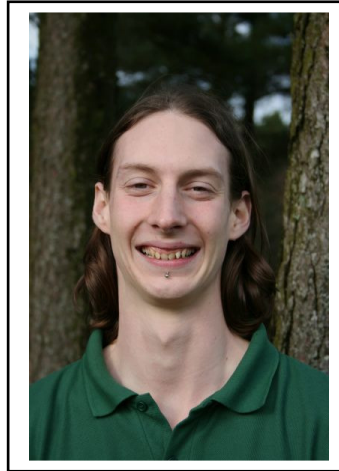
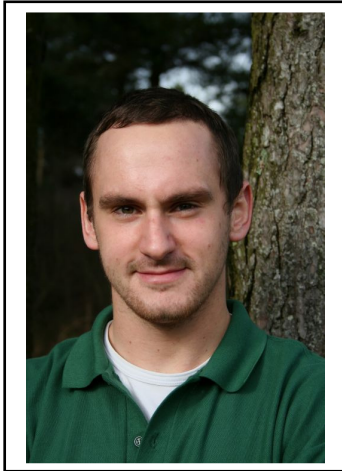


NEROCHE APPRENTICESHIPS PROJECT SUMMARY



Chris Hill, Dan Starkiss and Stuart Bicknell – the Neroche Apprentices

Project Aim	To enable a small group of local young people to develop their skills through involvement with the Neroche Scheme, in order to qualify them for a career in local countryside management.
Project Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To recruit a team of three Apprentices for an 18 month training package. 2. To provide the Apprentices with practical training in forestry, and a range of other countryside management activities. 3. To equip all three Apprentices with NVQ qualifications in Forestry and Environmental Conservation.
Project Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 apprentices employed and trained for 18 months • 3 apprentices given practical experience of countryside management with two partner organisations, and given tasters of 5 more • 3 apprentices with successful NVQ Level 2 in Forestry, and selected Units at Level 3 in Environmental Conservation

Working together to conserve and celebrate the heritage of the northern scarp of the Blackdown Hills AONB



The Forestry Commission, Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership, Natural England, Somerset County Council, Devon County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Mid Devon District Council, South Somerset District Council, The National Trust, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Somerset Art Week Ltd

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Context

A key issue for a rural area like the Blackdown Hills AONB is the retention of young people able and prepared to pursue careers in heritage management. Many factors contribute to the draining away of many young people from the area: lack of affordable housing, reduction in the agricultural and forestry workforce, the downturn in farm incomes, the unattractiveness of financial returns from working in countryside jobs, and the lack of training and entrance opportunities into countryside management. While most of these factors are beyond the scope of a Landscape Partnership Scheme to address, the latter question of training is one that can be tackled.

The Neroche Apprenticeship Project offered a bespoke training framework to enable a small number of local young people to become a part of the Neroche Landscape Partnership Scheme. The Project served to develop skills in tandem with the restoration of the heritage of the Blackdown Hills AONB, allowing trainees to inherit a landscape at the end of the Scheme which requires people with exactly their skills to carry forward its stewardship.

This Programme offered an 18 month full time course of practical learning for a team of three Apprentices, employed on short-term contracts by the Forestry Commission. The core programme was based in the Neroche forest, and overseen by FC staff. Under the guidance of an assigned Forest Works Supervisor, Apprentices contributed to environmental restoration projects within the FC managed estate, learning practical forestry skills supplemented by formal training courses.

Alongside this core activity the Apprentices also spent a period of the Programme based with other partners in the Neroche Scheme, developing their skills and understanding in aspects of countryside management pursued by those partners. These included nature conservation management, livestock management, outdoor education, tree surgery, public interpretation and access management.

The bespoke training programme was run for the Neroche Partnership by Ambios Ltd, a local not-for-profit environmental training company based near Crediton in Devon. Ambios has a strong track record in placing trainees with environmental organisations and developing bespoke training schedules to NVQ level to enable participants to gain long term employment in this sector.

Ambios worked with the FC to deliver practical vocational qualifications to industry requirements within the workplace alongside context-specific numeracy and literacy competencies. Individual learning plans derived from training needs analyses guided the Apprentices through relevant units from both the Forestry and Environmental Conservation Level 2 NVQ award, followed by units of Level 3 Environmental Conservation, all geared to equip participants with practical skills required in countryside management. The Project also provided Skills for Life support and tutoring to develop literacy and numeracy, and coaching in employability skills.

The Programme allowed participants to learn how countryside agencies, local organisations and private farming businesses operate in looking after the countryside, as well as delivering specific practical skills through formal training. This provided a unique insight into the countryside sector for individuals who might plan subsequently to work for these bodies. Through the Programme the Apprentices will become part of an empowered local Blackdown Hills workforce who can make the countryside work for them in a sustainable manner into the future.

Project Budget

Apprentices - recruitment	1,218
Apprentices - salaries	51,273
Apprentices - NI	3,367
Apprentices – superannuation	8,739
Apprentices - on-costs	12,818
Vehicle and travel costs for apprentices team	9,750
Training package administration (Ambios)	10,678
NVQ assessment	17,136
Skills for Life/Key Skills coaching	5,600
Other vocational courses	6,572
Partner rotation	1,200
Placement coordinator	1,800
Employment skills tutor	1,800
Selection/team building	5,000
Events and contingency	2,341
TOTAL	£139,292

Project Funding

In common with other projects within the Neroche LPS, this Project receives 68% funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the balance from partner match funding. Leader + funding through the Blackdown Hills LPS provided the major element of this match funding, alongside contributions from the county and district councils, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.