

**Weald Meadows Initiative (WMI) 'Vanishing Meadows'
Summary of 6 Months Achievements
May - October 2010**



The purpose of the project is to deliver the Weald Meadows Initiative - 'Vanishing Meadows' programme from November 2009 to November 2011 - to support the long term future and traditional landscape scale management of unimproved meadows in the Weald. This work is combined with the establishment of new species-rich grasslands within an area of national importance for these habitats. The initial years funding will deliver actions 1 - 3 which include:

1. site specific management, enhancement and creation advice to landowners
2. coordinating a wild seed harvesting programme to expand the wildflower grassland resource
3. assisting landowners to undertake practical management work and monitoring meadow condition and target species.

During May - Oct 2010, the projects officer supported 392ha of grassland through:

- 22 meadow visits (to 16 farms and 6 organisations) and telephone, signposting and email advice (to 80 landowners and 39 organisations) where management, enhancement and creation advice was supplied
- An additional 18 sites were assessed for seed harvesting (35ha) and 9 sites were actually harvested for Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS). A partnership with Kew's Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst resulted in an additional 36 hand harvesting collections of 17 wildflower species, from meadows throughout the Weald
- 18 WNOS orders were processed and an additional 5 whole-crop sowing sites were given support, including The Royal Botanic Garden Kew (Wakehurst) sowing techniques trail - please see the pictorial case study.

In addition the officer has also:

- Carried out networking towards the projects exit strategy and future funding, with 10 meetings with a range of delivery partners, to help secure a viable future for meadows
- Held 2 promotional events, attended 2 meadow focused events and contributed and appeared on BBC South East Today news items (2nd & 21st July) and Countryfile (22nd August 2010)
- Made available the WMI rapid survey assessment forms for West Weald Project - involving project partners Dolphin Ecological Surveys and the Sussex Wildlife Trust
- Submitted Weald Native Origin Seed results to Kent Biodiversity Partnership for 10 years of Biodiversity Achievements publication.

Comments from landowners supported by the WMI included:

Thanks so much for getting back to me. I realise you must have been swamped! The WMI web pages you've directed me to have so much really interesting and useful information. All we have to do now is try to implement it! Catherine in Maidstone.

Thank you again for your help. Your information has been invaluable to get me started! Mr Krugler

In the coming year (2010/11), the project will continue to deliver actions 1-3 and also

4. undertake specialist grassland surveys and offer support to the vast and untapped verges network
5. run targeted events with partner organisations for landowner and community benefits

Pictorial Case Study of WMI Partnership and Support for the Royal Botanic Garden Kew Wakehurst Enhancement Techniques Trail Plots

As part of the new restoration ecology unit at Kew and the enthusiasm of Iain Parkinson at Wakehurst a new research and demonstration trial site was developed in 2010, building on previous advice and Weald Native Origin Seed (WNOS) supplied by the WMI. The trial is made up of field scale plots demonstrating a range of enhancement techniques available to the public and landowners including enhancement using green hay and combined seed.

At The Beech Estate Meadows Ashburnham 21 July 2010

Left: Rowing up for hay making and Right: WMI combining for Weald Native Origin Seed



Resulting WNOS 'wild harvested' waiting for transport in the trailer



At The Beech Estate Meadows Ashburnham 22 July 2010

Steve from Wakehurst bailing the meadow hay with pedestrian equipment



Resulting mini green meadow hay bales July 2010



Bloomers Valley at Royal Botanic Garden Kew - Wakehurst 23 July 2010

Transport and the seed and bale spreading in action



The completed sown trial plots



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Project information available at: <http://www.highwealdlandscapetrust.org/projects.php?id=15>