

Project Number : R1 Citizen Science



Project Overview: The Citizen Science project’s primary objective was to collect biological data on key species of high conservation concern, which still occur across the Carbon Landscape in regionally, and nationally important numbers. The focus was on farmland birds, wetland birds, dragonflies, plants, water voles and willow tits. The project built upon existing survey work, by recruiting and training new recorders to increase survey coverage across the landscape. The data is being used to measure the success of the habitat creation and restoration undertaken by the Carbon Landscape Programme and to identify new opportunity areas. The project has been described as “the glue” which binds together the wider programme and has delivered far more than was envisaged at the outset. The numbers of volunteers who have engaged with the project has exceeded our expectations, the survey training workshops being regularly oversubscribed and additional dates added to meet demand. The commitment shown by our citizen scientists has been impressive, some taking part in up to five different surveys and others covering multiple 1-km squares for an individual species or group. Many are now into their fourth year of surveying and are keen to continue with what they recognise as being an important task, monitoring the flora and fauna of the Carbon Landscape.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

Project Location: Sites across the Carbon Landscape

Project dates: 01/07/2017 to 30/06/2021 (CS Project Officer’s post was paused 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021)

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
56 volunteers trained	56	393	Actual is number of training places taken up. 80+ volunteers carried out surveys.
15 Training workshops delivered	15	45	
370 surveys completed, analysed and submitted	370	463	Most surveys consisted of two or more visits.
1 sustainable and repeatable survey system in place	1	1	Accessed through https://www.gmlrc.org
1 online resources shared for Carbon Landscape	1	1	Accessed through https://www.gmlrc.org
Number of volunteer hours delivered?	30 k	71.828 k	Additional surveys submitted after close of reporting, not included in actual figure.

Additional outputs delivered			
Anything unexpected or additional outputs!			Development of Swift (GMLRC's and Cheshire LRC's) online recording system for use in the field or at home/office.
Add rows as necessary...			

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of the Carbon Landscape?

i.e. greatest achievement, Anything surprising?, anything unexpected? Headline plus short description of one or two paragraphs max

There were many such occasions. The Biodiversity Data Manager built the Carbon Landscape Data Portal from scratch. The portal is a user-friendly system, which surveyors use to adopt survey squares, input their data and was described by one volunteer as Great functionality from the Winter Farmland Survey data entry portal - SO much easier than the paper version. It also allows project partners to easily access data in both CSV and GIS formats for mapping.

The portal has already been expanded to facilitate the collection of ad-hoc survey data, including an Excel records import wizard, as well as RSPB structured survey allocations. The portal has also allowed us to extend survey coverage outside of the Carbon Landscape area as part of the wider Great Manchester Wetlands Citizen Science project with very little additional work. As a result, the technical demand for the recently launched GM Wetlands Citizen Science project is very little allowing us to focus more resource on the volunteers and surveys themselves by reusing what we created through this project.

A Land Ownership database was set up although this was not one of the original project outputs.

What difference has this project made to the cultural and natural heritage of Carbon Landscape?

i.e. thinking outcomes, what has been the impact, benefit or change to the cultural and/or natural heritage delivered through the project? c.300 words

The Carbon Landscape Citizen Science Portal, which was created as part of this project, allows partners direct, self-service, access 24/7 to the latest species distribution data. We have also migrated historical data into the portal to provide a more comprehensive picture. We will continue to build upon the portal and enhance its functionality.

Sharing data with our project partners to support the restoration of habitats not only during the lifetime of the Carbon Landscape Programme but continuing through the GM Wetlands NIA partnership. Future uses have been identified for the data including the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) and the establishment of Nature Recovery Networks as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. A network of skilled multi taxa surveyors has been established which will continue to support data collection in the future.

What difference has this project made to people?

As above, what has been the impact, benefit or change to people delivered through the project? If possible please also include 1 or two quotes from those benefiting from the project. c.300 words

Quote A big "Thank you" to you and Debs (Wallace) for your organisation of the Grasses ID Workshop (June 2018). I thought it was beautifully organised and Deb's preparation for the event, teaching and running of it, were brilliant. **Unquote** This volunteer continued to develop her ID skills and went on to carry out botanical surveys, with her husband, of the Bickershaw Southern Meadow in spring 2021. Following a joint visit with GMEU's ecologists, GMEU will recommend the site for selection, on ecological grounds, as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI).

Experienced surveyors have shared their skills, developed over many years, with new recorders and the project has played a key role in bringing people together and carefully matching experience with aptitude and enthusiasm to learn.

People have developed a sense of belonging to a biological recording community who want to protect the species and habitats across the Carbon Landscape Programme area. Attending workshops has brought them into contact with others who share their passion for nature and new friendships formed through surveying together. Many have had the opportunity to visit and explore new sites rich in wildlife and to see new species for the first time, so achieving one of the key objectives of "reconnecting people with their landscape". The project has made people aware of the rich diversity of species, which occur across the landscape and of the important contribution they are making to nature conservation by volunteering to carry out surveys.

Feedback from volunteers attending our Citizen Science Conference in January 2020 clearly shows the importance of the project when asked "Have you enjoyed being a volunteer on the Citizen Science Project and Why?" One volunteer's response was "Yes very much. Good training and support and a great opportunity to get to know certain "patches" and explore new ones. Great to know that our survey data is being used and is valued."

Useful Links

i.e. Any websites that are useful to the project

Carbon Landscape Data Portal (which is being expanded) - https://gmlrc.org/carbon_landscape/

Survey resources including volunteer manuals and recording forms are still available via the GM Local Record Centre's website https://www.gmlrc.org/carbon_landscape/

Citizen Science Project Newsletter - article by a key citizen scientist on their survey experiences (pages 10 to 12).

https://www.gmlrc.org/news/?item=citizen_science_newsletter_dec_2018

Breeding Farmland Birds Workshop – article by David Steel one of the key citizen scientists who carried out numerous surveys and helped deliver six training workshops on farmland birds

https://www.gmlrc.org/news/?item=what_a_wonderful_day

Future Plans and Legacy

i.e. What's next for the project? follow up project? Use of information gained

Encourage and support the voluntary recorders to continue with their surveys of the 1-km squares and sites they have adopted so long-term datasets are built which allow us to monitor changes in species distribution. Roll out the citizen science surveys across the wider GM Wetlands NIA thanks to funding from the Green Recovery Challenge fund.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of all is the development of Swift, GMLRC's new online recording system, which was launched in April 2020. Swift's development was made possible by the work undertaken to set up the Carbon Landscape Data Portal and has now become the preferred option for most of GMLRC's recorders to submit their records. It has also been adopted by the Cheshire Local Record Centre and the GM Bird Recording Group.

Lessons learned?

i.e. What worked well? Knowing what you know now is there anything that you would have done differently?

The work required to obtain access permissions from landowners required a dedicated person at the start of the project, even if only on a part time basis. We had to work around this by allocating surveys on land with public access.

Increasing feedback to the volunteers on survey results and how their data were being used, through regular quarterly updates. We only published one newsletter at the end of 2018.

Greater publicity of the project through social media to recruit more surveyors. Whilst we exceeded the target for surveys completed and submitted by 25% we could have allocated more surveys if participation had been even higher.

Photographic Evidence

Insert and scale up to 4 pictures, with brief description



The first Winter Farmland Bird Survey workshop on Irlam Moss on 25th November 2017. Photo courtesy of David Steel (c.)



The first Winter Farmland Bird Survey workshop on Irlam Moss on 25th November 2017. Photo courtesy of David Steel (c.)

Funding Partners



Any other logos or names of funding partners to acknowledge?

For examples of this approach from other LP Schemes see:

<https://ioahc.net/end-of-project-report-tp06/>

<https://ioahc.net/end-of-project-report-tp03/>

<https://www.coigach-assynt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Suilven-Path-CALLP-Project-Report.pdf>