

Report on 2023 CMA Conference – Delivering Nature Recovery

Monday 9 to Wednesday 11 October 2023

YHA Ilam Hall, Ashbourne, Derbyshire

‘Delivering Nature Recovery’ was the topic of the CMA’s first in person conference since COVID curtailed our normal activities.

Held at Ilam Hall in stunning Dovedale, which lies within the Peak National Park, around 50 delegates came together over the three days to learn about the policy and strategies behind the Nature Recovery concept, what nature recovery looked like in action and how best you can resource it.

Led by Ted Talbot who, because of his long service, was given a fellowship of the CMA, the conference explored the thinking behind existing and new nature recovery projects, including examples of rewilding a golf course, creating nature connectivity based around major road routes, urban green space projects and nature recovery at a landscape scale where success is measured in square miles!

The main speakers included experts in the field of nature communication and green finance as well as senior CMA members who talked about real world examples of Nature Recovery and climate change related projects.

One of the highlights was a presentation by CMA Patron Chris Baines who both entertained and inspired delegates with his provocative thoughts on how in the future, large corporations such as power companies, might be instrumental in helping in the creation of ecological corridors. Suggesting that the land under new powerlines planned for the UK could be designed as linear grassland and scrub habitats.



Rangers don't do well indoors for too long so; field trips are essential. Four quality trips had been organised by Ted and by Jess Coatesworth which looked at nature-based solutions to environmental issues, natural regeneration, natural tree colonisation, wildfire mitigation, the creation of future landscapes as well as rewilding, species recovery and public access management.

One of the best quotes of the week arose out of a discussion around managing wild camping and the associated fire risks. It was explained to us that Rangers need learn how to 'Bother people with Kindness' in terms of how they should be strict but also show some understanding.

One of the major benefits of CMA events are the networking opportunities they always provide. This networking is further enhanced because the CMA embraces such a wide range of countryside management professionals.

At this conference we had participants from National Parks and other protected landscapes, Nature Reserves, the Urban Green Space Projects, Water companies, the Voluntary sector as well as Wildlife Trusts and Local and National Authorities. This mix ensures healthy and informed debate and adds to the shared experience of all.

As always, the CMA conference welcomed attendees from the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA), part of a longstanding arrangement that ensures our debates have a wider UK focus.

We also welcomed two representatives from the Georgian Ranger Association (GRA), who gave a talk on the work of Rangers and the natural environments of Georgia and also signed a twinning arrangement with CMA. It is very much hoped this will lead to more online and in person collaboration between the GRA and CMA.

It was a great conference very much appreciated by all who attended, so much so that we have already started planning for next year conference!

Steve Peach, CMA Board Member