



SOUTH WILLESBOROUGH DYKES

Suddenly, you're in the countryside!

This Willesborough Dykes Greenway Path, launched in 2014, now provides a wonderful traffic free route between Park Farm and the town. It takes you alongside South Willesborough Dykes - one of the most valuable sites in the Ashford Green Corridor, and the largest. At over 200 acres, it's a sizable tract of untouched countryside with a lot of wildlife interest.



Snipe

Photo: Alpslake

This grazed marshland has been spared from development partly because of its tendency to flood but also because of its ecological value. Many of its important species are to be found in the man-made ditches that were dug centuries ago to help drain the land for farming. These include scarce plants such as water violet and a long list of aquatic insects. The site is also important for birds which over-winter here on the wet grassland, in particular an important population of snipe.



Water violet



Photo: Teun Spaans

Purple loosestrife

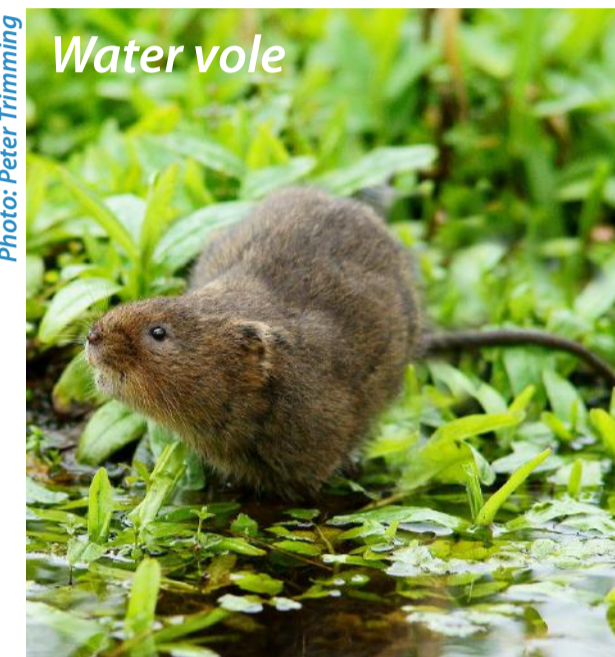


Photo: Peter Trimming

Water vole

As well as the network of ditches, two rivers run through the Dykes – the East Stour and the Aylesford Stream. Both are good wildlife habitats for plants such as purple loosestrife, insects like the banded demoiselle and one of Britain's fastest declining mammals, the water vole.

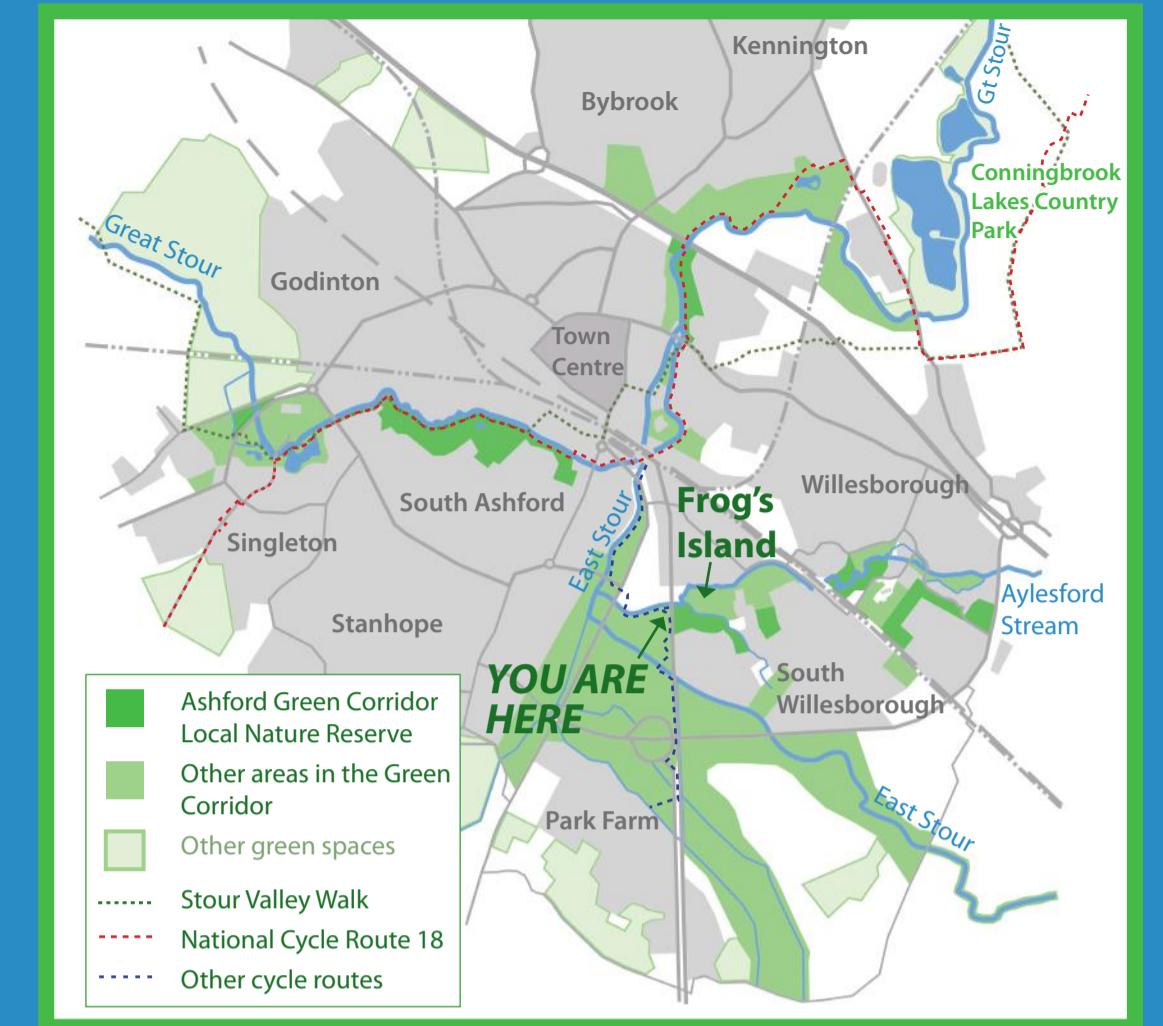
You might notice an area of tree planting and a hedge beside the path. Almost 4000 trees were planted by volunteers to create new habitat for another threatened mammal, the dormouse. Meadow wild flowers line the path, including species like black knapweed and musk mallow, all of which enhances the wildlife value of the area.



Dormouse



Tree planting



The Ashford Green Corridor

Discover one of Ashford's greatest assets!

Since the middle of the 19th century Ashford has expanded but land close to the rivers has not been built on, due to the risk of flooding and because the Borough Council has protected it as green space. Some areas are designated as Local Nature Reserves.

The resulting undeveloped 'fingers' of land, around the rivers Great Stour, East Stour and Aylesford Stream, reach right into the heart of Ashford. Collectively they connect to form the Ashford Green Corridor, which provides both people and wildlife with routes through the town and to the countryside beyond.



An **Ashford Green Corridor leaflet**, which includes walking maps and information on other areas of the Corridor, can be downloaded as a PDF from www.kentishstour.org.uk or by scanning the QR code.

