Colne Valley Regional Park

# Working in Partnership in Buckinghamshire

## The shared landscape of Colne Valley Regional Park and Buckinghamshire offers a unique opportunity to celebrate the area.

During 2023/24, £712,000 worth of work has been undertaken in the Colne Valley Regional Park, a return on investment of £9.45 for every £1 invested into the Park by local authorities, Parish Councils and corporate supporters. **A summary of our work in 2023/2024 as relevant for Buckinghamshire follows.**

## Lottery-funded Landscape Partnership

Colne Valley Regional Park successfully delivered the outputs of this three year, £2.5m project with budget to spare. Rather than the funding disappear, we made the case to HLF and received permission from the Lottery to use underspend on the following:

- Commissioned Wildlife Trust to survey waterbirds using the lakes from Rickmansworth to Denham. This has given us clear evidence that the Colne Valley is of national importance for waterbirds.
- 'Planning to improve the green belt' - a conference in May attended by nearly 100 people.
- Installed water supply at Denham Country Park to enable cattle to continue conservation grazing
- Making the case for the Colne Valley by building the evidence base, engaging residents and advocacy.
- Substantive repairs to Footpath 21 between Buckinghamshire and LB Hillingdon.

Before and After photos of works to Footpath 21

Corporate Volunteers helping with clearing the footpath

## Community Engagement

Local engagement projects completed this year include:

- Annual forum in December attended by over 100 people.
- 6 community events in Buckinghamshire as part of Festival Fortnight, including walks, talks and exhibitions
- Management of 22 HA of ancient woodland across 3 sites that we lease from Buckinghamshire Council. This includes securing £10,000 for biodiversity from Mace Group.
- 17 Community and corporate volunteering days at 6 sites in Buckinghamshire

# Landscape Recovery

Our landscape recovery focus this year has been on improving the landscape and paths around our roads.

In Buckinghamshire, this has included works around the A413 (Gerrards Cross/Denham) and A412 (Denham) laybys and the footpath under the A40 including path entrances, fencing, installing steps and litterpicks. We have also introduced £30,000 LCF & HLF Funding for a new boardwalk in Denham Lock Woods with London Wildlife Trust.

We have further delivered work for Parish Councils including rights of way maintenance in Denham and improving green spaces and nature reserves in Iver.

We continue to promote a series of 18 circular walks; helping people to discover the countryside on their doorstep including 8 routes in Buckinghamshire.

Corporate Volunteers at Kingcup Farm

Community Volunteering at Hardings Row Nature Reserve

Guided Walks in and around Buckinghamshire

## Rivers Enhancement

Supported by 100 voluntary 'River Rangers', we have been tackling invasive species on a catchment scale through a Floating Pennywort control project involving physical removal and groundbreaking release and monitoring of biological control (a Weevil) including at 2 Sites in Bucks.

Further works include:

- Tackling the invasive non-native Himalayan Balsam which is harming Kingcup Farm SSSI
- Monitoring river health through riverfly surveys. This has included survey sites in Buckinghamshire on the Colne, Colne Brook and Misbourne.
- Monitoring and maintenance of fish passes on weirs at Denham Country Park and in New Denham.

## Your Countryside in Crisis – a call for action'

Our planning work this year has seen us submit responses to plans and consultations that impact on how residents use and experience their local countryside. This includes 6 huge developments in Buckinghamshire all claiming 'Very Special Circumstances' for development in the Green Belt (6 in one year in a relatively small area demonstrates the unprecedented scale of the threats the Green Belt is facing in the 2020's)

Furthermore, we have written to MPs, Ministers and Shadow Ministers to highlight the huge benefits of the Green Belt for local people and to make recommendations of how to improve National Planning Policy. We have met with the two Buckinghamshire MP's and Buckinghamshire cabinet members. Letters, planning responses etc can be seen at: https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/library/

We have engaged with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, including taking National Planning Lead, Green Belt Lead and others on a tour round the Colne Valley to see the effects of national policy on the Green Belt at first hand, taking in Iver Environment Centre, Langley Park, Iver Heath and Denham Country Park.

We have launched a campaign making the case for positive use of the green belt in line with the original intentions behind its creation in the mid 20th Century. This is not an anti-development campaign; it is pro-countryside. It focusses on a 5 point plan:

- Influence Local Planning
- Restore the Landscape
- Reform National Planning
- Establish Status
- Protect Nature

## In Development

We continue to work with our partners on a raft of projects to protect, enhance and protect our shared Buckinghamshire landscape including:

- **Heritage Lottery Fund #2**

  We are currently at early application stage for a second HLF application, including Buckinghamshire projects covering the following categories:

  - Strengthening Our Story
  - Habitat at Heart
  - Landscape Without Borders
  - Linking our Heritage
  - Planning for Access
  - Building the Trust

- **A40 pathways project - connecting the A40 & the Canal**

We have secured £32,000 via the Landfill Community Fund to complete the enhanced pathway link between Hillingdon and the Grand Union Canal.

- **Northmoor Hill Woods Project**

We have secured £265,000 funding from HS2 & LCF to deliver a 4 year project to deliver habitat enhancements and access improvements at this irreplaceable ancient woodland.

- **Colne Rewilding Project**

We are seeking external funding to extend the GLA-funded Colne rewilding project so that it also covers Buckinghamshire.

## Contact:

**To discuss further opportunities for to work together on green space, biodiversity, landscape, communities or planning please contact**
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