

INDICATOR & INNOVATION FARM UPDATE

# APS ISLE OF WIGHT

JULY 2022

## ENHANCING AND CONNECTING KEY HABITATS ON FARM AND IN THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

### Project Summary

APS Isle of Wight have 26 ha of glass houses, growing organic and conventional tomatoes for the UK market. The glass houses are essentially closed systems, so the M&S Farming with Nature Project is focusing on how the APS site fits within the wider Isle of Wight landscape. Two locally important Priority species can be found at the APS site, red squirrel and water vole. They each occupy completely different habitats, woodland and riparian habitats respectively and the project is exploring ways in which APS can support these species by working with neighbouring landowners. In addition on site management of grassland, scrub and brownfield habitats provides important habitats for reptiles, invertebrates and song birds.

### Key Objectives:

1. Enhance key habitats on site including ancient woodland, riparian habitats and grassland
2. Manage these habitats with a focus on red squirrel, dormouse, water vole & pollinators
3. Work with neighbouring landowners to connect key habitats in the landscape around APS

### Measures of success:

1. Improved woodland habitat for red squirrel and dormouse with clear species response
2. Increased connectivity of habitats around APS
3. Trial cutting edge drone technology to capture geo-referenced three dimensional images of habitat along one of the tributaries of the East Yar and support a bid to defra for Landscape Recovery Funding by the East Yar Farmer Cluster

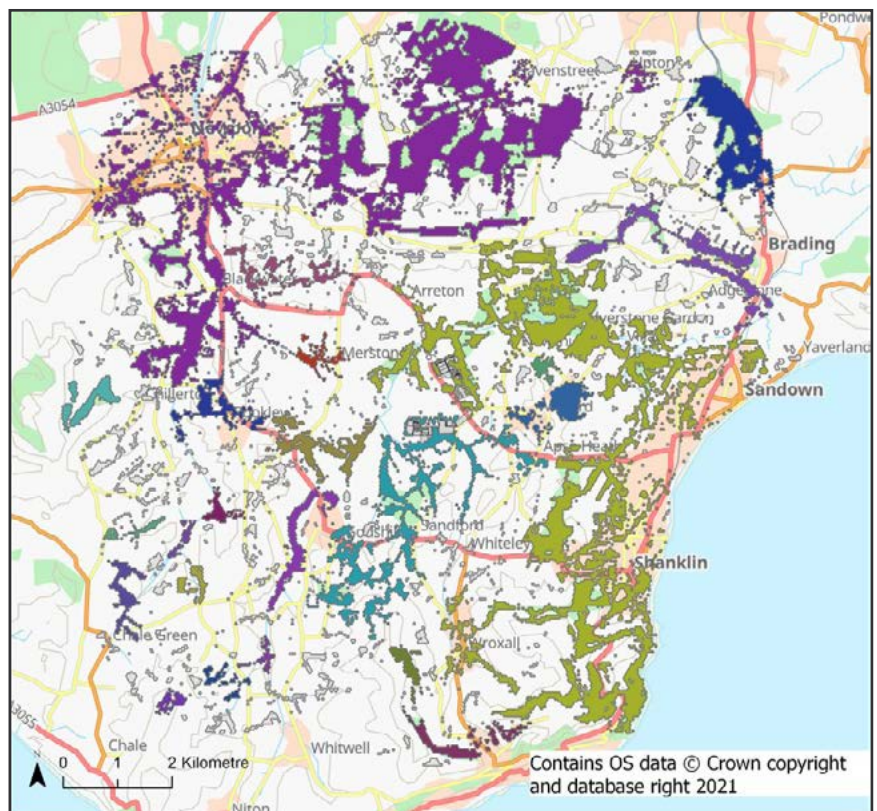
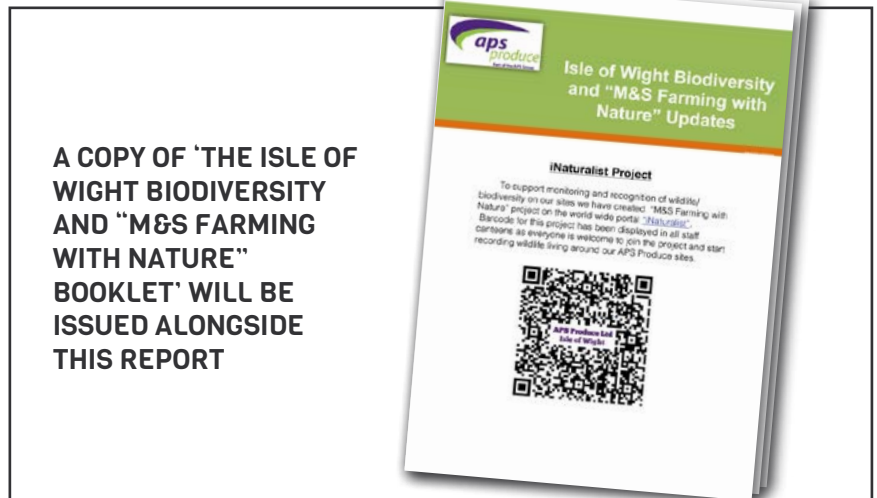
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### Expected outcomes/benefits to business:

1. Strong links with a number of local nature recovery projects including 'Wight Squirrel Project' and Natural Enterprise working on water vole
2. Effective working relationships with local farmers and landowners to unlock future land management funding and potentially facilitate other collaborative business opportunities.
3. Strong links with local community groups to facilitate on site nature conservation work, promote learning and support local communities.

## Project Activities

- Habitat management and monitoring work at the APS site in Arreton is progressing extremely well. Following advice from Ian Boyd and other local nature specialist's riparian, grassland and scrub management has been implemented since the start of the project. Greg Wachenek, APS Composting and Waste Manager has reported on the work (attached) which highlights how the organisation are involving staff through the use of i-naturalist and local conservation organisations who are assisting with vegetation clearance to enhance riparian habitat quality.
- Brian Moralee and Naomi Jones from Fera attended a meeting of the East Yar cluster group to present the connectivity work that Fera have done on red squirrel habitat. Using a technique called least cost path analysis they identified where woodland habitat was sufficiently continuous to allow red squirrel to move about the landscape. The East Yar Cluster Group are particularly focused on soil and water management so water vole is a more appropriate target species but this type of analysis could easily be done on riparian habitat. Water vole are common on the APS site and the business are working with a local community organisation called Natural Enterprise to manage riparian habitat on site to encourage this species.
- The East Yar Cluster Group facilitator, Richard Grogan, has been working on a bid to defra for Landscape Recovery Funding. This would allow the cluster group members to stop cropping riparian and flood plain areas that are regularly flooded so they can be managed to create seasonal wetland areas. If the expression of interest is successful then the least cost path analysis of the River Yar riparian habitat would be very important to help put together a management plan.



**CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS EXTENDED**



**WATER VOLE IN HOLE**

- To achieve this type of connectivity analysis detailed data on habitat extent and condition will be invaluable. This can be done using a drone that collects geo-referenced, three dimensional images so Fera are planning to fly the tributary of the East Yar river that runs through the APS site to explore how the images could be used effectively. There is huge potential for using this technology to survey habitat at a landscape scale and could be used by other cluster groups for monitoring or to help secure additional funding for habitat management work. This is an example of a three dimensional image taken using a drone.



**EXAMPLE OF 3 DIMENSIONAL DRONE FOOTAGE TAKEN ON A DIFFERENT SITE**

- One of the aims for last year was to explore the potential for Biodiversity Net Gain funding to support habitat management work on site. After discussions with Richard Grogan who is the ecologist for the local council and Ian Boyd who is a local independent ecologist, it has become clear that as there is limited development on the Isle of Wight. As a result there is not likely to be any net gain offsets required on the island. There is significant funding from N offsets which pays for management to reduce N flow into water courses but this is not something that APS can tap into as they do not generate N leaching or run off.

## Timeline:

| WORK PACKAGES              | 2021 |    |    |    | 2022 |    |    |    | 2023 |    |    |    | 2024 |    |    |    |
|----------------------------|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|
|                            | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1   | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| CONSERVATION PLAN          | ■    | ■  | ■  |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| CONNECTIVITY ANALYSIS      |      |    | ■  | ■  |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| BIODIVERSITY ASSESSEMENT   |      |    | B  |    |      |    | ■  |    |      |    | ■  |    |      |    | ■  |    |
| SECURE NET GAIN FUNDING    |      |    |    |    | ■    |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |
| WORKING WITH CLUSTER GROUP |      |    |    | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  |
| WORKING WITH COMMUNITY     |      |    |    | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  |
| MONITORING                 |      |    |    |    | B    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  |
| MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTED     |      |    |    | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  | ■    | ■  | ■  | ■  |
| REVIEW & REPORT            |      |    | *  | ** |      | *  |    | ** |      | *  |    | ** |      | *  |    | ** |

**B** = BASELINE                      \* = INTERIM                      \*\* = FULL

## Next Steps:

1. Complete drone survey of the Wroxal Tributary - Oct 2022
2. Fera present drone survey work to APS and East Yar Cluster Group- Feb 23
3. Support Landscape Recover Bid if expression of interest is accepted
4. Explore further community involvement opportunities