

## Setting a benchmark for skills Stanford Hall, Leicestershire

Caring for a registered historic parkland, with a grade I listed house and 13 other listed buildings, takes some skill. Now thanks to Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) funding from Natural England, the park at Stanford Hall in Leicestershire is able to sustain its heritage and ecological interests for many years to come.

A new 10-year HLS agreement was struck in 2009, which started with refreshing an existing conservation document. The review highlighted work needed to a number of parkland features. With advice from Natural England, Harborough District Council and English Heritage, and the work of specialist contractors, the owner repaired designated parkland structures, restored planted features and a serpentine lake.

The HLS work is of high quality, using traditional techniques and specialised craftspeople. It has re-energised the estate, encouraging the owner to help sustain Stanford Hall for the future, and helping them to target limited resources. It also earned numerous accolades, including a commendation from the Georgian Society and a place on the shortlist for an English Heritage Angel Award.



**The 'Charles I Bridge' at Stanford Hall.** Repairs were undertaken in accordance with the Heritage Management Plan for the parkland, and won a Historic Bridge and Infrastructure Award from the Institute of Civil Engineers in 2012.

Work of this scale presents a rare opportunity to record and learn more about the site and how to look after it. At Stanford Hall, this opportunity was seized, thanks to the Stewardship funding.

Work completed so far has not only enhanced the site's significance; it has put the owner and estate staff in a stronger position to sustain that significance into the future. They have gained valuable experience of providing the park's heritage assets care and repair to the standard they deserve. The work completed so far sets a standard of expertise to which future repairs and maintenance will need to conform.

As Stanford and numerous other Natural England -funded Parkland Management Plans in the East Midlands testify, HLS is succeeding not only in setting high standards for the management of heritage assets, but also in

raising owners' aspirations for what good management can achieve,  
equipping them with the foresight, confidence and expertise which will sustain  
the initial investment for the long term.

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