

New Meadow Reduces Flood Risk *...and is good for wildlife too*

Close to Ashford town centre, a new flood meadow is recreating a feature that would have been a quintessential part of Ashford's landscape 100 years ago.

South Park Meadow covers an area approximately 8000 sq. metres in which the ground level has been lowered and sown with a native wet-meadow seed mix. The East Stour river banks have been altered to improve flow conditions and river habitat and a new earth bank has been formed along the site edge. This winter a 180 metre hedge will be planted along this bank by KSCP volunteers. The work will benefit wildlife, reduce flood risk, add value to the landscape and improve water quality. Once established the recreated flood meadow, which includes several scrapes (shallow depressions that seasonally hold water to provide habitat for a range of species such as dragonflies), should be awash with wildflowers and waving grasses in spring and summer - excellent for insects and birds and an important nectar source for bumble bees and other pollinating insects. Due to be opened to the public in the Spring of 2015, South Park Meadow will be a beautiful and peaceful space for local residents and visitors to the town whilst providing a valuable area for storing floodwater during the winter months. This is a partnership project between KSCP, the Environment Agency, Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council.



Working towards a wildflower meadow similar to this one planted in 2012 at Little Burton



River bank works, improving flow and wildlife habitat



Partnership Sponsors



**ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY**



New Project Officer for Sturry Road Community Park

This new job has been created to manage Sturry Road Community Park and to involve local residents in activities and events. Martin Thomas, already working at Pegwell Bay Country Park near Sandwich, will be working part-time with the Sturry Road Community Garden Trust to deliver improvements to facilities and wildlife habitats, and develop a series of events for adults and children including a weekly programme of children's summer holiday activities. Funding was made available by Sturry Road Community Park Trust and money seized from criminals by KCC's Trading Standards Team. Talking about his new role, Martin commented: 'I'm really excited about getting to know the park and the people who use it. I hope to get even more people out, enjoying this fantastic space.'

Martin changed career following redundancy from Pfizer over 5 years ago, switching to countryside management and wildlife conservation. Explaining his decision to leave his scientific career, he says, 'I realised that I have a passion for green spaces and wildlife. I also love helping others to share in my enjoyment of nature and the outdoors.' He lives in Ramsgate with his wife Emma, who works in a primary school and who calls him 'Swampy' for his outdoor tendencies.



Martin Thomas joins the team

Sturry Road Community Park is hidden away behind the Park and Ride to the north-east of the city, and as a result remains unknown to many residents. Its 38 acres include a basketball court, 5-a-side football pitch, kids' BMX track, skateboard park and children's play area. The eastern part of the park is given over to wildlife, with recently planted woods, open grassland and ponds. The park can be easily accessed from the city centre as it is just off National Cycle Route 1 and the Stour Valley Walk.

Westgate Park Open Day a huge success.. and sunny too!



The winning class of this year's Kent Messenger, Love Your City Walk to School initiative officially open the play area by cutting a ribbon, along with Canterbury City Council Sheriff Tony Austin



Children enjoyed taking part in Roman re-enactments, Iron-Age face painting, making bat masks with Kent Bat Group and creating paper ducks, dragonflies & butterflies with KSCP volunteers



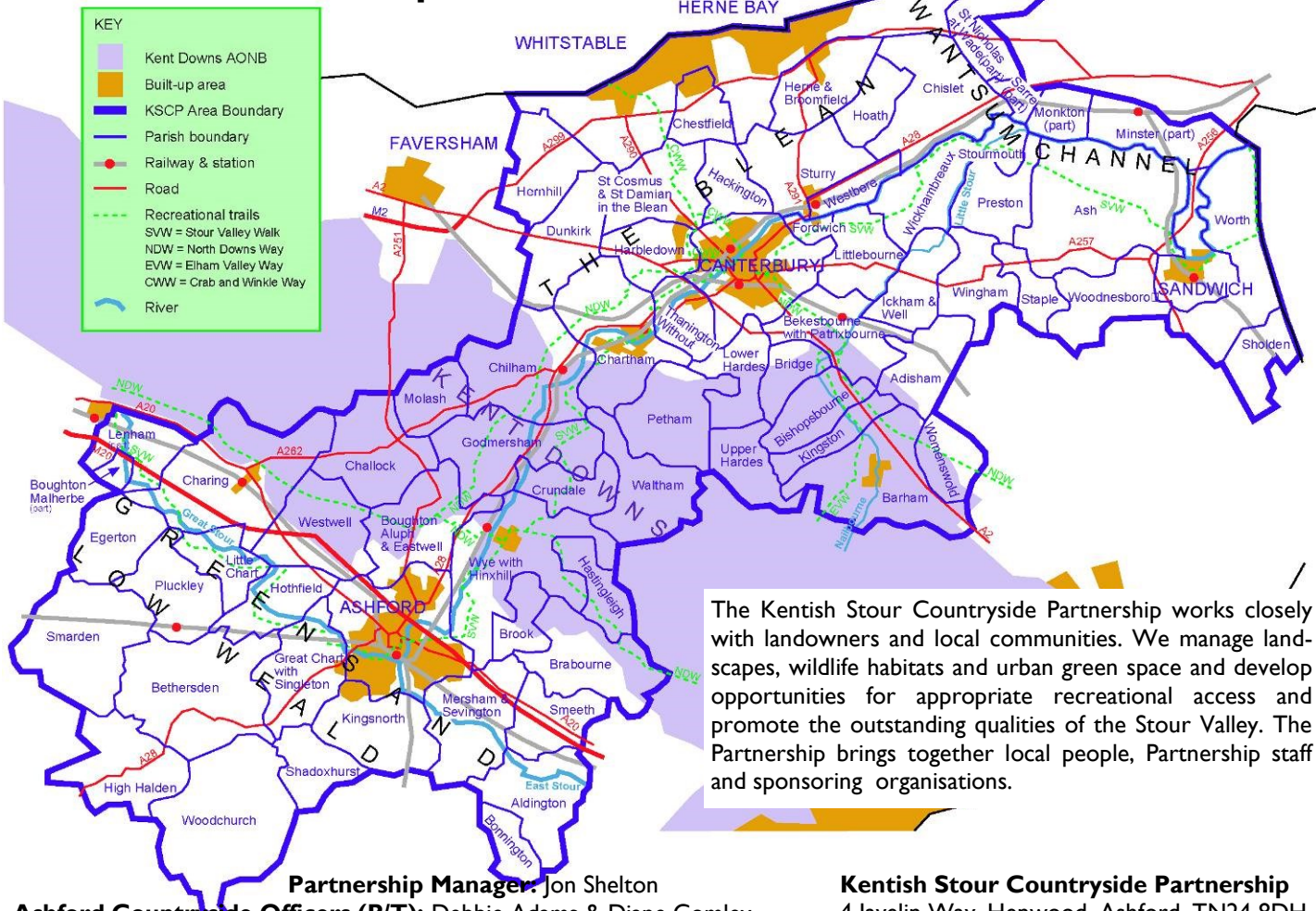
Toddlers Cove play area was officially opened on June 29th as part of a wonderful day of celebrations in Westgate Parks, Canterbury. The play area and ongoing community engagement are funded by a £770,000 Parks for People Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

The open day celebrated the history of the park through a dramatic musical performance by pupils from the Canterbury Academy, called Through Space and Time. A Romano-British encampment also offered a chance to step back in time and sample life in the parks as it was nearly 2,000 years ago.

Other highlights of the day, which was attended by several hundred people, included a poetry competition, free smoothies, created by pedal power from Wheely Groovy and fantastic Celtic face painting.

This summer, a wide range of events including archaeological digs, poetry workshops and bat walks all take place in the park. Details are available by picking up a leaflet, visiting www.westgateparks.co.uk or calling KSCP.

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
Sturry Road Community Park Officer (P/T): Martin Thomas

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Dormice Willesborough Dykes, Linking Communities, Sheltering Nature

KSCP, working in partnership with Ashford Borough Council, took the lead on a dormouse mitigation project for a new cycleway on South Willesborough Dykes, Ashford earlier this year. KSCP dormouse expert Debbie Adams led the planting of 3,820 trees supplied by TCV Heritage Trees Project. The trees were being planted due to the loss of dormouse habitat for the cycle route development linking Park Farm Estate with Ashford Town Centre. Trees planted included those favoured by dormice for food and nesting: hazel, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, hawthorn, wild privet and honeysuckle. In total 280m of hedgerow and 1530m² of new woodland was planted for the dormouse. This ensured that overall; there was no net loss of habitat for the protected species. 10 nest boxes have been set up in the remaining habitat so that the dormouse population can be monitored by Debbie in the future.



The hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) sleeps through the daytime and forages at night

This small, bright eyed nocturnal mammal has suffered great decline in numbers leading to patchy distributions across the UK due mainly to habitat loss and fragmentation. The species and their nesting areas are now fully protected by law.

The careful planning and dedication to endangered species protection throughout this work has demonstrated that 'wild' life can co-exist in today's urban framework and cyclists using the new path can do so in the safe knowledge that their sleepy friends have a safe future too.



Tree shelters protect the new plants

News updates from the Stour Valley

Wild Sites on Your Doorstep

Continues with events this summer. Visit www.wildsites.org

Management of Ordinary Watercourses

KSCP has been successful in a bid for funds for the management of Ordinary Watercourses. These are drainage channels which are not under the management of the Environment Agency or River Stour IDB. KSCP can provide advice to landowners and possibly help with management. Please contact us if you are responsible for a channel and would like some advice.

Hambrook Marshes

On 1st April a new charitable body 'Love Hambrook Marshes' acquired the wetlands near Canterbury known as Hambrook Marshes. KSCP are helping to manage the site as they have done since 2004. KSCP volunteers were planting six riverside standard trees with parkland guards as the sale went through. LHM are looking for anyone interested in managing their valuable mixed willow bed, possibly for baskets or garden willow furniture. Please contact KSCP.

Sturry Community Park

A programme of fun summer activities for children and a new regular monthly volunteer team is needed to manage the Park so please get in touch with us if you are interested in either.

East Kent Catchment Improvement Partnerships

KSCP are looking to do work on rivers and streams at Godmersham, Buxford, Kennington and Thanington over the next year.

Friends of Canterbury Riverside

This new group is helping to improve the riverside spaces between Westgate and Kingsmead. Plans include creating small meadow areas, educational projects with two schools, new bespoke sculptured seating and interpretation. Some funding has been agreed with Canterbury City Council and KSCP are looking for a volunteer to help lead some of the projects. KSCP are also looking at what improvements could be made to in river habitat through the city.

And finally congratulations to Debbie and Anna in the KSCP team who have both recently got married so we now have a Debbie Reynolds and an Anna Bell.

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'.

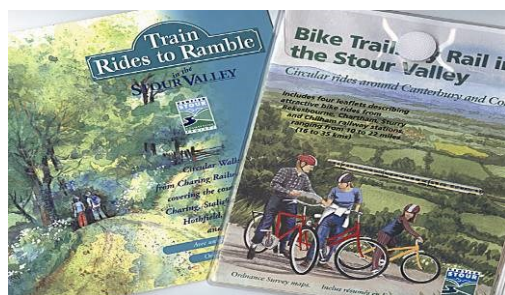
Wednesdays (Ashford area): Meet 9.15 at Wye or 9.30 at the back of the Stour Centre.

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

Saturday mornings Westgate Parks & Sturry Community Park
Contact us for further details

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* (£1.00) 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 guide to this ancient woodland with map.



Various free walk and cycle maps. Available from Tourist Information Centres.



Wild Sites photography



Meadow cranesbill. One of many wildflowers sown alongside the Great Stour Way by KSCP volunteers at Hambrook in 2011, flourishing in 2014.

Countryside events in the Stour Valley

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

kentishstour.org.uk
theblean.co.uk
friendsofkingswood.org
wildwoodtrust.org
spokeseastkent.org.uk
westgateparks.co.uk
wildsites.org