

Halingway Towpath Willow Pollarding Project

Information provided in this report will be used to showcase your project on the Biodiversity Partnership web pages. Please expand boxes as needed or use a separate sheet.



Project title: Halingway towpath large willow pollarding project 2007

Date of Project report submission: 8 September 2008

Date of Application: 30 October 2007

Sites/Location (if applicable): The Halingway towpath, River Cam

Contact:

Name: _ Dr Philippa Noon _____

Organisation: _ Conservators of the River Cam _____

Telephone: _ 01223 863785 _____

Email: _ river.manager@camconservators.org.uk _

Please answer the following questions about your project:

If any aren't applicable insert N/A.

For Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) please see:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/natureconservation/action/partnership/baps/>

* If your project involved habitat work, how much habitat area in terms of BAP habitat has been ~~created~~/restored (please cross out accordingly)?

Which habitat(s)? _ Veteran Trees and Parklands _____

* Which BAP species have benefited (or other species)? _Ancient willow trees and associated fauna (e.g. barn owls, bats). _____

* Did the project contribute to other Biodiversity action plan targets and actions? Which ones and how? _

* Did the project generate ecological data? Yes No
Has the data been submitted to the Biological Records Centre?
 Yes No

If no please state the reason why data has not been submitted. _____
_The survey is ¾ complete; the River Bailiff still needs to type in data entries before they can be submitted. We anticipate that this might be completed before the end of October 2008. _____

* How many volunteers have been involved in the work? _One _____

* How many volunteer hours have gone into the project? _Eight _____

* Any other information you would like to tell us about?_Mr David McKee (local barn owl expert with a licence to inspect nests) has kindly agreed to keep monitoring the nesting boxes for birds. He made 2 half-day visits to the Halingway. A future project bid might need to include funds to cover his travel expenses. _____



Please provide a summary report of your project:

What worked well, was/were your main successes?

Thirty seven trees were pollarded in January 2008 by the Conservancy's contractors, Town & Country Tree Surgery Company. Photographs were taken of each numbered tree before and after the works to add to the archive of material for the Halingway.

The Conservancy's staff constructed two barn owl nesting boxes to a specification designed by the Hawk and Owl Trust. Two nesting boxes were mounted on tree no. 317 and tree no. 372 in the Horningsea area on the recommendation of a local barn owl expert (Mr David McKee). One of these nesting boxes was occupied in the summer of 2008; two fledgling owlets were found in the box by Mr McKee on an inspection which took place on 16 July 2008. This was an extremely gratifying sight for all personnel involved.

On the same day a grass snake was seen close to the pollarded line of trees. The SCDC Ecology officer had recommended chipping arisings on site in order to provide winter shelter for snakes; the towpath clearly supports significant biodiversity.

It was agreed with Mr McKee that two or three more barn owl nesting boxes need to be installed in Horningsea and Clayhithe. Locations have been nominated. These boxes have yet to be built.

SCDC, in collaboration with the Biodiversity Partnership (Fabiola Blum) and the author (Conservators), prepared a press release on the works. This release was distributed to the local media on 4th March 2008. The item taken up by the BBC news website almost immediately. The River Manager was also interviewed on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire and was able to cite the importance of the funding from the Biodiversity Partnership and SCDC to assist the Conservators', as landowner, to achieve a more systematic management of this riparian habitat over the long-term.

What was difficult/challenging? What lessons have you learnt that could be shared with other projects, can be learnt for future projects?

Weather is always unpredictable and it was not possible for the contractors to commence works until after Christmas 2007. However, once they had commenced, the works progressed well.

There are always potential issues arising from major tree cutting works alongside a public right of way. No footpath closure was necessary for these works, but a

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banksman had to keep a constant vigil for passing pedestrian and cycle traffic along this busy through-route. This slowed-up the contractors' rate of work on site.

Also, access to the rear of the Halingway is via cultivated fields; the set-aside margin was rather narrow this year and a later visit by 4x4 to follow-up the presence/absence of owls using the nesting boxes was made difficult by the lack of trackway.

The nesting box initiative was retained in-house as a peripheral project for the staff to work on during 'down-time' from other maintenance works. This meant that it became a lower priority versus other issues hence the reason why constructed bat boxes (c. 30 in number) have not yet been emplaced in situ.

Similarly, the updated tree survey has been conducted by the River Bailiff around his other duties. This might have been completed more efficiently by a volunteer (e.g. Wildlife Trust) or supervised student (e.g. undergraduate). There are obvious links which could be explored in the future with the College of West Anglia, nearby in Milton.

In this space we are interested in receiving your feedback on all aspects of the application process so that we might improve it in future.

The application process was very easy and clear. Officer support was always readily available for advice.

We should certainly be interested in applying for Biodiversity Partnership Funds in the future for these, and other types, of habitat works beside the River Cam.

Are you happy to share this information with other projects? Yes No

Thank you!

Please email this form back to Fabiola Blum,
Fabiola.Blum@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or post it to
Biodiversity Partnership,
ET1001, Castle Court, Castle Hill, Cambridge, CB3 0AP



Cam Conservators with Barn Owl Box