

Wildfires to Wildflowers

David Stevenson, Mole Energy



Last year I wrote about Mole Energy's work to support the National Trust. We are donating funds from every solar panel, battery and vehicle charger we install towards its conservation projects at Bolberry Down near Salcombe.

Installing high-quality home and business solar means Mole Energy already plays a role in driving sustainability, but there's always more to be done for our environment. That's why we forged our partnership with the National Trust in 2020, to fund the charity's efforts to boost wildlife at their sites on the South Devon Coast.

The National Trust cares for more than 780 miles of coastline in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our first donation was used to fund the trust's work at Southdown Farm, which is a short drive from our Totnes Office.



Knapweed

Projects included planting native trees and shrubs to increase habitat diversity and providing food and shelter for nesting birds and other wildlife.

Wildfires

In August this year, we returned to present Emma Reece, National Trust Ranger, with a second cheque for £3,410. This time our funds will be used to support coastal path protection and wildlife regeneration. And not a moment too soon. In July, a wildfire broke out at Bolberry Down, causing significant damage to wild gorse.

Ms Reece said: "The fire had been going since late May and our Ranger team worked with the fire service to help prevent it from spreading.

"Having already cut fire breaks through the area, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service advised us to douse the site from above, focusing on the inaccessible areas. Helicopters provided by AH Helicopters, worked for three hours to help get the fire under control, along with extensive work by the Fire Service on the ground."

Sowing sustainability

Mole Energy funds will be used to help National Trust coastal farmland, around Bolberry Down, which teems with a rich mix of wildlife. This includes large numbers of nesting skylarks, whose calls fill the air in summer. Local wildflowers include wild carrot, birds foot trefoil and bell heather, which are home to the Grayling butterfly and rare Mediterranean oil beetle, once thought extinct. This wildlife and the accompanying geology has led the slopes to be designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Dawn Brumham (Mole Energy) and Emma Reece (National Trust)

Wildflowers

This summer, the trust started work to increase the diversity of the wildflowers on Bolberry's grasslands, by clearing hay and sowing wildflowers. These pockets of plants will eventually cover the rest of the areas and be enjoyed by many. As one of the few flat areas of local coastland, Bolberry Down attracts 30,000 visitors annually, for whom the National Trust has surfaced more than 1km of footpaths for easier access. The Southwest Coast Path also runs through the site.

"Having well maintained, signed and managed footpaths and car parks is vital to help visitors explore and enjoy the coast with confidence. The National Trust works hard to ensure that waymarkers, steps and gates are well cared for and to keep vegetation under control. Mole Energy's support will help protect Bolberry Down for the people, plants and animals that visit and call it home, for many years to come."

Emma Reece - Area Ranger, National Trust

If you'd like to help keep the coast alive visit: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/appeal/coast-campaign-appeal



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