



**TMBC Projects 2014 Medway Valley Countryside Partnership  
March 2014 - August 2014**

**The Partnership's Objectives:**

- 1. Creating, sustaining and enhancing our landscape and biodiversity**
- 2. Developing, managing and supporting community-based environmental initiatives**
- 3. Developing, and promoting life-long outdoor learning**
- 4. Encouraging and enhancing greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits**
- 5. Ensuring the Partnership has the resources for effective development and operation**

Project work is delivered by the Partnership team; Mark Pritchard (MP), Mary Tate (MT), Derek Whitehead (DW), Simon Ginnaw (SG) and Andrea Griffiths (AG) supported by the Manager Caroline Drewett (CD) and her replacement Kim Richards (KR). Seasonal staff are recruited as stewards for Oare Gunpowder works managed by MVCP as part of the Kent Countryside Management Partnership's contract with Swale Borough Council. A separate Orchard For All Project run by Pippa Palmar (PP) also operates across all boroughs.

The majority of projects are funded through a number of partners thereby increasing the value for each partner financially.

A Steering Group of representatives from the Environment Agency, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Mike Harris), Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council steer the Partnership through quarterly meetings and a MoA.

**Creating, sustaining and enhancing our landscape & biodiversity**

**Giant Hogweed Control Programme (AG)**

In 2014 the project again covered 200km of riparian habitat through liaising with landowners and organisations to deliver a coordinated control of Giant Hogweed. The Scheme covers the Medway catchment and the River Cray in the London

Borough of Bexley. In specific areas Himalayan Balsam (for flood defence purposes) and Japanese Knotweed is also controlled.

Over 400 landowners are in contact with the scheme (some carrying out their own control) with over 20,000 plants treated in the 2014 spray season by our spray contractor. The scheme provides advice and where needed practical support in the control of the non native species in a coordinated catchment approach. The latest annual report can be provided upon request.

Over the next few weeks we will be working on Knotweed across the region, control of Floating Pennywort in the Yalding area and we are monitoring the situation with Azolla water fern.

GIS maps are currently being compiled along with landowner invoices and the annual report for detailed updates on this work

### **Rivers Work (MT/MP)**

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) came into force in December 2000 and became part of UK law in December 2003. It provides an opportunity to plan and deliver a better water environment, focusing on ecology. It commits European Union member states to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all water bodies in the long-term. To achieve 'good status' both the ecological and the chemical status of a surface water body need to be at least 'good'. Ecological status refers to the quality of the structure and functioning of aquatic ecosystems of the surface waters.

The Partnership continues to work with the South East Rivers Trust to secure project delivery funding in the future for the water-bodies in the catchment. Detailed Catchment Action Plans have been written for all the major tributaries to the River Medway within the borough of TMBC. These include the Bourne, Ditton Stream, Mereworth Stream, Leybourne Stream and Hilden Brook. These action plans have evolved from community engagement events which have sought to gain public engagement and approval for the proposed works, and elicit projects and priorities from landowners and the public alike. Projects have been prioritised and a variety of catchment funding sources are being investigated to try and make some of the aspirational projects reality.

**<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33362.aspx>**

### **Dene Park (MP)**

Survey and training work continues to happen at Dene Park with both MVCP staff and the engagement of students from the nearby Hadlow College. MVCP have led a number of educational walks for Hadlow students from both the animal management and landscape disciplines. Current surveys:

- Dormice surveys
- Amphibian survey
- GCN assessment

A dissertation project surveying amphibians at the site revealed that in 2 of the 3 new ponds dug in 2012 already had breeding populations of palmate newt and excellent numbers of dragon and damselflies.

Owing to the exceptionally wet winter weather much planned coppicing and rhododendron clearance had to be put on hold however as site access for vehicles was impossible.

MVCP are now investigating a renewed funding bid to Biffaward's Rebuilding biodiversity stream for proposed coppicing and habitat linkage work in winter 2014/15.

### **Leybourne Lakes Wildlife Management Plan (MT and MP)**

The management plan produced for the country park has now been adopted by the site managers and is being used in order to (particularly) enhance habitat for this increasingly important breeding site for nightingales.

### **Clare Lake Enhancement Project (MP)**

£5600 of funding has been secured and a further application made to Groundwork to secure the necessary £15k. Initial soundings are positive although there is no written confirmation as yet. Friends of Clare Lake meeting have been held to prioritise tasks and we are set and ready to go.

### **Good Woods (MP)**

Follow up calls for possible autumn 2014 work are planned all the partners visited as part of this scheme. Active coppicing work has taken place (see below in Tag report) at a variety of TMBC owned sites and more is already scheduled for winter 2014/15.

### **Church Farm (MP)**

Ongoing woodland thinning and meadow establishment on the site owned by East Malling and Larkfield PC.

### **Save our Magnificent Meadows (MT)**

Mary Tate is now in place as the project officer for the SOMM project. Many new landowners have been engaged and planned meadow creation is underway at a variety of sites both inside and close to the borough. Events are being held with a comprehensive series of training launched to create 'Meadows Champions'. See our dedicated web-page at <http://www.medwayvalley.org/save-our-magnificent-meadows/> for more details.

**Developing, managing and supporting community-based environmental initiatives**

### **Beat Project East Malling (AG)**

MVCP have been working with Beat Project staff at the St James Centre, East Malling for a number of years to improve their woodland and increase access opportunities and use.

Previously a long footpath, play area and story-telling area were created on site. In August 2014 MVCP have returned with their TAG volunteers to build a 25 metre path extension, install more sensory play and active play equipment, increase interpretation and access via signage and also encourage more wildlife to the site via nest boxes and habitat piles.

In the next few months the community centre, with MVCP assistance, is planning a community fun day to encourage use of and appreciation of this small woodland site.

MVCP have delivered numerous other TAG days in the TMBC area.

### **St Philips Church (MT/SG)**

After plans for the Quiet Garden (Community Garden) and play area had been approved and finalised, the play area has now been constructed. MVCP and St Philips Church are working together to find funding for the garden project following an unsuccessful bid to Nineveh charitable foundation. Grants from Co-op and CEMEX were applied for but unfortunately both were turned down.

TMBC are currently tendering for a contractor to do the basic landscaping of paths and steps garden. The Kent Green Guardians have a small fund to use on the garden, but are struggling to get volunteers to create the garden. It is hoped that TAG can help out with the design in the near future after a meeting with Jane Mata, Kent Green Guardians.

### **Thursday Action Group (DW/AG/MP)**

Supporting the Partnership through the TAG programme is our valued team of volunteers undertaking practical project work with us. In this reporting period a further 90.5 practical volunteer days have been spent in the Tonbridge and Malling borough through TAG.

### **Examples:**

- Beat Project East Malling – establishing wildlife garden
- Tinkers Island (TMBC owned site) – vegetation control
- Haysden Country Park (TMBC) – Himalayan balsam control
- Priory Wood (TMBC) – Coppicing, pond works, hedge laying
- Woods Meadow (TMBC) – vegetation control
- Planned TMBC staff day Brungers Pond – rubbish and vegetation clearance

### **Trees to Treasure (SG)**

This project is in its final year of funding from the Big Tree Plant and will continue to support community tree planting projects. The scheme is open to applications from community groups and organisations, schools, Parish Councils, clubs and churches for tree planting on green spaces or areas with public/community access, within Dartford, Gravesham, London Borough of Bexley, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Swale, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells. The closing date for applications is the 31<sup>st</sup> of October and the trees will be distributed to successful groups in December. The number of applications across the area is still low and additional publicity of the scheme is needed. The project can support local authority projects and schemes where trees are needed.

### **Kent Orchards for Everyone Project (PP)**

Pippa Palmar (our new part time Kent Orchards for Everyone Orchards Officer is delivering the HLF project (4 years) focussing on priority orchards across the Faversham and Greensand fruitbelt). Macey's Meadow and Plaxtol are two within the Borough alongside New Ash Green receiving training, support for orchard restoration and advice.

**Developing, and promoting life long outdoor learning**

### **Snodland Wildlife Garden (MT and MP)**

No work in this project period.

### **TMBC Playscheme (SG)**

MVCP have been approached by TMBC to be involved with the planning and some delivery of the Summer Playscheme. After correspondence between Borough Council Officers and MVCP staff, it was agreed that MVCP would deliver Mini Beast workshops at eight playscheme venues. 354 children were signed up to attend the workshops in total. Staff have expressed their appreciation and explained how MVCP's Mini Beast Workshop was the most popular and greatest received by the children out of everything provided.

**Encouraging and enhancing greater access in the outdoors and the corresponding health benefits**

### **Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Park events (SG)**

MVCP are leading three events at Haysden Country Park this year. A Bug Hunt was held on June 29<sup>th</sup> to celebrate National Insect Week, where we had 18 people attend

and take part. There are two more events still to take place, these are the Night-time Walk on 16<sup>th</sup> August, and an Eel Fun Day on 28<sup>th</sup> August.

At Leybourne Lakes Country Park, one member of staff attended and helped out on the Wildlife Day.

### **Ensuring the Partnership has the resources for effective development and operation**

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A significant role of the Partnership Manager and Senior Partnership Officer is to develop projects and subsequently secure funding for them to meet community needs in the coming year/s. The finances are managed on a day to day basis by both with forecasting and budget management by the Partnership Manager.

The partnership is supported by Kent County Council's HR and Finance teams.