

# **Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership - March 2017**

## **1. Work done in Ash**

Sites worked on by BVCP include:

Hollybush Park, Snaky Lane, Lakeside Park and Shawfield Lane as well as the landscaping alongside the A331 owned by Surrey CC that contains the Blackwater Valley Path.

In total about 85 days of BVCP staff time were spent working on projects in Ash including organising 11 volunteer projects that carried out 61 days work.

Projects included:

- Maintenance of the BV path, vegetation clearance and litter removal.
- Tree safety work along the path.
- Securing funding from Hants CC for Shawfield path bridge replacement and project management of contractors to do this.
- Resurfacing 200m of Shawfield Lane
- Grassland management of meadows in Lakeside Park, Shawfield Lane and Hollybush.
- Support for volunteer group at Snaky lane (their work not included in above volunteer figures)

## **2. North/South Route through Blackwater Valley**

Development of a complete footpath North to South from Sandhurst to Tices Meadow is vital for the safety of the Valley community. The A331 is not suitable for cyclists.

The footpath has been developed but some landowners have refused access along this route. A way must be found to overcome these problems and all interested parties (MPs, Councillors - County, Borough, and Parish) should pressurise unwilling owners. The best solution is that the public should purchase the path for use forever. This must be the long-term aim.

This is a highly developed area with no green belt protection. The powers-that-be can at least improve the facilities to compensate for the developments in the Valley.

## **3. AGM 2016**

The AGM day commenced with a coach trip to Tices Meadow. This consisted of a walk upto a small mound overlooking the excavated area. The area has been completely landscaped and shows up as the start of the Blackwater River. The river has been altered so that it meanders along. The second trip was to the Blackwater Valley at Shawfield Lane where a new bridge has been constructed over the River into the North Town, Aldershot.

(A summary of the report follows containing only those items relevant for Ash; a complete copy can be obtained from APC. Office)

## 1 Introduction

This report outlines the work of the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership over the period 1st October 2015 to 30th September 2016.

This work load has only been possible with the support of many individual volunteers and site groups. In particular the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust, who have continued to provide project funding, organise and run regular public events as well as carrying out site work.

## 2 The Team

We finish the year with nine staff in post - the same as we started with:

Manager: Steve Bailey B.Sc., M.Phil., MIEEM.

Senior Ranger Andrew Price B.Sc.

Countryside Ranger: Stuart Croft B.Sc., M.Sc.

Countryside Ranger: Stuart Barilli

Countryside Ranger: Andy Poole B.Sc.

Assistant Ranger: Laura Keighley B.Sc.

Assistant Ranger (temporary post): Jenny Sibley B.Sc.

Assistant Ranger (temporary post): Charlotte Moore B.Sc.

Senior Administrative Assistant (temporary post): Emily Moore

## 3 Access

Some sections of the Blackwater Valley Path fall within sites we now get extra funding to manage, but some sections don't and work on these is reliant on core funding to keep the path open and safe to use. The whole path requires an annual litter pick in spring and a twice annual vegetation cut back as well as regular tree safety work.

The bridge over the river at Shawfield had become dangerous, requiring regular repairs. This is one of the busiest sections of the BV path. A contribution to Hampshire CC enabled replacement of this to be brought forward. BVCP staff then resurfaced the adjacent path to Shawfield Lane.

Efforts to secure the missing sections of path have not been successful. There has been no change at the unsatisfactory diverted section at North Camp. There has been no movement in resolving the outstanding planning issues on site which it was hoped may provide a resolution.

The "Better Connectivity" project being lead by Surrey CC in partnership with Hants CC and BVCP aims to improve pedestrian and cycle access between rail stations, and communities along the Valley.

## 4 Countryside Management

**4.1.1 Farnham** Tices Meadow  
Sites worked on: BVR  
landscaping

Tices Meadow (Farnham Quarry) is now in essence restored. The site is already one of the best for bird watching in Surrey. The Volunteers published an extensive annual report and keep a website [www.ticesmeadow.org](http://www.ticesmeadow.org).

A draft agreement should be signed shortly that will enable BVCP staff to be paid for work on this "quarry" so we can put more time in to ensure the site gets the level of care it deserves.

**4.1.3 Guildford**     Hollybush Park  
Sites worked on:     Shawfield  
                              Meadow  
                              Lakeside Park  
                              Snaky Lane  
                              BVR landscaping

The Snaky Lane Community Wildlife Group holds monthly work parties. BVCP supplies all tools and equipment and attend with staff when larger equipment is required. During the year the BVCP staff helped the group cut & remove meadow hay when the meadow was mowed, sprayed off *Crassula* from the pond and assisted with a path resurfacing project. At Lakeside Park the path network was cut twice including removing fallen trees from the path and river. Bat boxes were checked and repaired. The meadow was cut by contractors, but not collected; it was recut and hay collected and removed. Paths across Shawfield Meadow were mown and later the meadow was cut & collected. The entrance gate at Hollybush Park was replaced,

#### **4.1.5 Rushmoor BC**

Hollybush Hill has no adjacent housing area, so will not sustain a site based group. As with other grassland sites, the grassland was cut and raked to promote the wildflowers. A block of pine trees was thinned and bramble removed

### **7 Publicity & Promotions**

The Trust (the voluntary organisation) now organises and promotes the majority of walks and talks, one or two a month with support from staff when required. The main event is ‘Walk the Path’ which was again a success. The Partnership and Trust host separate web, and Facebook sites.

### **8 Planning**

This year 24 individual planning applications and seven policy documents were reviewed. Whilst no major new developments were given the go ahead in the Valleys current strategy area this year, there are a dozen sites within it identified in local plans or proposed by landowners for housing.

### **9 Additional Partnerships**

Surrey CC, Hampshire CC, Rushmoor BC and Yateley Town Council all fund additional site management work in the Valley on top of their core contributions. Hampshire CC once again provided extra help towards the smooth running of the Partnership assisting with training and administrative support. management work in the Valley on top of their core contributions. The Trust and Partnership work closely together towards common objectives. The Trust organises events and projects under its own name, but often with support of BVCP staff, whilst displays are done jointly. Public walks and talks are now mostly organised by Trust volunteers.

The Land Trust has become a key partner as we manage Wellesley Woods and Green Corridor on their behalf. There are a number of other potential sites that The Land Trust have approached us to take on that may Surrey CC, Hampshire CC, Rushmoor BC and Yateley Town Council all fund additional site come forward next year.

CEMEX continues to fund management at Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve. We will be starting a siClose links are maintained with the Environment Agency as a key non-funding partner on river improvement projects. Research on these projects on the Blackwater is being used to inform the national view of river management.

We attend the Loddon Fisheries and Conservation Consultative and the recently formed Loddon Catchment Partnership, working toward improving the River Loddon and its tributaries. We will be starting a similar agreement with Hanson for Tices Meadow next year.

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## **10. The Value of Partnership**

The total value of work undertaken in the Valley this year due to the activities of the Partnership is £695,500

Funding partners provide the essential core income but this is a decreasing fraction of overall investment. Non core income and value of volunteers' time both now exceed partners' core contributions.

Figures for the financial year 2015/16 are:

- The core funding from Partners remained at £104,000.
- Non core income totalled £371,700 of which £18,200 was for management fees transferred into core funds.
- The time of volunteer and student time, allowing for inflation, is calculated at £201,300.
- The raised income to core funds was £7,300.
- In-kind value varies greatly from year to year, this year at £14,800.

Cllr. William Cole

Ash Parish Council

09 February 2017