

Appeal After Vandals Attack Nature Reserve

Somerset Wildlife Trust is appealing for help following vandalism attacks and theft at their flagship nature reserve at Westhay Moor.

Westhay Moor is the Trust's only National Nature Reserve and the Trust is part way through a major £256,000 investment, with the help of Viridor Credits, to improve public access to the site and help further protect wildlife.

Three separate incidents of vandalism and theft have taken place at the site, over the last two weeks. On Wednesday 16th September contactors had diesel fuel, tools and other items stolen from an excavator, which was also vandalised. On Saturday 19th some of the new wildlife sculptures were broken and stolen, including a large otter sculpture, which was removed from the new entrance sign using a chainsaw. On Thursday 24th, vandals broke into the newly refurbished Viridor Hide. New educational displays were stolen and locks on the hide were broken.

David Leach, Brue Valley Living Landscape Project Manager, said: "The Trust has been doing a lot of work at Westhay recently to improve the reserve for local people. Westhay National Nature Reserve is a well used and much loved site."

"We are treating this matter very seriously. The people responsible for this vandalism and theft are stealing from their own community. The money we have invested at the site comes from taxpayers' purses and generous donations from our members."

"We urge anyone with any information to please contact the police."

The vandals brought a pump onto the site to siphon the diesel from the excavator, as well as a chainsaw to remove the sculpture. The site has suffered from vandalism in the past, with a four wheel drive vehicle and chains used to remove bollards from the ground.

National Nature Reserves in the Brue Valley are visited by over 70,000 people each year.