

Chalk, Cherries and Chairs

Non-Toolkit Toolkit*



A quick guide to what we learned, what challenged us, and what we're proud of from our Landscape Partnership Scheme 2019-24



Introduction

The Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Landscape Partnership Scheme ran from April 2019 - November 2024, primarily funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and match funded by over 80 partners, organisations and landowners.

Chalk, Cherries and Chairs was conceived to address the real and immediate challenges facing the Central Chilterns: the development of HS2; the loss and fragmentation of ancient woodland and other wildlife habitats through development; the disappearance of traditional orchards and hedgerows; and an increasing disconnect between people and their local landscape. Focussing on three themes – wildlife, heritage and people - a whole host of interweaving projects were designed with the Chilterns' landscape in mind and sharing common threads, such as volunteering, learning and digital media.



Our Partnership

The Chalk, Cherries and Chairs Crossed Themed Working Groups (XTWG) were set up June 2023, made up of Steering Group members and delivery leads to address areas which needed more attention in the Scheme, including Impact & Legacy, Volunteering, Diverse Engagement and Partnership.

The Partnership XTWG ran two workshops in 2024. In the January session, Steering Group members, delivery leads and others from partner organisations discussed the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from Chalk, Cherries and Chairs. In the June workshop, the same people reviewed these successes, challenges and lessons learned and chose their top 5. The group also wrote what they thought the opportunities were for the future and new things they had learnt from the Scheme.

We have pulled all of this learning into this bitesize '**non-toolkit toolkit**'* for future programmes and projects to learn from our lessons!

**We had initially planned to create a full toolkit, but then concluded that not many people have time to access and use a detailed toolkit - hence our 'non-toolkit toolkit'!*

Top 5 successes

- The Cross Themed Working Groups - brought people together to work on key areas and strengthened the scheme
- The Central Chilterns Farmer Cluster - becoming a CiC and plans to replicate the model elsewhere
- The knowledge gained through researching oral histories, heritage Chilterns' crafts & skills and development of self-guided walks
- The Partnership - better knowledge of each other's organisations and individuals within, increasing opportunities to work together in the future
- The enthusiasm of people, and our ability to drive and produce many successes from Chalk, Cherries and Chairs

Top 5 challenges

- Lack of strategy, and the pure scale of the scheme and its many projects was potentially overly ambitious from the start
- Lack of continuity from development to delivery stage of the Scheme, with minimal handover between staff
- High turnover in core staff team
- Issues with project management until the last 18 months of the Scheme
- Lack of time spent on laying foundations and embedding legacy from the start

Top 5 lessons learned

- The need for better connections between projects to encourage more joined up working
- The need to provide a consistent process for recruiting volunteers, and to increase collaboration and communications between volunteers and projects
- Put more investment in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the beginning of a Scheme and make sure to partner with relevant organisations and groups from the off
- Create a clearer / simpler financial claiming process
- Ensure communications and finance teams from all partner organisations are involved from the start and understand the objectives of the Scheme

Top 5 opportunities for the future

- Use lessons learnt from Chalk, Cherries and Chairs to build a stronger continuation of the Partnership, and work together to co-design activities
- Work more closely with the health and wellbeing sector and include in future projects
- Increase the overlap between cultural and natural heritage
- Use learnt knowledge to create a similar project in the future
- Strategic development of further engagement with key stakeholder groups

Top 5 new things we learnt

- The important and powerful link between heritage and wildlife
- About inspiring young people to take part in conservation and heritage activities
- The importance of communication within the Scheme - between Steering Group and Project Manager, delivery leads etc.
- How to engage and excite volunteers as well as learning about co-designing projects with community groups
- How to work on a major National Lottery Heritage Fund scheme

To find out more, including our evaluation
summary, End of Scheme Report and legacy
film, go to

www.chilterns.org.uk/chalkcherrieschairs



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