



Restharrow Scrape Development Project



Feedback on Volunteer Days 18th October and 22nd November 2019

Purpose: The aims of these days were, firstly, to familiarise participants with the whole of the Restharrow Scrape Project (i.e. not just the purchase and improvement of the site), secondly, to update them on progress so far, thirdly, to make them more familiar with the need for evaluation and measurement and, fourthly, to obtain their feedback on the project, the day itself and their ideas on issues discussed in workshops. The participants were existing and potential volunteers

Outline of the 'Day': On both occasions Ken Chapman welcomed the participants and introduced the facilitators. Michelle Boakes (an external consultant) and Sally Hunter facilitated the first 'day'. For the second one, we decided that we would be able to conduct it without outside help and that Roger Jones would take over from Michelle. Changes were made to the format of the second 'day', shortening it from 5 hours to 3 and replacing the purpose of one of the two workshops.

On both occasions, Sally opened by describing the project in terms of the ten 'approved purposes' set by the Heritage Fund when confirming our grant and talked about our progress to date on each of these. She also explained the intended 'outcomes' identified in our National Lottery application. This was followed by Michelle on the first occasion and Roger on the second one describing the purpose of measurement and evaluation and making the link to the intended outcomes.

Effectiveness: Participants were asked to place themselves on a scale of 0 to 10 regarding their knowledge of the project, firstly at the beginning of the 'day' and then

at the end. On the first occasion 19 of the 37 participants completed this exercise giving themselves an average score of 6.2 to start with and 8.0 afterwards, an increase of 1.8. On the second 15 out of 22 participants scored themselves 5.4 and 8.1, respectively, an average increase of 2.7. It should be noted that a greater number of people who have been heavily involved with the project took part in the first one, so the apparent increase in the second was probably not as great as the numbers suggest. Nevertheless, it was quite clear that both workshops had proved effective in extending participants' knowledge and understanding.

In another exercise towards the end of the 'day' participants were asked to write their thoughts about the project and/or the meeting itself on a luggage tag and attach it to a ribbon/branch provided. 16 of these were completed on each occasion and the responses were almost invariably positive and included several valuable suggestions. For example, on the first: "I've been impressed by the range and scale of the contributions today. People seem very enthusiastic" and "You need to monitor what other bird observatories are doing/innovating. The people who visit the other observatories need to know about Sandwich BBO!" On the second: "Know much more about the purpose of the project. Really thought-provoking day – I might even volunteer at last" and "DBS HIDE VOLUNTEERS".

The Workshops: Participants were grouped around tables and each group worked together on their responses to the tasks that they were given. On the first occasion participants were asked in the first workshop to think about how we would measure our success or otherwise – what we could do to find out. Whilst this was useful in getting them to think about evaluation, it produced nothing beyond what we had included in our evaluation plan with our funding application. The second workshop was about suggested quantitative and qualitative questions for comment cards/self completion questionnaires etc. This produced a good number of ideas that we might be able to use in the future.

On the second occasion we replaced the first workshop with the request that they consider ways to encourage more people to visit and, perhaps, become members and volunteers. We asked them to think about both publicity and specific activities that might attract them. This produced lots of suggestions, most of which were already being used or had been considered previously (but are worth reviewing) plus a few new ideas such as "Links to U3As" and "Specific school holiday events". They were also asked to suggest fundraising ideas if they found the time. The second workshop remained as before and the responses were similar.

Volunteering: A list of volunteering opportunities at SBBOT had been produced shortly before the second 'day' and this was talked through with participants. It resulted in number of offers being made and the ones made by Sharon Irvine and Sue Philpott, perhaps the two most significant, were not even on the list!

Conclusion: Both 'days' were very successful, as demonstrated by the scale exercise, the luggage tag one, the output from the workshops and the volunteering offers made on the second occasion. The first 'day' proved to be a useful learning experience, enabling us to run the second one without outside support and make it more effective by adapting the format. It is safe to conclude that we achieved our aims as set out above.

RJ/SH