

**Floodplain Meadows Partnership Conference Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October**  
**FMP Arts and Crafts competition.14.00-14.30**

So that leads us nicely into our final speaker and final activity which is to share with you all of the wonderful entries for our Arts and Crafts competition. This was a second novel approach for us, along with the community arts project, and we had no idea what the response would be. I'm pleased to say we have been delighted and amazed by all the entries and are so excited to announce the winners. So I'm going to hand over to Olivia Nelson who will take us through the competition. Olivia has worked in the conservation sector for nearly 20 years, but mostly with the National Trust, then returning to policy work to work at the Organic Research Centre. She now works for us the Floodplain Meadows Partnership where she acts as our Advocacy Officer. She has been responsible for running the Arts and Crafts competition so it is only fitting that she gets to tell you all about it. So I'm going to hand over to Olivia.

**Olivia Nelson: FMP arts and crafts competition - finalists showcased, and winners announced.**

Olivia: Thank you very much. I'm hoping this will work. It was really lovely to be able to work on this and not just be looking at policy development and advocacy. So thank you, it's been a real treat. This is just a short presentation. Really it is to showcase all these amazing creative efforts of everybody who submitted an entry. Actually just hearing Clare speak there and showing some of the gorgeous art that went on there it's a good follow on, then with other people who also responded. So the Arts competition, we were meant to launch it last year but obviously COVID put a stop to that so we did it this year and actually although COVID was an absolute nightmare, what came through very powerfully was people's connection with nature and actually this Art competition came from a conversation through our steering group and others about how do you engage people with nature and using art and creative means of doing that and that's where we sort of came from with this. The competition was actually funded by the Morgan Family Bursary Fund and The William Dean Countryside and Educational Trust. So we do thank them. It invited all types of artists and crafters, both to help us raise awareness about floodplain meadows, to engage them and to help us tell a story in a different way beyond advocacy-speak about how they can be part of natural climate solutions.

So the aim of this competition was to raise awareness of floodplain meadows and to help us to be able to instigate a call to action to government to protect them and recognise the role they play as part of natural climate solutions. We launched it in April and we closed it end of August so to get peak time, and we set a brief. So we asked people to visit a meadow if they could and we gave them the meadow map on the Floodplain Meadows Partnership website. Then we gave them 4 themes, which you can see there on the screen. The role of floodplain meadows in managing climate change, the importance of floodplain meadows for nature, how floodplain meadows contribute to a sustainable agricultural system and the last one about how floodplains help with letting rivers floods and with flooding management. I have to

say, like Emma, we were absolutely overwhelmed by the response we've got. It really showed how much people care and how much they feel about the beauty of meadows and actually one impression I got was how often people were surprised by the pleasure they found of being in a meadow.

So I'm going to go through just a few examples of who applied and who came in. I mean we got entries from as far as Bangladesh and this one celebrates the floodplains of Arial Beel. We then had one from Russia and this one is an example of Mezian art, which is an ancient ornamental art. We had a range of different people who came in. We have this one here, and this is from a team. This is a guy called Nick Marra and Stella Davis. It's called Creatures of Fox Earth and Nick has learning disabilities and Stella is his art teacher and has been for 5 years and she helps him with his art. So he directs it and they again were very inspired by the meadows and the creatures that you can find in the meadows. We also had the OU Stitch Group, they came and they also gave us their impressions of floodplain meadows and those blue skies are actually leftover face masks that have been found littering the meadows. So a little message there about the litter that we can find. Then just the sheer range of ways that people have presented their responses and how they want to tell the story, everything from embroidery, bag-making. This is some embroidery by Jean McKendree which was one we really loved, about the freshwater snails she found on the meadows. Photography was another very strong one. Fritillaries did come through as a really strong theme. Glassmaking, this is by Hazel Crane, known as Buttercups. We had lots of different forms of painting, of watercolours. This one is by Emily Terry and another one by David Hugh Lockett and a lot of poetry came through as well. I think we've already shown this one, The Drowner's Song from the Water Meadow. So just a wonderful range. Then in terms of the actual themes that came through, as I said the fritillaries, they seemed to be a very strong design that came through. A lot of them were used to tell the story about the biodiversity. These are just 3 examples which came through and obviously you've seen the photographs as well. Also the role of meadows in agriculture. That was another theme that came through. So a couple here. We did love this one and I've already used it on Twitter, and I'm sure we will use others. Again, all of these images we can use in different ways. This one came through, it's a great image of the story of flooding, it's a very powerful image.

So thank you to everybody who came through, we're really sorry we could only choose 12. So 12 winners we chose for the calendar. I have to say I was one of the judging panel, but it did take us hours to deliberate over and it was about 100 entries we had from across the UK and internationally and we all would agree that the imagination and the creativity of those who entered was absolutely outstanding. Judith Purcell who represents the Morgan Family Bursary Fund did say, "Thank goodness I wasn't a judge, I would have given them all first prize and I was amazed at the imagination and skill, let alone the interpretation of the subject. So well done." We would like to also repeat that, thank you and well done.

So the winners. We chose 12 winners and this is to make a calendar for 2022 which we will be producing and will be available in November and I think we're in

conversation about it going to the OU shop. So we chose 12 winners and then there are 2 outstanding winners and the Field Studies Council very, very kindly donated a £250 voucher and then Andy Rimming, thank you very much to Andy, he's also donated a beautiful hamper of his meadow produce. So we have also picked 2 winners for overall as well and again that took us a while to choose them. We have also got 2 children who applied, they visited a meadow and we wanted to give a special Children's Award to Lizzy and Tommy Smith Budger, they went with their mum and dad to a floodplain meadow in Milton Keynes. Well, they're both lovely. Tommy's 2½ and Lizzie's 4½ and actually the Wildlife Trust have very kindly donated a bug hotel. So thank you very much and well done to Lizzie and Tommy. I spoke to their dad and he's absolutely delighted on their behalf.

So now I'd like to go through the winners. I can't do a drumroll, if I could, I would. But the first one we had is Vicky Bowskill. Vicky did this wonderful poem, Forever Meadow. I can't play it but when we do the link to the winners Vicky has actually done a recording and it's the most soothing telling of a poem, it's really beautifully done. It basically celebrates the full story of floodplain meadows and it shows the importance of flooding and haymaking to the natural bounty. What I also want to say at this point as well is we asked people to put a little statement in about what their art was and we found that very useful and actually when you do go and have a look at the artists which we we'll have on a Flickr page, and read also their statement because a lot of them they really added actually to the story. The next winner we have is Lesley Cowley, this beautiful glassmaking and we couldn't choose between either of them so we chose both. It's A Beautiful Climate Solution and a piece of work on the right called River. These are blown glass. Lesley, as you can see on her own website, she actually makes glass and sells it. This was inspired by the North Meadow and the fritillaries on the North Meadow and also the influence on meadows from the river. So that's as I think Clare was talking about, the ripples and the movement of the river. So thank you very much Lesley. The next one is Jeff Coles who gave us a poem called Time Cycle Repeat. This one came through from a visit to Long Mead and he actually used words from information handouts. It was to talk about the yearly cycle of the meadow and we loved the poem and we also loved the way it was presented as well. Now this one has got a little film with it as well and this was also Long Mead. This is Jill Colchester. This is a kaleidoscope she made, we thought this was a really clever way of illustrating and she says 'the cyclical nature of meadows and the role of Yellow-rattle as a parasitic plant and the importance of Great burnet in carbon capture.'

[video]

It's very soothing. So thank you very much Jill, that's brilliant.

The next winner we have is again it's Long Mead. Long Mead must take out a copyright on their landscape and their habitat. It's honestly influenced so many different artists in the entrants. This is Julia Loken's work which is gorgeous. She said in her statement that she spent many, many hours trying to get this right and to try and represent all the different species of both plants and insects and you can tell, it's just lovely. It definitely was one of our favourites. The next work, I don't think we'll

be able to do this justice. This is Mark Oversby and this is titled Restoration, Walk No 7. Mark is a photographer and has done a few photography projects. I'm going to try and read this out. But he basically began to experiment with long exposures. So what he would do, he was walking out in the meadow and he was then exposing 97 seconds and that was to represent the percentage of loss of meadows. Then using an old analogue flash gun he would use up to 40 bursts of light during the exposure and that was to reflect the number of wildflower species that can be found in 1m<sup>2</sup> of meadow. So actually, reading that statement really helped but again it was an unusual way of showing the meadows in a light that perhaps you don't normally see. But thank you very much Mark. The next one is a poem. I'll leave it up for a little bit, I won't try and read it. But this is Studying Meadows in Latin and it's described as the Latin names of plants often reflects their most important characteristics and this allows people to distinguish between plant species but also shows us about what their diversity is and also what their importance is for humans. I'll leave it up just a little bit just so you can actually get a chance to read it. Again it was one of our favourite poems. You're right Steve Roberts, they are absolutely fabulous. We were so lucky to go through them, it was such a nice way of spending some of my work time. Right, next one, this is another poem, but also an image. This is Matthias Harnisch. This actually came from Germany. This was inspired by the Northern Upper Rhine in Riedstadt. He has worked with the Floodplain Meadows Partnership and I think they've had trips there. I think that's right Emma, which I've not been able to but they've gone and actually visited these, but again, just the poem and the images were very strong. I'll give you a little bit time so you can have a read. The next one, again, this one really shows the way that people have approached this in such creative ways. This is by Niki Kent and we chose all 3 of her entries, Meadow Grasses and actually what Niki's done here is she has visited a meadow, I think this was Tewksbury Nature Reserve and she took some of the grass and wildflower species and then pressed them and then printed them through an etching press. Again we just thought it's just a really beautiful way of showing the biodiversity and the value to nature that the meadows have. Then we have another poem and this one is a Haiku. This is by Sarah Caulfield and this was inspired by Runnymede, which as you know was where the Magna Carta was sealed and she said that she they visited Runnymede quite a lot last year and it was a really important place for them. If you don't know Runnymede it's quite an overdeveloped part of the world. So again, it was her reaction to the meadow. Of course, we also really liked the way it was presented which will look beautiful on the calendar.

Then we come to our 2 overall winners. I've seen her name come up quite a lot in the chat. But this is Clare Cornish. This is Seasons Song and we absolutely loved this just for its use of glass, it's intricacy and the designs which represent many of the grasses and flowers found in the floodplain meadows and the way it talks about the sustainable cycle of floods and silts and drought that allow meadows to flourish. We just thought it was just beautiful, detailed, and a lovely strong message and I hope this is right. The way it goes is 'Cherish the winter floods that nourish our summer hay'. This is great, thank you Clare this is lovely and this one will win Andy Rummings hamper. I think Clare was delighted about that. So it's very nice to be able to email to say well done. Then finally, the winner for the Field Studies Council

is Alice Walker. This was also Long Mead and I think it was actually Alice who brought her team of artists who came along to the Long Mead. But this is great. We chose all 3 because it really tells the story and it portrays the delicate balance that floodplains face, and the destructive future if they aren't urgently protected and it uses just a variety of materials and techniques, and demonstrates the rich biodiversity and the agriculture use, but also importantly, highlights how time is running out for this very unique habitat and this is beautiful. It's textural, the different ways she's shown it. So thank you very much Alice. We were really pleased to be able to award you that. So well done.

We do have 2 little video recordings of the 2 winners, Clare and Alice. Also, just to say, we are hoping to put an online exhibition up of all the entrants but also we are trying to arrange something for next year for next summer, an actual physical exhibition so people can actually come and visit and I think some of these artworks will be able to have that face to face view as well. But thank you to everyone who entered. Well done to all those who won. It has been an absolute pleasure to go through them.

Emma: So if everybody could unmute themselves we could do a live clap.

[clapping]

Olivia: I have to say that we were desperate to choose the soundscape but we couldn't put it on to a calendar but we will be using that and I can see how popular that one has already been. But all these bits of artwork, I'm sure we can find some way to bring them in. So thank you. Amy, do you want to share the 2 little recordings that we made that were done by the Alice and Clare?

[video]

Clare: I was inspired to take part in the competition because I know some beautiful meadows in Great Musgrave in Cumbria which are floodplain meadows and the owner John has worked so hard to enhance them. The one original beautiful flowery meadow is absolutely gorgeous and what he's done is taken seed from there and used it to seed surrounding parcels so that the area of flowery floodplain meadow has increased hugely and it's really down to his dedication and interest. The meadows are also used really well by waders. They are full of curlews and oystercatchers and lapwings and it's just a beautiful place to be, it must be one of the best floodplain meadows in the county. Standing in the meadow in early summer while the sward is growing, smelling the cucumbery smell of the great burnet and listening to the waders is just magical. I entered the competition really because I just wanted to be part of what the floodplain meadows project does in promoting this special habitat, how beautiful they are, but also how topical they are today. Little is known about this habitat in the wider population and they're not only beautiful in their own right but vital in many ways going forward in the climate emergency for their role with floodwater storage and sustainable farming. I just thought a competition like this is an imaginative way of capturing people's creative response to a beautiful habitat and sharing it.

Alice: Hello my name is Alice Walker and I'm an artist and art teacher based in Oxfordshire, England. I work in oils, watercolours, collage, pencil, print and digital media. I've always had a deep love of being in nature and responding to it creatively. Last July I was fortunate enough to take my art students out sketching in Long Mead meadow on the banks of the Thames just west of Oxford. It was there that I discovered the amazing story of Britain's floodplain meadows and their importance today as a valuable source of hay, a carbon store and a vital habitat for a multitude of species. I was shocked to find out that barely 3% of these meadows remain in Britain but inspired by restoration projects like Long Mead that are boldly working to improve this for future generations. The meadow was ablaze with colour and activity when we visited it, a rich tapestry of grasses and wildflowers, home to an abundance of birds, bees, butterflies and invertebrates. But despite this variety of wildlife it was an oasis of calm and inspiration. When I heard about the Floodplain Meadows Partnership Art competition, I was excited about the potential of art to respond to the challenge of raising awareness of these amazing habitats. Artist Edgar Degas famously said, 'Art is not what you see, but what you make others see'. On one level my task was easy as these meadows are naturally stunning and art that draws our attention to the beauty and wonder of the natural world can bring us joy, remind us of its value and need for protection. But it was also important that the art should amplify the message that these vital floodplain meadows are still under threat from agricultural practices, housing and road development and even flood defence measures. So my artwork for the competition was inspired by a desire to help others discover, love, and act to protect these precious places. I'm really thrilled that my artwork has been selected to win this competition, I'm particularly excited to think that it's going to be used to raise awareness and promote the message of this brilliant organisation. Thanks very much.

Emma: Well I'm not sure what to say now really, I find it very moving actually there the way that the artwork makes me feel and the explanations from the artists about why they did what they did and I'm so pleased we did this competition and I'd like to do it all over again next year. Is that all right, Olivia?

Well I'm really sorry to say actually that that's the end of our programme for this year. I really hope you found something in the sessions of value. There is always more to say than we have time for so I make no apologies for trying to squeeze a lot in but I'm very grateful that you gave up your time to join us. We are planning a face to face conference next year so please do come back and enjoy more debate and time for discussion when we can actually see each other. Before I finish I would like to thank very much our speakers, our Chairs and the team monitoring the chat, thank you and I would particularly like to thank Babette, Amy and Hazel from the OU Events and Comms team for dealing with all of the IT issues, the last minute problems and steering us through the myriad issues around delivering a conference online. Thank you. I think you've probably worked out by now there's bottles of wine on the way.

Finally to wrap up I just want to highlight probably 3 key points that have arisen over the last 3 days to leave you with. Firstly carbon. The role of floodplain meadow and

related diverse grassland as a potential store for atmospheric carbon needs to be more widely appreciated. Secondly floodplain. The need for floodplains to be viewed as a distinct landscape type in all relevant mapping exercises, target setting and funding schemes so restoration targets specifically for floodplain meadows would flow from this. Thirdly meadows need management and they need to remain within commercial enterprises. The premium value of their produce should be advertised and support is needed to reflect their public benefits. Finally art and creativity. Exploring how important these sites are through artistic interpretation has a massive potential both to engage with people with the habitat and to promote messages about the habitat. So that's probably where I want to wrap up actually.

Finally, we're going to leave you with a slide created during this conference by one of our very creative PhD students, Vicky Bowskill who has been busy doodling a cartoon of the conference. It is focused on the soil carbon discussion so I'm going to leave you with her thoughts on this slide. Hopefully played out to another hearing of the soundscape Dawn Chorus at Wheldrake Ings by Simon Elliot. I hope that inspires you to go and help do what you can for floodplain meadows. Thank you very much.