

BlackwaterValley Countryside Partnership Report March 2015

The partnership is sponsored by local organisations and councils to maintain paths, clear the river and encourage the area to be used for recreation.

Importantly, the Partnership is also engaged in securing the 23-mile path, developing and extending Rights of Way, negotiating with landowners to maintain the path and working with the Wellesley Development Management to improve recreation facilities around the Aldershot Urban Extension.

At the AGM (07/11/14), two areas of SANG were visited by the representatives.

1. One piece of ex-army property near the Duke of Wellington statue has been taken over by BVCP as an 'Aldershot Urban Extension SANG' as part of the Wellesley Development. This area has not yet been cleaned up. It has been used as an army exercise area and as such was covered in various debris, barbed wire, foxholes, and was of course unsafe. There were no paths or signs and any trees were in a dubious state.

2. The other area visited was 'Southwood Woodland' positioned just past the residential area. This is a beautiful, well laid out area, with footpaths labelled and specific areas left for recreation. Southwood village is lucky to have this facility!

Attached to this report are three reports from the AGM (7 Nov 2014):

1. A report on the BVCP
2. A report on the Blackwater Valley Path Current Issues
3. A report on the BVCP accounts.

Other (verbal) reports at the AGM included:

Details of the BVC Trust. The charity set up for volunteers etc. (David Murr)
Details of the Wellesley Development and BVCP relationship. (Nicola French)
A report on attempting to improve the use of public transport in the BV. (Marc Woodall)

The Path between North Camp Station and Lakeside Road Ash

This path has recently been closed, barring access to the river path to cyclists and pedestrians. Public use of the path has always been by permission of the owner of the land, secured by a legal agreement with Rushmoor Borough Council specifying pedestrian use. The agreement gave the landowner the option of providing an alternative route. Previous owners had no objection to cyclists. The current owner has asked the council to stop publicising cycle access and has now used the option of diverting the route away from the river onto Hollybush Lane.

For many years Hollybush Lane has been neglected and had become disused, pot-holed with sharp objects in the surface. This is hardly a replacement for the riverside path. A better alternative is to use the Basingstoke Canal Towpath between the aqueduct over the A331 and Ash Vale station. This has the advantage that there are several 'watering holes' along the towpath!

This story has been reported to the local press and Rushmoor's planning office. The Trust is supporting the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership and others involved to find a solution. SCC and HCC support the Blackwater Valley and hopefully are actively working together to get the path reinstated.

Cllr William Cole
Ash Parish Council Representative