

Flowing in the right direction

KSCP have been successful, in partnership with the South East Rivers Trust, in an application to the Environment Agency for funds to develop a Stour Catchment Partnership.

The application also includes the sub-catchment of the River Dour with additional partners the Dover Society and Whitecliffs Countryside Partnership. The partnership will deliver actions to improve our rivers. The Stour catchment, which administratively includes the Dour and Oyster coast streams, is made up of 25 separate water bodies (lengths of river or lakes). Most of these water bodies are classed as in moderate (3) or poor (4) condition in a 5 class system through the Water Framework Directive. The reasons for our rivers not achieving a higher status are complex but key factors in approximate order of importance are: phosphates from domestic and agricultural sources; obstructions to fish passage such as weirs; pollution from domestic and industrial sources; the unnatural shapes of our river channels which have been manipulated by us over many hundreds of years.

The Stour Catchment Partnership is made up of many organisations that can help to resolve these issues. Two key pieces of work that have taken place thus far has been the installation of phosphate stripping technology in waste water treatment works by water companies and improvements to fish passage and channel habitat by EA, KSCP and others. The Pledges Mill weir in Ashford was impassable for fish, but the height has now been lowered, and a fish and eel ladder provided.



Pledges Mill weir, prior to work



At Godinton the channel has been narrowed by using faggots to create a faster flowing channel.

More news on partnerships

The KSCP has agreed to join up with the **South East Rivers Trust** to deliver more work for our local rivers. The South East Rivers Trust evolved from the Wandle Trust in South West London. The Trust works with local communities and other organisations to enhance rivers and their catchment areas. KSCP has also been working with the **Wild Trout Trust** over the last couple of years. KSCP staff have been learning about methods to improve our rivers for fish such as placing woody debris into the river banks, using faggots, and placing gravel into the river, all to create a more varied river habitat. At Godinton, near Ashford, major works have taken place, co-ordinated by the Wild Trout Trust, to improve the river habitat. The Godinton Estate Manager and local fishing group are very happy with the results.

Partnership Sponsors



**ENVIRONMENT
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Development Officer appointed for Westgate Parks

Anna Williams has joined the KSCP as the new Westgate Parks Development Officer.

Anna, 26, has considerable experience of engaging the community in the heritage and habitats of open spaces. As a Kent County Council education ranger, she worked at Canterbury Environmental Education Centre in Broad Oak Road before developing a busy outdoor learning programme at Brockhill Country Park, Hythe. A former student at Faversham's Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Anna gained a first class honours degree in Countryside Management from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and is a qualified Forest School practitioner.



Anna said: "I'm excited about the opportunity to work with the community on heritage and habitat projects at Westgate Parks. As well as improved leisure facilities and a new outdoor learning programme for schools, volunteer projects will bring to life the history of Canterbury, from pre-Roman times to the present, and offer a wealth of opportunities to learn about the diverse wildlife of the river Great Stour. We want to make Westgate Parks a very special riverside area for residents, schoolchildren and tourists."

Westgate Gardens, Tannery Field, Toddlers Cove and Bingley Island link to form the unique 'Westgate Parks. The ambitious scheme was given the green light thanks to £770,000 Heritage Lottery Funding. Major Plans include:

- *Improvements to the Toddlers Cove play area and Rheims Way underpass.
- *New public toilets.
- *Enhanced planting and ecological areas.
- *A community based education and volunteering programme.



Anna will be working very closely with Canterbury City Council who are managing the project and a number of key partners including The Canterbury Archaeological Trust and the Friends of Westgate Parks.

Anna added: "Anyone wishing to get involved and find out more about volunteering opportunities is welcome to contact me on anna.williams@kent.gov.uk. "I will be delighted to explain more about what is happening now and in the future and how organisations and individual volunteers can help." More details about the scheme can be found at www.westgateparks.co.uk



All hands to Dexter Close, Boughton Aluph

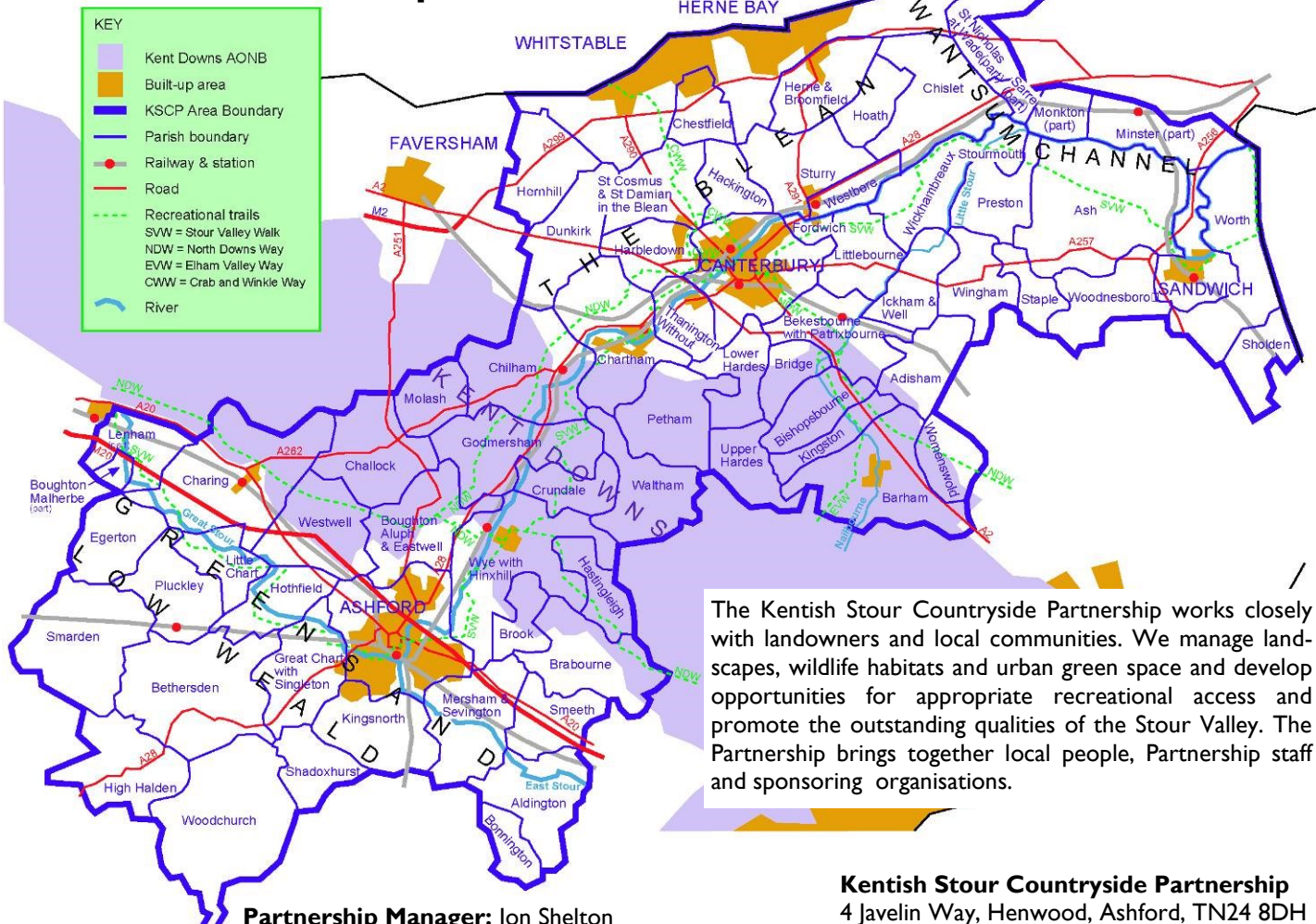
Wildlife in Boughton Aluph has received a boost with the clean-up of one of the pond areas. In November KSCP volunteers cleared scrub surrounding the pond on Dexter Close. In recent years the area has become overgrown, with the pond becoming silted up and full of leaf litter. The clean-up was the first step in a programme which will see silt dredged from a section of the pond and lower branches removed from surrounding trees to cut the amount of leaf litter dropping into it. Next spring the cleared area will be sown with a wildflower seed mix, to create a meadow.

KSCP Countryside Officer, Debbie Adams, said: "The work that our volunteers have carried out will really help to make the pond friend-

ly for wildlife. Wildflowers will attract pollinators such as bees, and a healthier pond should see the return of dragonflies, toads and possibly even newts." There will be another chance to get involved as a community day is being planned for the New Year. This will focus on clearing the area around the pond on Goteley Mere. Councillor Winston Michael said that the community think it a wonderful idea to restore the pond to its former glory. He went on to say that what a few volunteers achieved in a day, despite the rain, had inspired the local community who had described it as "amazing", "mind blowing", and "incredible". Voluntary work undertaken by the Partnership can be seen all around Ashford.

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership runs conservation task days every week. If you are interested in helping out at Goteley Mere, or volunteering on any other task, please contact Debbie Adams on Debbie.adams@kent.gov.uk or 0300 333 6490, or find out more at www.kentishstour.org.uk

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.

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

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Muddy Marvellous

KSCP volunteers took to the, somewhat slimy, waters of Sandwich to improve a stream for wildlife and local residents. South Poulders Main Stream is managed by the River Stour (Kent) Internal Drainage Board but problems with access to a short section of the watercourse, close to the Butts in the town, has meant that the channel has become over-wide and heavily silted up.

“The stream has suffered over recent years due to the collapse of banks and lack of water flow,” explained Pete Dowling, Engineer to the River Stour IDB. “Residents have tried to protect their gardens by lining the banks with wooden piling but this has created an unnatural habitat for wildlife. The South Poulders Main Stream is the outlet to the Delf Stream which passes through the town and is therefore important to flows through it. We therefore asked Countryside Officer Carol Donaldson from KSCP to come up with a plan to help improve flows throughout the system and enhance the channel for wildlife.”

The plan Carol devised involves narrowing the over-wide stream by creating new banks made of bundles of hazel twigs held in place by long stakes, these will be backfilled with silt from the channel and should create a smaller channel which will move water along at increased speed and help keep the stream free from silt. In addition it is hoped that these new banks will become colonised with wetland plants which will provide a natural border to the river and provide habitat for creatures like dragonflies which can get to work chomping on the mosquitoes.

“The work is certainly muddy and messy,” said Carol “but the volunteers enjoyed the challenge and look forward to seeing the results. Many other watercourses in Sandwich have similar problems to South Poulders Main Stream and we hope, if this experiment works, others will look at undertaking similar improvements.”



News updates from the Stour Valley

Wild Sites on Your Doorstep

There will be an exhibition of the work of 'Wild sites' at the Whitstable Horsebridge Community Centre 19th –25th Feb 2014.

Good Woods

KSCP has completed 9 landowner woodland visit reports in 5 months out of a total of 40 in Kent. Some of these woods will go on to have management plans written. About half of UK woodlands are unmanaged or under-managed.

Sturry Community Park

KSCP has secured funding from Crime Proceeds Funds from East Kent Trading Standards, along with other sources, to employ a part-time Project Officer at Sturry Community Park, Canterbury. The Project Officer will engage with communities, run activities and manage the park. The Project Officer should be in post by March.

Crab and Winkle Way Leaflet

A new leaflet for the Crab and Winkle Way has been produced by KSCP in partnership with the Crab and Winkle Line Trust. The leaflet will be available from Tourist Information Centres in January.



Ptomaphagus varicornis

Rare beetle thriving in City Centre

A tiny insect rarely seen in the UK has been found alive and well and apparently thriving in Canterbury. A type of carrion beetle, scientific name *Ptomaphagus varicornis*, was discovered during a survey of bugs and plants on Bingley Island, part of the Whitehall Meadows local nature reserve.



Ragged robin, a plant that should be found in the new riverside habitat

Major funding for Civic Centre Park South

KSCP has been successful in a bid for funds from DEFRA (Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs) via KCC for the creation of a major wetland area in Ashford. Work should begin in April.

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

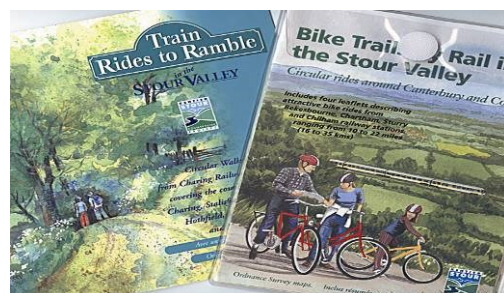
Friends of King's Wood: friendsofkingwood.org

Wildwood (Herne): wildwoodtrust.org

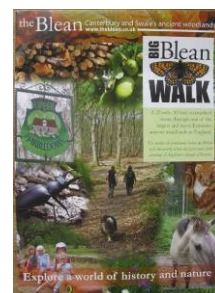
Spokes (cycling): spokeseastkent.org.uk

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.