9950
Install dipping platform	May	2018	2650	
Re-fence field	May	2018	5875.52	
Design and install interpretation panel	August	2018	2000	
Easy Access Trail	July	2018	7500	
Interpretation in YHA building and surrounding courtyard	July	2018	12000	
<b>Additional Costs</b>				
Cut and collect (as per ecological specification)			1000	
Interpretation extra costs			3000	
Ecologist to oversee easy access trail work & follow up ecological survey of dewpond			500	
			<b>46,475.52</b>	<b>10,780</b>

**Comment upon the progress made towards the sustainability of the project outcomes in the long term.**

- The YHA will carry out two Duke of Edinburgh events at the YHA annually, dedicated to the maintenance and on-going management of the field – with input from the SDNPA ranger
- In addition, local Green Gym volunteers from TCV have already shown an interest in volunteering regularly for the YHA on the field. This interest will be fostered and developed and will ultimately contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the site
- Interpretation information will be available on the SDNP website and downloadable leaflets for the easy access trail
- Educational materials will be uploaded onto the SDNP Learning Zone
- Permanent on site interpretation will inform users and passers-by on the field and wider NP

**Annex I - Please find latest Project Status Report**

Project:		Truleigh Hill Habitat & Access Improvements			Date: 19/02/18	
KEY AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE:				AUTHORS/OWNERS:		
Nr	Top Activities	Programme Status				
		Project Target Date	Estimated Target Date	% complete	TREND (RAG)	
					Current	Previous
1	Landowner (WSCC) permission / YHA permission	01/10/17	01/10/2017	100		
2	Planning permission for capital works	01/12/17	01/05/2018	50		
3	Badger scoping/environmental report	01/10/17	01/10/17	100		
4	Engagement of contractors	20/09/17	01/10/2018	100		
5	Dew pond restoration	01/11/17	15/01/18	100		
6	Dipping platform	01/02/18	31/07/18	0		
7	Fencing	01/03/18	01/06/18	0		
8	Chalk grassland restoration	01/09/17	01/09/18	0		
9	Grazing	08/03/18	01/09/2018	0		
10	Easy Access Trail	Apr 2018	31/07/18	0		
11	Creating Learning resources	26/11/17	04/06/18	0		
12	Liaison with schools	05/01/18	04/06/18	0		
13	Interpretation of the research	30/05/18	04/06/18	0		
14	Application for Advertisement Consent	30/06/18	14/06/18	0		
15	Interpretation Instalment	24/07/18	15/08/18	0		
16	Provide training for volunteers (50 days target)	18/11/17	31/06/18	0		

## Agenda Item 16 Report PR27/18 Appendix I Annex I

<b>Progress made since last report:</b>
<p>Landowner and tenant permission obtained                      Ecological surveys finalised and method statements produced                      Planning application submitted – follow up information submitted – awaiting validation                      Dew pond restored!                      Meeting held with Disabled Ramblers to review and comment on easy access path proposal                      Contractors booked in for next phases of work – all dependent on planning permission                      Partnership formed between YHA, The Conservation Volunteers and SDNPA involving using volunteers from both the YHA and TCV in the management of the field. The YHA will host Duke of Edinburgh students twice a year (booked in for 9-11<sup>th</sup> April) and TCV are hoping to bring youth clubs from nearby Fishersgate, as part of wider project with Adur and Worthing District Councils. TCV also doing a push for Green Gym attendees in February.                      Contractors informed and booked in to complete work. 56 volunteer days currently planned                      Regarding the interpretation for the internal and external – currently developing content with the help of the Eastern Area Team, YHA and the appointed designers (Hoffi). This includes identifying different grades of walking/riding access from the site as well collating the relevant SDNP gateway information for the site</p>
<b>Actions During the Next Reporting Period: (to end of June)</b>
<p>Planning permission obtained                      Duke of Edinburgh &amp; YHA volunteer event held – planting dew pond and removing derelict fencing                      Field re-fenced                      Dipping platform installed                      Part of chalk grassland work completed                      Cut and collect field in preparation of construction of access trail and fencing                      56 volunteer days delivered                      Planning permission will be sought for the external panels planned for the hostel courtyard (currently identifying content/sizes)</p>
<b>Key Decisions Requiring Input from Others:</b>
<p>Unplanned costs for below – approval required – see section on budget for details on underspend                      Extra cost for ecologist to oversee work on access trail and follow up ecological survey on dew pond                      Planning consent for the external interpretation panels.</p>

<b>CHANGE LOG:</b>		
<b>Nr</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	The volunteer element of the project has changed from a friends of group to a partnership with the YHA and The Conservation Volunteers	See description above
2	The timeline of planned works has been adapted and updated – see attached budget for details	Due to a number of different factors – including the requirement to obtain planning permission, some of the works have been delayed. We are working with the ecologist to ensure that we can move the works in line with the method statement.
3	Delay in interpretation works, due to restricted resources and extra comm's needed with consultants.	Actively managing project, but planning consent will dictate programme for implementation.

RISKS & MITIGATION STRATEGY:				
Nr	Risk	Risk Score	Previous	Mitigation Strategy
1	Planning permission denied			Dewpond can be restored, but none of the other works would be possible. Funding money returned.
2	Delays to capital work			Project timelines for particular activities can be moved accordingly – working with the ecologist to ensure this is in line with the method statement
3	Loss of staff resource			Staff cover would be sought from internal resource
4	Project deliverables fail to meet National Grid funding criteria			If permissions are established, project deliverables are achievable

BUDGET MANAGEMENT		TREND (RAG)	
		Current	Previous
Spend by SDNP since last report	£9950		
Total SDNP spend to date	£9950		
Total project spend to date	£9950		
<b>Comments on Budget</b>			
Estimated cost of project £46475.52 – details below			
<b>Truleigh Hill Habitat and Access Improvements</b>			
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Cost (£)</u>
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