



Case Study 4.2 Use of social investments to buy land for nature conservation



Some major funding organisations now consider social investment to be a useful mechanism in helping the UK's fragmented landscapes. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (EFF) has a facility available called the Land Purchase Fund, through which they work with three major conservation organisations (the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust) to purchase sites of strategic conservation importance. EFF purchase the land and provide a two-year window for the organisation to fundraise in order to buy the land from them. To date, they have made 11 land purchases totalling over £8 million with six successfully sold on to the applicant organisation and secured for conservation so far.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust²² (WWT) is an example of an organisation participating in this scheme. WWT wanted to buy Hollybed Farm Meadows (16 ha) when they came up for auction in 2012. WWT approached EFF about the proposal and EFF agreed to purchase the land, leasing the land to WWT and giving it a two-year window in which to raise the funds to buy the land from EFF.

Since drawing up the agreement with EFF in 2012, WWT has been managing the site (which includes ten meadows, an orchard and a small wet woodland) as a nature reserve. Management has included spreading seed taken from Far Starling Bank SSSI (which forms part of the site) across the rest of the site in order to help increase the spread of plants throughout the individual fields.

WWT needed to raise more than £382,000 to purchase and manage the land, and successfully achieved this within the timescale. Contributions include a legacy gift to be used for the benefit of the wildlife of Worcestershire, a membership appeal raising £105,000, a grant of £65,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund²³ and a donation of £50,000 from Severn Waste Services²⁴ through the Landfill Communities Fund.

22 <http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/>

23 www.hlf.org.uk/

24 www.severnwaste.com/landfill-communities-fund/





Volunteers strewing green hay at Hollybed Farm Meadows. © Chris Ellory

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