



## **Restharrow Scrape Development Project**

### **Warden's Report**

I have been involved with the Restharrow Scrape Project from its initial conception, the application and awarding of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the re-development of the Restharrow Scrape area, the appointment of the Assistant Warden, the overseeing of the education and outreach, and evaluating the project, all through to the current day. This has given me a great overview on how these projects are managed and first-hand experience of what it takes to make a project successful. Particularly, in creating projects with end-goals in place that can be measured and evaluated.

I have contributed in both broad and fine scale planning of the excavation and profiling of the scrape area, design of the bird hides, fencing, and parking, etc. The siting and sourcing of materials, pricing of labour, understanding constraints, and making the site friendly for those with mobility issues, are all areas of management where I had not a lot of previous experience. I have achieved a greater understanding of the planning and implementation process of these type of projects which will be useful for the future when (hopefully) implementing similar projects.

Monitoring post-development has been pleasing as I was able witness first-hand the wildlife utilising the wetland I helped create. I have watched young Lapwings walking around in front of the hides and other wildlife colonise and breed on site. Watching the wildlife itself also helps me evaluate what areas of the site work best, and which do not, giving me ideas how to improve this and other sites in the future.

Some of our original education and outreach ideas were held back by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as having interactive flaps to lift up, hide volunteers, and leaving books for identification, but this meant we had to be creative with the interpretation boards and displays inside the hides. These were all well received. I've learnt how to work around these problems and how to vary the range of media provided for all purposes.

The digitisation of past data has been a great help. It allows me to produce quick and interesting facts and figures for volunteers and visitors about the Restharrow Scrape and wider Sandwich Bay area. This has been particularly good for engagement and social media. In more detail, I can now open the dataset up to students and work closer with local educational organisations such as Universities. I have data at my fingertips that can be used to contribute to local planning issues and national bodies such as the BTO already using our data in assessing national trends in declining songbirds, such as Willow Warbler.

As the amount of outreach work has increased, I've learnt how to best manage the logistics in a busier organisation. I've learnt what areas work best as an engagement tool and skills in engaging and safeguarding children are now second-nature. My line management skills have certainly improved from the appointment of the Assistant Warden. It has been pleasing to watch the skillset of the Assistant Warden develop over the course of the Project, and in turn produce better quality data for analyses and, especially, more interactive engagement of youth with our organisation. To manage the Assistant Warden I too have learnt the risk assessments, policies, and tools used when engaging younger audiences and understood how important they are. SBBOT has continued to employ an Assistant Warden after the RHS Project and so my skills in line managing will continue to improve. The Restharrow Scrape Project has enhanced the opportunities for young people to gain experience in this sector and to volunteer in an exciting conservation organisation. I've built on prior knowledge to increase support for volunteers and how to utilise them best. I look forward to continuing along this path.

**By Steffan Walton, Warden, SBBOT, 8th April 2022.**