

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



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Summer 2013

Stour View

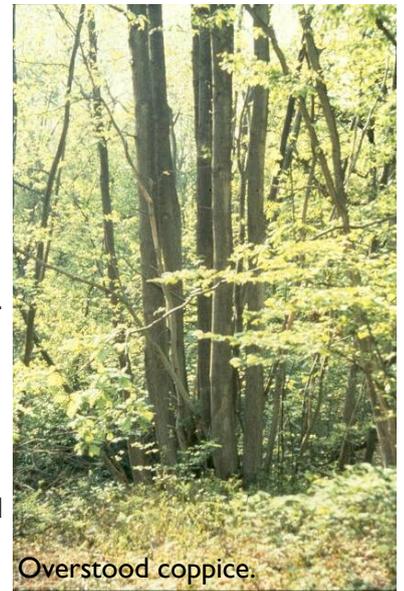
Good Woods *for people, for nature*



Good Woods is a groundbreaking project aiming to breathe new life into UK woodlands. Through the project KSCP are able to offer free woodland advice to woodland owners. The scheme is sponsored by B&Q who have teamed up with sustainable charity Bioregional and The Sylva Foundation to revive woodlands to provide environmental, social and economic benefits. The Kent Downs AONB unit are acting as the co-ordinating body.

There are more than 3 million hectares of woodland in the UK, however in England alone it is estimated that about half of our woodlands are either un-managed or under-managed. This has contributed to a decline in biodiversity, loss of amenity and skills, and poor routes to market for wood products.

Good Woods is focussed on reaching out to owners of under-managed woodlands, starting in the South and East of England. The Countryside Management Partnerships across Kent are able to offer a fully funded site visit and bespoke report to owners and managers of woodlands who would like help in getting their woodland into better condition and whose woodlands meet the eligibility criteria. If you own woodland and are interested please contact the KSCP.



Overstood coppice.



New stretch of Great Stour Way opens

Thanks to the good will of a local landowner, funding from Natural England and the work of Kent County Council a new stretch of the Great Stour Way has opened between Shalmsford Street and Godmersham. The project came about because of a chance meeting between local cycling group Spokes and the local landowner who had seen how successful the Great Stour Way from Canterbury has been and wanted to take it further through his landholding. The 2.5 miles of off road surfaced route offers cyclists, walkers and horse riders an especially scenic passage through the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. From Godmersham, along quiet country lanes, one can continue to Wye, and following National Cycle Route 18, to Ashford. By following other rights of way you can divert off the path to the picturesque village of Chilham, taking care along the A28. The train stations in the valley offer the opportunity to return by rail. Time to get out and explore!

Partnership Sponsors



Funding for Westgate Parks!

Canterbury City Council has received a grant of £770,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) for the regeneration of the Westgate Parks in Canterbury. The project aims to develop a major green heart for the city of Canterbury, where residents and visitors can enjoy leisure and recreation in a tranquil setting, and can learn more about the City's long and rich history. The KSCP along with other groups helped to secure the funding.



The Westgate Parks are made up of four distinct areas: Westgate Gardens, Tannery Field, Toddlers Cove and Bingley Island. The project will carry out essential refurbishments to the play area, make the parks a more pleasant place to visit by improving facilities such as paths and toilets, and restore flower beds.



KSCP will employ a project officer through the funding to deliver an educational and volunteering programme where people can learn about the area's rich history and wildlife. The project will also provide an educational resource for local schools, universities and colleges. The project is also supported by an active Friends group and many other groups including Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

The parks are one of the major open spaces in the city of Canterbury, and are amongst the oldest accessible public spaces in the UK. Evidence of human settlement dating back to before the Romans has been found.

Ailsa Williamson, the project patron, and member of the Williamson family who gifted the Westgate Gardens to Canterbury added: "This is marvellous news bring the area up to date and providing a lovely facility for the people of Canterbury."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said on behalf of HLF and BIG: "We're delighted to be able to provide this much needed support for Westgate Gardens, when it could not be more needed. Many public parks are really suffering in the current economic climate so this is particularly good news for Canterbury. Parks are important to all of us and add so much to our quality of life. Westgate Gardens will help to bring the local community together and now, we can help to secure its future."



Go wild on the river

What could be better when summer arrives than a day on the river? New company, Canoe Wild, who are based on the River Stour outside of Canterbury offer the chance to do just that.

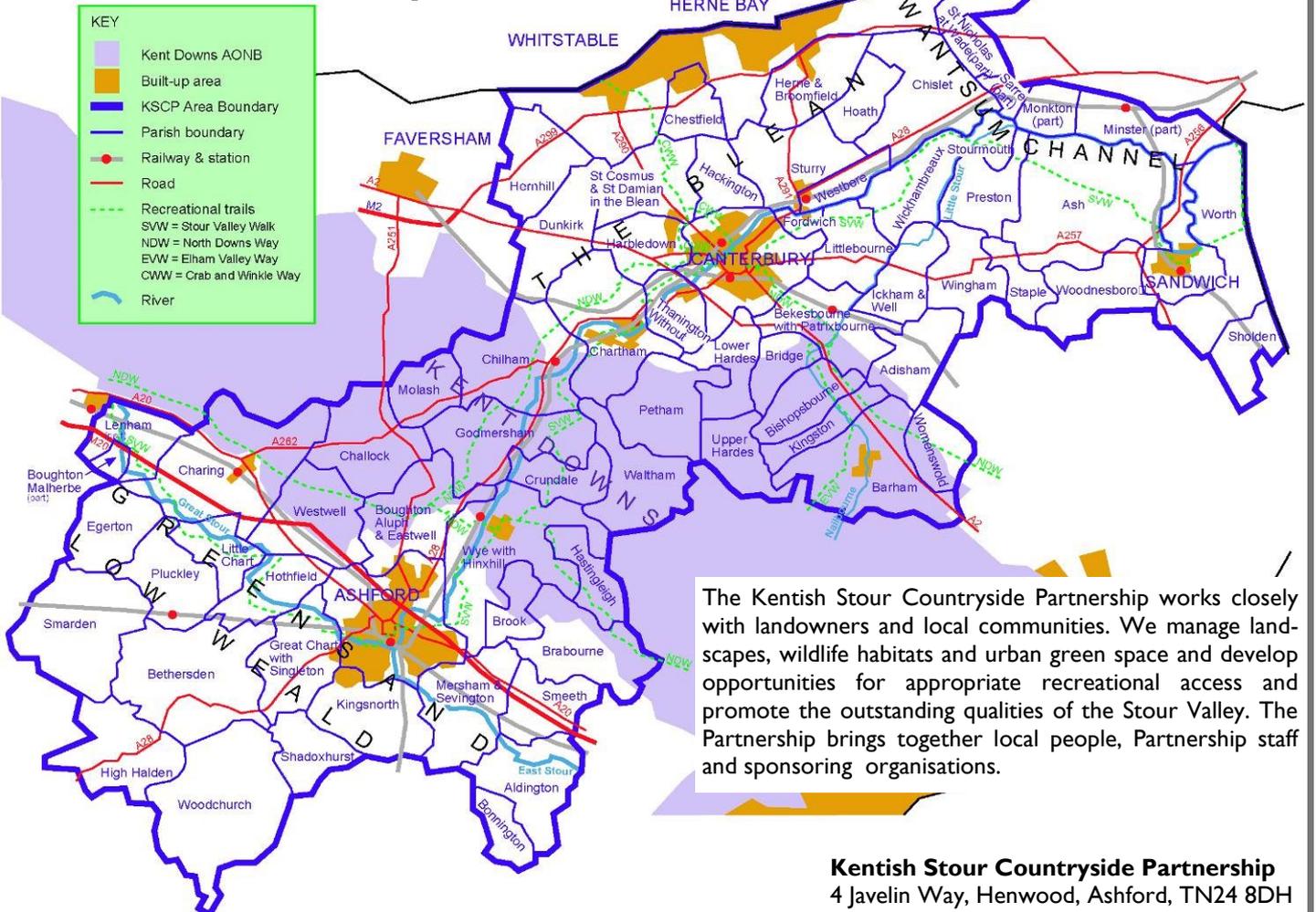
They offer a range of hire options starting from £15 for an hour to longer trips starting at their launch by the George and Dragon pub car park in Fordwich and heading past Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve towards Grove Ferry. KSCP Canterbury Project Officer Carol Donaldson says, "Canoe Wild's trips are a great way to enjoy the wildlife of the river. Trout can be seen weaving through water lilies as you glide along, nightingales call from the banks and hobbies hunt overhead." No experience is needed and the boats are stable and easy to handle.

Have your say on how you would like to see the water environment protected and improved

The Environment Agency is currently consulting on the Challenges and Choices facing the South East River Basin District, which includes the Stour catchment. The consultation runs from 22 June to 22 December 2013. This is your opportunity to tell the Environment Agency what you think are the most significant issues for the water environment (the challenges), the best ways to tackle these issues (the choices), and what the priorities should be.

You can find the consultation documents on the Environment Agency's website:
<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/140088.aspx>

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

New lease of life for Long Rock

KSCP has given the grassland at Long Rock near Whitstable a new lease of life with the creation of two shallow wetland areas.

The areas, known as scrapes, were created during the winter of 2011 and now provide a feeding and resting place for a range of wetland birds such as redshanks and lapwings. The population of both these birds has dropped significantly in the UK, partly due to the lack of suitable breeding sites. While Long Rock is probably too busy to ever see these birds successfully produce chicks then the scrapes damp muddy conditions provide ideal feeding sites and mean that birds are in good condition for the breeding season.



Water Voles are also present at Long Rock where they live in burrows along Swalecliffe Brook. These animals are particularly vulnerable as they are isolated from other populations. A predator such as a mink could easily wipe out the whole colony but the animals are also easily disturbed and endangered by dogs in the water which prevent the voles feeding and could injure or even kill animals. KSCP are asking dog owners using Long Rock to be aware of the sensitive wildlife that makes this site such a special place and keep dogs out of Swalecliffe Brook and away from the scrapes and shingle beach.

News updates from the Stour Valley

Wild Sites on Your Doorstep

This project has been very successful with many fully booked photography, drawing, painting and writing events. For further info. go to www.wildsites.org

Great Stour Way

KSCP has removed five cattle grids from the Great Stour Way and are planning to remove a further two on Brett land.

River Restoration Plans

KSCP has completed river restoration plans for the the Wingham River and Whitehall Dyke in Canterbury and Kennington Stream in Ashford.

We are now talking to landowners about how to take some of the ideas forward.



Wild Sites photography

Marginal plants on the Wingham River



A silted up and nutrient rich channel with little life.

Watercress orchard

The opening day for Watercress orchard in Ashford saw lots of fun activities including welly throwing, 'watch out' was heard from time to time, and no less noisy, snail racing, with lots of cheering, a good job snails can't hear!

The Mayor got involved, planting one of the new trees.



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



Train Rides to Ramble (£2.00) & *Bike Trails by Train* (£1.50) Circular walks and cycle rides from railway stations in the Stour Valley. Full colour, maps & directions, packed with information and illustrations.



Big Blean Walk (Free) A guide to this ancient woodland walking route with map.



Wildsites (£1.00) A guide to 31 wildlife sites in the Stour Valley.