

The countryside & urban green space newsletter for people living in Ashford, Canterbury and the surrounding countryside



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'Wild Sites on Your Doorstep' wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

CONSERVING, ENHANCING AND PROMOTING THE COUNTRYSIDE AND URBAN GREEN SPACE OF THE STOUR VALLEY

The KSCP has always worked closely with communities through a variety of different initiatives and activities based on the landscape and wildlife of the Stour Valley. A new project, funded almost entirely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is about to start, that will embody our ethos of strong community involvement.

Wild Sites on Your Doorstep is a community participation project, aimed at helping people to learn about, access and enjoy the rich natural heritage of our Partnership area. Local communities will participate in a programme of activities and events based at publicly accessible wildlife sites. These activities will enable participants to learn about the sites in question, using photography, art and creative writing to engage them and help them to learn actively.



We want local people to discover and learn about wildlife sites close to where they live, and will place special emphasis on audiences currently not engaging with the sites, such as disabled people, young people, and people on low incomes. Urban Wild Sites in Ashford and Canterbury will be good venues for engaging with new audiences through special activities.

Some participants will be trained in leading guided wildlife walks and encouraged to become providers in the programme. Others will be trained to update a new website. Project volunteers will be actively involved, having opportunities to work with activity providers such as professional photographers and wildlife experts, and to curate exhibitions.

A wild weekend of activities across the May bank holiday, marks the first programme of events for the Wild Sites project. Events will take place at **Whitehall Meadows, Hambrook Marshes, Dering Wood, Jumping Downs, Singleton Environmental Centre, Blean Woods NNR, and Lenham Heath**. Photographs, paintings, drawings, illustrations and text generated during activities will become content for a printed interpretive site guide, a web site and two exhibitions. For further info. contact KSCP.



WILD SITES

on your doorstep

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No Man's Orchard Looks to the Future

Beautiful No Man's Orchard near Chartham Hatch is home to some truly majestic apple trees. The traditional orchard is managed under a Stewardship agreement and provides a haven for woodpeckers, grass snakes and stoats along with many wild flowers and 33 species of lichens and mosses.

Some of the old trees have died and to ensure a future for the orchard KSCP volunteers planted 28 new fruit trees in January 2013. The trees are all old Kentish varieties with names such as Lord Lambourne and Falstaff and are available for adoption on either a yearly or life basis.

Following the day's tree planting volunteers carried out a traditional wassailing ceremony, hanging toast in the branches of the oldest tree and pouring cider onto the roots. Wassailing was believed to ensure the health of the orchard and a good crop of apples for the coming year.

To adopt an apple tree in No Man's Orchard please contact Janet Larkinson by e-mailing jd_larkinson@tiscali.co.uk



New lease of life for Waterbrook

Waterbrook Dyke in South Willesborough has had a new lease of life courtesy of the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board and KSCP.

Walkers following the stream through the Cudworth Road Recreation Ground could be forgiven for not realising that the dyke is home to a thriving population of water voles and common frogs.

Now the habitat along the channel has been further enhanced by the creation of several berms, shallow platforms cut into the bank, which should provide ideal conditions for colourful wetland plants to flourish.

Work was carried out by Rhino Plant and overseen by KSCP officer Carol Donaldson who explains, "The presence of water voles on the site meant that we had to undertake extensive surveys and gain permission from Natural England before carrying out the work so as not to harm either the voles or their burrows which are both protected by law." In addition the Stour IDB has removed years of accumulated silt and debris from the channel and created pools which will help fish survive during periods of drought.



Chilston Ponds, maintaining an English Parkland

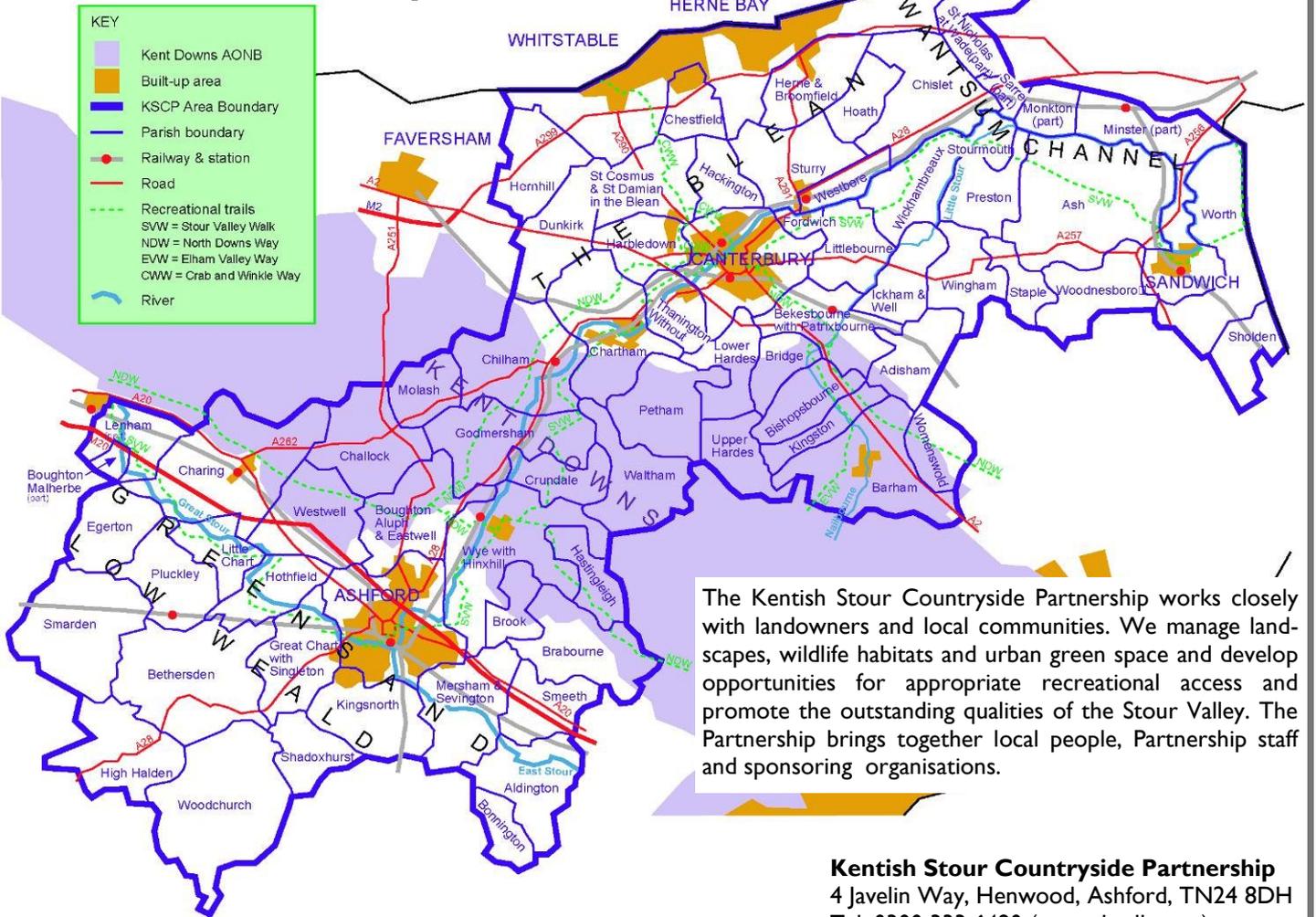
The Heaths Countryside Corridor (HCC), a community group that owns and manages sites close to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, including sites that were formerly part of Chilston Park Estate, have recently planted a range of trees, ensuring a legacy of an English Parkland setting.

Volunteers from KSCP worked in particularly chilly conditions to build secure tree guards around the young trees to protect them from cattle damage. The guards, constructed from locally sourced chestnut paling, echo the use of local craftsmanship from a past era.

Ashford Countryside Officer Debbie Adams said, "Chilston Ponds is a beautiful site containing rare wildlife including great crested newt and interesting acid grassland flowers. It is well worth a visit and a perfect place for a family picnic once the weather warms up!"



About the Partnership



The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership works closely with landowners and local communities. We manage landscapes, wildlife habitats and urban green space and develop opportunities for appropriate recreational access and promote the outstanding qualities of the Stour Valley. The Partnership brings together local people, Partnership staff and sponsoring organisations.

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Partnership Manager: Jon Shelton
Ashford Countryside Officers (P/T): Debbie Adams & Diane Comley
Canterbury & Wantsum Countryside Officer: Carol Donaldson

Wet weather causes high groundwater levels

2012 was the wettest year in England since records began in 1910. With prolonged rainfall, the water table can rise causing groundwater flooding. Groundwater is the water found in the spaces between rocks and within soil, known as the water table. A major problem with a high water table is that the sewerage network can be affected as groundwater infiltrates sewer pipes. When this happens it can cause waste water to 'back up' into properties; sewer manhole covers can 'pop-up' and there is a potential for releases of sewage into roads, gardens, properties and the wider environment.

This year high groundwater levels have caused the sewer network in the Nailbourne Valley in East Kent to suffer from infiltration. Southern Water pumped wastewater from sewers into tankers and to a treatment works. Where this response is not sufficient to avoid flooding, it is also necessary to pump wastewater from a sewer into a tank where it is screened and passed through a filtration system before being discharged into a nearby river. This has recently been the case on the River Nailbourne.

Throughout this incident, the Environment Agency (EA) sampled the water near the pumping sites and along the river to monitor the environmental impact. This indicates that the sewage is highly diluted and the impact on water quality has been low. The water in the River Nailbourne continues to provide a safe environment for wildlife.

For more info. about groundwater in the Nailbourne area, contact the Environment Agency Customer Contact Centre 03708 506 506 or visit the website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk. *Barrie Neaves (EA)*



An Environment Agency Officer sampling on the Nailbourne

News updates from the Stour Valley

Blean Woodland Festival - 27th May to 2nd June

The Kent Wildlife Trust are co-ordinating a celebration of the Blean. Events such as walks, talks and workshops are due to take place from May 27th culminating with a Blean Festival at the Canterbury Academy (formerly Canterbury High School) on Sunday 2nd June 10am—4pm. For more info visit www.theblean.co.uk KSCP will be leading a walk along part of the Big Blean Walk on Tuesday 28th May and will have a stall on the Sunday.



Westgate Parks HLF bid submitted

Canterbury City Council submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February for works and community projects over 5 years concerned with Westgate Gardens, Toddlers Cove, Tannery Field and Bingley Island, collectively known as Westgate Parks. The application was put together with the assistance of local organisations including KSCP, Friends of Westgate Parks and Canterbury Archaeological Trust—fingers crossed!

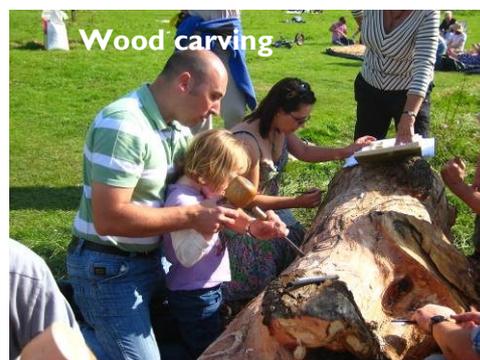


Great Stour Way extension coming along nicely!

The rural cycle route from Chartham to Godmersham has been worked on over the last few months and should be ready for an early summer opening!

Community Orchard Launch Saturday April 27th

The newly planted orchard in Watercress Fields, off Ford Way in the Ashford Green Corridor is to be officially opened on April 27th by the Mayor and Mayoress of Ashford just after 11.00am. Come along to the event, bring a blanket and a picnic and enjoy the planned activities including welly throwing, snail racing and wood carving.



Move for KSCP After over 20 years in Wye, KSCP have moved to Ashford. See contact details on inside page. We are the last conservation organisation to move our office out of Wye following Natural England, BTCV, CPRE, ADAS and in the distant past the Countryside Agency and Rural Development Commission, also FWAG (Farming Wildlife Advisory Group) ceased trading from Wye last year. So along with the agricultural/environmental college closing all these conservation bodies have now moved away from the village. Unfortunately our office had just too many leaks to keep us dry!

Volunteering

Come along and lend a hand with a variety of enjoyable and worthwhile practical conservation projects throughout the Stour Valley!

For our detailed programme phone us on 0300 333 6490 or go to www.kentishstour.org.uk and click on 'get involved'.

Wednesdays (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at Wye or 9.30 at the back of the Stour Centre.

Thursdays (Canterbury & Wantsum): Meet 9.15 at Wye or 9.45 at North Lane Car Park, Canterbury.

Countryside events in the Stour Valley

For information about events in the Stour Valley visit the following websites:

KSCP: kentishstour.org.uk

The Blean Initiative: theblean.co.uk

Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org

Wildwood (Herne): wildwoodtrust.org

Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk

KSCP publications, for those who enjoy the countryside

All available from quality bookshops and KSCP. For information on other publications and free downloads visit kentishstour.org.uk

