



A3.1 Black Devon Wetlands

C1.2 Black Devon Wetlands Trail

Project Overview:

These projects aimed to restore Black Devon Wetlands in Clackmannanshire by creating a suite of habitats rich in wildlife which combined with access improvements and interpretation would result in a site where local people could engage with the wildlife of the Inner Forth.

The site covers 42 ha on the edge of Alloa, adjacent to the River Black Devon. Amongst the expanse of grassland sits a freshwater lagoon that was created to cap the neighbouring landfill in 2005 and brackish pools that were created as part of a habitat enhancement scheme in the late 1990s. Following a number of years with no management, RSPB signed a 21-year lease on the site in June 2015, which enabled these projects to take place.

Year 1: Boundary of site defined; lease drawn up between RSPB and Clackmannanshire Council; contractor undertook mowing of part of the site in December.

Year 2: Lease signed in June; fencing of site took place that split the Reserve into smaller compartments to aid management for different species; 'people' zone of the Reserve marked out; guided walks undertaken; topographical survey undertaken; specifications and plans for wetland, viewing mound boardwalk and footpaths drawn up.

Year 3: Planning consent received for wetland enhancements, new viewing structure, paths and new wetland creation; ongoing breeding bird surveys; 2 ha of new wetland created by JM Dewars in the autumn; volunteers from project B1.1 Conservation Volunteering Around the Forth assisted with boardwalk creation. The viewing screen (output of project C3.1 Telling the Inner Forth Story) was installed and Reserve signage, a new path network including boardwalk and benches were too. Pupils from Alloa Academy visited the site as part of World Wetland Day and took part in activities including planting willow screening. Around 4 ha of vegetation was cut using the soft track, allowing access to wet sections of the site.

Year 4: The Reserve was officially opened with a launch event and family fun day that attracted over 100 people. 300 additional visitors attended guided walks, events and bespoke visits between April and June. Unfortunately, the viewing screen was vandalised at the start of the school summer holidays, but a story in the local paper generated support for the Reserve in the local community, and the damage was swiftly repaired. Materials to build additional lengths of boardwalk and three pond dipping platforms were purchased and volunteers with RSPB staff installed these at the new ponds over the winter months. Signage for the reserve was installed and a decorative stone for the floor of the viewing screen was purchased. Volunteer wardens started to keep an eye on the site, and report issues to the RSPB Wardens. Further events took place and were promoted online and in a leaflet. Additional wetland enhancement works took place around the edges of the freshwater pool with clear areas of bank and deeper water created.

Cattle handling facilities, additional vegetation management and floating islands were sourced and will benefit the ongoing management of the site.

Year 5: Two all-abilities gates for the track leading down to the Reserve were installed and interpretative panels to surround the viewing mound were designed and installed. These were designed by Astrid Jaekel, who also produced the interpretative panels for the viewing screen. A green roof was put on the viewing screen. Interpretation panels were designed for the pond dipping platforms and other forms of interpretation have been commissioned. An owl and kestrel boxes have been purchased, as has wild bird cover seed to be sewn in the autumn after IFLI. Aerial photography of the site was taken. (5 school children have attended outdoor lessons on site and 170 people have attended specific events held on site.

The Black Devon site which in April 2017 was officially opened as an RSPB Nature Reserve now allows residents and visitors to get close to a range of wildlife, take part in volunteering and participate in bespoke year-round events - all within walking distance of Alloa town centre and the village of Clackmannan.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved:	RSPB Scotland. Clackmannanshire Council, volunteers, schools, contractors including Blackburn Fencing, JM Dewars, Civic Architects, William Montgomery, Greenroof UK and Tradstocks Ltd.
Project Location:	Black Devon, Alloa, Clackmannanshire. NS894911 (Central grid ref)
Project dates	May 2015 to September 2018. Year 1 quarter 1 to Year 5 quarter 2.

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
<i>Area of wet and dry grassland brought into positive management</i>	38 ha	38 ha	
<i>Area of wetland created / enhanced for wildlife</i>	2 ha	2 ha	
<i>Visitor oriented wildlife site created</i>	1	1	
<i>Events held and number of people attending</i>	n/a	450 attendees	
<i>Length of new path created</i>	695m	290m	Revised down.
<i>Length of new boardwalk created</i>	30m	100m	
<i>Green roof on viewing structure</i>	n/a	1	

Additional interpretation	n/a	1	Interpretative stone for viewing structure & panels for viewing mound.
Access gates	n/a	2	Gates for the path down to the Reserve entrance.

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of the Inner Forth?

Activities within these projects complemented by ongoing site management have created an additional 2 ha of freshwater habitat, enhanced and extended the original freshwater pool and enhanced the full range of wetland habitats found on the site including wet grassland, fen and reedbed. This work will have ongoing benefits for associated flora and invertebrates as well as breeding and wintering birds. Creation of the floating islands within the freshwater pool has created additional space that could be used by breeding birds or as a high tide roost sites for SPA species.

Whilst cultural heritage was not a main focus for the projects, the viewing screen (part of project C3.1 Telling the Inner Forth Story), additional interpretative boards sited on the viewing screen and events at the site have showcased and raised awareness of the industrial history of the site and surroundings.

The viewing screen has attracted a lot of attention and some people come to the site to photograph just it. This is a unique structure, of high quality design and construction, which will last for many many years. It is a true focal point on the reserve.

What difference has this project made to people?

Wetland habitat enhancement and access improvements have provided a wildlife experience for local people that is not otherwise available or accessible within the local area. This has been integrated with innovative interpretation (partly delivered through project C3.1 Telling the Inner Forth Story) and sensitive access to the wetlands via a series of boardwalks. All access aspects of the site are suitable for all abilities.

To date, the site has hosted volunteer, training and education opportunities led by RSPB staff, IFLI staff and external agencies and turned an area that was largely unknown by the surrounding community into a destination for all ages, abilities and a variety of interests.

Over the past year, comments have been collected from visitors to the site, comments have ranged from :*'We love the shelter and always enjoy sitting watching the wildlife, it's a fantastic setting'* and *'Been going down for years, it is great see it looking good for all ages, plus keeping it still private for wildlife. Well done'* to *'Its great the local secondary school are being included in projects'* and *'Big changes a lot better'*,

Useful Links

There are pages for these projects on the IFLI website:

<http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/conserving-restoring/black-devon-wetlands> &
<http://www.innerforthlandscape.co.uk/projects/exploring-learning/black-devon-wetland-trail>

There is a page on the RSPB website: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/reserves-a-z/black-devon-wetlands/> and a regular blog that covers the Forth and Lomond Reserves often features news of Black Devon Wetlands: <http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/loch-lomond-and-black-devon-wetlands/default.aspx>

Future Plans

RSPB Scotland signed a 21-year lease with Clackmannanshire Council and therefore have a commitment to manage the site for this term. The Forth Reserves Warden will continue to manage the site, engage with visitors, local school children, and groups, run volunteering days and run a series of annual events. We will continue to promote the site within the local and wider communities, so that even more people have the opportunity to enjoy the site and learn about the wildlife that makes a home there or visits seasonally.

We will continue to develop the site for wildlife, through grazing management and consider the hydrology in more detail, with the aim of further enhancing the mosaic of habitats that can be found on the site.

Lessons Learned

This project has on the whole been fairly straightforward to manage primarily because of the support we have received from the Council, partners and local communities. It was slower to start than anticipated because of all the background planning that was involved, but this has led to higher quality outputs as a result.

Since signing the lease there has been steady progress on site and a lot of it is visual change. I think this was important to do so the local community could see we were 'doing things' to it.

Photographic Evidence

Site in December 2014 with initial vegetation management underway – the site was covered in waist high rank grasses prior to this.



Inner Forth Landscape Initiative End of Project Report

RSPB Wardens on site during new wetland creation, Sept 2016



Volunteers and RSPB staff edging the boardwalk, December 2017



Preparing for the Reserve launch event (also showing new fencing, gates, paths etc), April 2017.



Completed pond dipping area on new wetland, December 2017.



Volunteers preparing the floating islands, March 2018



Section of decorative floor stone within viewing screen (screen was output of project C3.1)



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May 2018 – Aerial photos showing new path network (joining to C1.1 paths), new wetland area bisected by boardwalk with additional boardwalk to the side, viewing mound with spiral path to raised seating, boardwalk to viewing structure by the original large wetland with newly re-profiled edges.



Photos courtesy of RSPB staff, David Palmar www.photoscot.co.uk & White House Studios.

Funding Partners

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