



Rural Skills Project

Funded by: The Princes Countryside Trust

Grant details

This two year project enabled Running Deer C.I.C to promote and deliver our Rural Skills project to local people and people living in rural isolation. This project made a real difference to people's lives, enabled some to go on to start their own business, and for others it empowered them in ways that none of us foresaw. We educated people in traditional rural skills and through this we are helping to preserve the countryside for future generations.

This project leaves behind a legacy of knowledge, preserved hedges, restored stone walls, managed woodlands and new creations from green woodworking.

Desired outcome 1

It will help to retain traditional skills thereby benefiting deprived rural areas; by providing rural skills training we are helping to retain the tradition of the skills including woodland management, hedge laying, stone walling, coppicing, green woodworking and hurdle making.

Achieved goals

We successfully provided training in rural skills to a diverse range of people; and despite the weather testing our resilience in 2012/13 and latterly December and January 2013/2014 our activities have helped to retain traditional and rural skills in Devon. We delivered 14 courses over the two year period; recruited 2 Apprentices; recruited 10 volunteers and provided signposting and business support to those interested in starting their own enterprise. – with 4 students going on to set up their own business in green woodworking and woodland management.

We have continued to develop land partners and worked with the National Trust to lay some of their hedges in late autumn and local farms on waterways management, repairing and reinstating stone walls and hedge laying.

Desired Outcome 2

It will help young people who would not otherwise be financially secure to remain within their community; for example the opportunity to train as an Apprentice will give 2 young people the opportunity to earn as they learn which could ultimately lead to a new start-up business for

example in hedge laying or woodland improvements as a result of the training; or the possibility that Running Deer may be able to offer continued employment (subject to funding). Those participating in the short 6 week intensive courses will learn enough to enable them to put their skills to good use and to consider setting up their own business (with the right support) or to have the confidence to go and work for someone already in the sector.

Achieved goals

We successfully recruited our two Apprentices, studying Environmental Conservation with Bicton College. We have had some issues with the college because their Assessor left and was not replaced for over 9 months but that has been resolved now.

Apprentice Nat is very keen to go on to further study and is now researching his options. Apprentice Gary now works for the National Trust – Grant in particular is a real success story because not only does he live in rural isolation, he also has special educational needs so for him to be able to go on to work with a large organisation such as the National Trust is fantastic.

4 students have set up their own business; a further 2 have gone on to do further training (teaching courses) in order to set up similar projects to this and several students have gone on to find work in a rural industry such as Adam who started a new Agriculture Apprenticeship the day after he finished our course.

Surprisingly 2 students have gone on to work with people with additional needs because whilst our courses are practically based, we provide a very holistic and empathic environment and this too has helped our students to realise their own potential.

Desired Outcome 3

It will educate about the importance of rural sustainability and the importance of the countryside on our leisure and recreation needs: we will demonstrate how coppicing, for example, could be offered as short weekend courses and getaway breaks for people wanting to do something different or develop a hobby and is an excellent example of using the countryside for leisure and recreational needs.

Achieved goals

We attended regional shows and provided demonstrations which have been well received and good enough to be invited back again the following year. We took part in National Countryside Week which was great fun.

We participated in a BBC Spotlight news item at the very beginning of the project, a Devon radio interview and a Radio 4 interview. Mel Stride MP visited us which was well promoted and the PCF organised a Devon Life magazine article which has promoted rural skills and the importance they still have in the countryside.

We also appeared in the North Devon Journal and Western Morning News. This project was well publicised which certainly helped not only the particular project but also our own Aims and Objectives to provide opportunities for local people and people at risk of exclusion.

Click on the picture below to watch the Spotlight News item!



Outcome

We worked with 53 people in total; 3 down on our target. The weather proved to be our worst enemy with exceptional rain fall and storms all through this 2 year programme. The summer of 2013 made up for it and we were able to introduce charcoal burning on a large scale into the course too, thanks to the National Trust lending their charcoal burner to us.

The introduction of working with Heavy Horses into the programme added a different dimension to it and was well received by students who learned how to care for, and worked with Trelawny within a woodland setting.





